



Style Guide for the Communications of the Association for Information Systems

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Abstract:

This style guide is for authors who intend to submit papers to the Journal of the Association for Information Systems (JAIS) or Communications of the Association for Information Systems (CAIS). It covers general style issues and common errors. Please check with this guide before you submit your manuscript to JAIS/CAIS.

1 Tense and Voice

1.1 Active Voice

Use active voice wherever possible. Historically, publications have eschewed using “I”, “we”, and other such words to maintain objectivity. However, CAIS prefers that authors use “I”, “we”, and so on because they are clearer and more succinct.

Table 1. Active Voice

Passive	Active (preferred)
...was analyzed.	We / I analyzed...
...are presented in Table 1.	Table 1 presents / shows / summarizes...

Authors should avoid awkward phrases such as “the researchers” and “the authors”. Instead, use “I”, “we”, and so on, or recast the sentence. When dealing with sentences that do not use pronouns, make the subject as clear as possible.

Table 2. Active Voice

Passive	Active (preferred)
Three theoretical implications can be derived from our study.	Readers / We can derive three theoretical implications from our study.

1.2 Tense

This section provides several guidelines to ensure that authors use the appropriate tenses in their manuscripts. Generally, information systems papers use three tenses: present, present perfect, and past.

1.2.1 Present Tense

Use present tense when discussing what your or someone else’s paper does. However, when doing this for papers with two or more authors, treat the sentence’s subject as the authors, not the paper itself (see second last example in Table 3). In other words, do not refer to “Holsapple and Axel (1996)” as though it were the name of the paper.

Table 3. Present Tense

This paper explores ...	This paper explores ...
We define this as...	We define this as...
This paper provides an extensive...	This paper provides an extensive...
In Section 1, we summarize ...	In Section 1, we summarize ...
Holsappe (1995) discusses how decision context...	Holsappe (1995) discusses how decision context...
Holsapple and Axel (1996) discuss [not discusses] how decision context influences decision making.	Holsapple and Axel (1996) discuss [not discusses] how decision context influences decision making.
Holsapple and Axel’s (1996) paper “On decision context influences” discusses how...	Holsapple and Axel’s (1996) paper “On decision context influences” discusses how...

Use present tense when reporting the results or findings of a study.

Table 4. Present Tense

The data suggest that...

Use present tense when discussing models and hypotheses.

Table 5. Present Tense

The model proposes how exercising strategic choice and institutional forces impact the antecedents and consequences.

In particular, our model explains how and why organizations achieve benefits.
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1.2.2 Present Perfect Tense

One can use either present tense or present perfect tense with signal phrases. Signal phrases “tell readers who a source is and what to expect...as when introducing an explanation, interpretation, or other commentary” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 646). Typically, present perfect suits a sentence, paragraph, and/or section better when explicitly reviewing past contributions. When simply discussing what an author (or paper) discusses/describes/and so on, one can use present tense as in Table 3.

Table 6. Present Perfect Tense—Signal Phrases

“Neisser (1967) has described cognition as ‘the activity of knowing: the acquisition, organization and use of knowledge’ (Neisser, 1976, p. 1)” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 646).
--

John Simmons (2007) has noted that the “information systems is a complexfield” (p. 10).
--

“Lin (1999) has suggested that preschooling may significantly affect children’s academic performance through high school (pp. 22-23)” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 646).
--

The practioner and academic literature has paid increased attention to the practice of information technology (IT) governance by boards of directors.
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Use present perfect tense when discussing contributions to knowledge.

Table 7. Present Perfect Tense—Contributions to Knowledge

First, this study has contributed to the existing literature...
--

Second, this study has extended the extant knowledge in this field...
--

1.2.3 Past Tense

Use past tense with signal phrases that relate to studies.

Table 8. Past Tense—Signal Phrases

“In an exhaustive survey of the literature published between 1990 and 2000, Walker (2001) found ‘no proof, merely a weak correlation, linking place of residence and rate of illness’ (p. 121)” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 646).
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We conducted the review to identify publication outlets, theoretical foundations, methodological approaches, sampling, and topic areas for e-government research.
--

Use past tense with the methodology for data collection.

Table 9. Past Tense—Methodology

We analyzed ...

“To test the model, we conducted interviews and a survey. Because the model comprises [present tense for models] measured and latent variables, we first conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the latent variables to analyze the sets of items that measure those constructs. Next, we used ordinary least squares multiple regression to analyze the results. We also asked the respondents to identify some information about themselves. We first asked respondents to identify their current role(s) on the board” (emphasis added) (Jewer & McKay, 2012).

Use past tense when explicitly using words and/or phrases that indicate they happened in the past, such as when someone coined a term or for what interviewees said.

Table 10. Past Tense—Past Phrases

In 1990, Smith (1990) coined the term...

One interview said: “something here”.
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1.2.4 Other Tense Points

When discussing your paper in the introduction and conclusion, take care to not to use the future tense (introduction) or the past tense (conclusion). Use past tense in the conclusion only when discussing what you **did** in the course of conducting your study. See Table 11 for examples.

Table 11. Tense in Introductions and Conclusions

Incorrect: (introduction):	In Section 1, we will summarize ... After that, we will analyze ...
Incorrect: (conclusion):	In Section 1, we summarized ... After that, we analyzed ... In Table 1, we analyzed ...
Correct: (introduction and conclusion):	In Section 1, we summarize ... In Table 1, we analyze ...

2 Quotes

All direct quotes require a page reference unless the source document does not contain them.

2.1 Quote Format

All quotes use double quotation marks in the first instance.

Table 12. Quotes

“Remember to use double quotation marks for quotes” (LeBrocq, 2012, p. 10).
While “quotations are fun” (Adam, 2011, p. 1), they can cause problems.

For quotes in quotes, use single quotation marks.

Table 13. Quotes in Quotes

“Adam introduced the term ‘quotes’ in his seminal 2012 work” (LeBrocq, 2012, p. 10).
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2.2 Indented Quotes

Indented quotes are longer than 40 words or more. Do not indent quotes under 40 words. Either dependent or independent information must introduce indented quotes (i.e., don’t include a quote without explaining why you have done so). In either case, begin the indented quote with a capital letter. The punctuation for each differs. Dependent sentence fragments should use a colon; independent sentence fragments should use a period. Do not italicize the citation at the end of an indented quotation. Also, note the punctuation.

2.2.1 Dependent Quote

John Simmons said that they:

Carried out the pilot test in two phases. In the first phase, five academics with significant expertise in the area of KM reviewed the four knowledge sourcing types and origins and six items that measured firm performance. Based on their comments, we carefully modified items for knowledge sourcing types and removed one item from firm performance. In the second phase, we collected data from 32 firms that had implemented enterprise-wide KM initiatives, and then checked the reliability and validity of the firm performance items. (Sim, 2005, p. 5)

2.2.2 Independent Quote

John Simmons thought that this was incorrect. He explains his approach in his paper on KM:

We carried out the pilot test in two phases. In the first phase, five academics with significant expertise in the area of KM reviewed the four knowledge sourcing types and origins and six items that measured firm performance. Based on their comments, we carefully modified items for knowledge sourcing types and removed one item from firm performance. In the second phase,

we collected data from 32 firms that had implemented enterprise-wide KM initiatives, and then checked the reliability and validity of the firm performance items. (p. 5)

2.3 Other Quote Points

Quote marks should always appear before a period. While we realize many authors will be more familiar with the reverse of the example below, *CAIS* uses the final period to clearly demarcate the end of a sentence.

Table 14. Quote Marks and Periods

"I am an example of where to put a period at the end of a quote".

Similarly, commas and other marks (such as footnotes) should always occur outside of quotation marks (not in them) and occur before the period.

Table 15. Quote Marks and Commas

Correct:	I am introducing the words "xylo", "oxy", and "cthulu".
Incorrect:	I am introducing the words "xylo," "oxy," and "cthulu."

One exception to this rule is parenthetical statements that are their own sentence. (This sentence exemplifies the exception.)

Table 16 notes how to punctuate more complicated sentences.

Table 16. Complex Punctuation

In his paper, Adam (2011, p. 1) states that "authors should carefully tend to their writing. They might not always enjoy it, though."

In his paper, Adam (2011, p. 1) states that "authors should carefully tend to their writing. Why do they 'struggle'?"

3 Common Stylistic Issues

3.1 Equivocation

Equivocation is an entrenched style in academic writing, and authors typically equivocate in introductions and conclusions.

Table 17. Equivocation Example

This study aims to explore the role of meta-ethics in information systems.

This sentence leaves it unclear as to whether the author actually explores the role of meta-ethics in information systems or not, which is not appropriate for an academic paper. Journals accept academic papers for publication because it does something (e.g., adds knowledge) and not because it *might* do something.

Thus, if you explore meta-ethics in information systems, simply say that (e.g., "In this paper, I explore the role of meta-ethics in information systems").

3.2 That and Which

CAIS upholds a distinction between "that" and "which". That is, the two words are not synonymous and should not be used interchangeably. Choosing to use either that or which depends on whether the information they introduce is "essential" or "nonessential" (i.e., necessary to the meaning of the sentence or not). Essential elements do not use punctuation to offset them; nonessential elements do.

3.2.1 Essential

In Table 18, one cannot omit the bold element or place it between commas “without leaving the meaning of ... [the company] too general” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 449). This sentence refers to a specific company that is located in Oklahoma (i.e., it is the company in Oklahoma that has twelve employees, not the one in New York). Thus, the bold element uses “that” and has no punctuation.

Table 18. Essential

The company that is located in Oklahoma has twelve employees.
--

3.2.2 Nonessential

In Table 19, the bold element is not essential to the meaning of the sentence and so must use “which” and commas. That is, “it does not limit the word to a particular individual or group” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 449). This sentence refers to the company with twelve employees (the reader knows what company the speaker means). The fact that it is located in Oklahoma may be useful information, but one understands what company the speaker means regardless of the fact that it is in Oklahoma.

Table 19. Nonessential

The company, which is located in Oklahoma , has twelve employees.
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3.3 Use and Utilize

“Use” and “utilize” are the two most commonly confused words in manuscripts submitted to *CAIS*. Importantly, “*utilize* is not an elegant variation of the word *use*” (Cheney, 1983, p. 232). Most commonly, authors use “utilize” when they simply mean “use”. Utilize is not a more academic word.

Various sources provide alternate meanings for “utilize”, which include “to make do with something not normally used for the purpose” (Cheney, 1983, p. 232) (e.g., you **utilize** a fork when a screwdriver isn’t around to **use**) or to “make good/effective use of” (“Utilize”, 2012) (this second meaning is common in scientific writing; for example, “Vitamin C helps your body **utilize** the iron present in your diet” (“Utilize”, 2012)). Thus, unless you are aware of and explicitly mean to use “utilize”, use “use” exclusively.

Table 20. Use and Utilize

Correct:	The study considered the individual’s use of the information system
Incorrect:	The study considered the individual’s utilization of the information system.
Correct:	In this study, we use the technology acceptance model to analyze individuals’ behavior.
Incorrect:	In this study, we utilize the technology acceptance model to analyze individuals’ behavior.

3.4 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

“A modifier is **misplaced** if readers can’t easily relate it to the word it modifies. Readers tend to link a modifying word, phrase, or clause to the nearest word it could modify: *I saw a **man** in a **green hat***” (emphasis in original) (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 381). Table 21 illustrates common forms of misplaced and dangling modifiers in manuscripts submitted to *CAIS*.

Table 21. Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Incorrect:	The vandalism was visible passing the building.
Correct:	Passing the building, I noticed that the vandalism was visible.
Incorrect:	We describe information systems in this manner to better understand how they influence organizations, including management information systems and decision support systems.
Correct:	We describe information systems, including management information systems and decision support systems, to better understand how they influence organizations.
Incorrect:	The report was controversial, and some distinguished computer scientists demanded that it be withdrawn, arguing that attention to applications would weaken the field’s focus on basic research.
Correct:	The report was controversial, and some distinguished computer scientists , arguing that attention to applications would weaken the field’s focus on basic research, demanded that it be withdrawn.

3.4.1 Limiting Modifiers

“Limiting modifiers include *almost, even, exactly, hardly, just, merely, nearly, only, scarcely, and simply*. In speech, these modifiers often occur before the verb, regardless of the words they are intended to modify. In writing, however, these modifiers should fall immediately before the word or word group they modify to avoid any ambiguity” (emphasis in original) (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 383).

Table 22. Limiting Modifiers (Adapted from Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 383)

Unclear:	She only found that fossil on her last dig.
Clear:	She found only that fossil on her last dig.
Clear	She found that fossil only on her last dig .

Table 23. Limiting Modifiers

Sentence	Meaning
He is the only one I like.	Out of everyone, I only like him.
He is the one only I like.	I like him, but nobody else likes him.

3.5 Ofness and Andness

Sentences that use excessive “ofs” and/or “ands” should be avoided because they hinder readability. Table 23 illustrates a sentence and a modified version that is easier to read. Sentences with too many ofs also tend to contain nominalizations, which authors should avoid (see Section 4.10).

Table 24. Ofness and Andness

Harder to understand:	It might be employed in several ways—for instance, evaluation of the capabilities of an enterprise system or formulation of queries on data warehouses.
Easier to understand:	It might be employed in a number of ways – for instance, to evaluate an enterprise system’s capabilities or to formulate queries on data warehouses.

3.6 Because and As

Use “because”, not “as”, when you mean the former. While “as” can and does have the same meaning as “because”, “because” is easier to understand because it only has one meaning, whereas “as” has both temporal and cause meanings. Table 25 illustrates the problem, and Table 26 illustrates usage.

Table 25. Because and As

He went to the shop as he cried.	This sentence could mean that he went to the shop while crying or that he went to the shop because he cried. In more complex sentences, one often cannot distinguish which usage the author means.
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Table 26. Because and As

Use:	The framework will be of use to practitioners because it provides a systematic way to understand how and why business benefits have or have not been achieved.
Do not use:	The framework will be of use to practitioners as it provides a systematic way to understand and explain how and why business benefits have or have not been achieved.

Note that a comma should not occur directly before because in these types of sentences (e.g., with the “because” clause at the end of the sentence).

Table 27. Because and As

Correct:	It is reasonable to assume that responders knew this because 79 percent answered...
Incorrect:	It is reasonable to assume that responders knew this, as 79 percent answered...

If / whether / because fragments (i.e., “because of that”, “whether he knew or not”, “if this is the case”) are generally only separated from the sentence with a comma when they appear at the beginning or middle of the sentence.

Table 28. Because and As

Correct:	Because 79 percent answered, it is reasonable to assume that responders knew that...
Incorrect:	Because 79 percent answered it is reasonable to assume that responders knew that...

3.7 Possessives

Authors should use an apostrophe to create possessives with words that end in an “s”. Do not use “s” in these situations.

Table 29. Possessives

Correct:	<i>The New York Times</i> ’ John Slatter states that this isn’t the case.
Incorrect:	<i>The New York Times</i> ’s John Slatter states that this isn’t the case.
Correct:	Stavros’ (2008) “knowledge management” idea is...
Incorrect:	Stavros’s (2008) “knowledge management” idea is...

3.8 Acronyms

Take care that you pluralize any acronyms correctly. One common mistake is, for example, to use “DSS” for “decision support systems” and “decision support system” in the same paper. This is incorrect. If a paper discusses both decision support **systems** and an individual decision support **system**, then the acronyms must be distinguished (i.e., DSSs for the former, and DSS for the latter).

Another example is “knowledge management systems”. If a paper discusses only knowledge management systems (in the plural), then it can use “KMS” exclusively. If, however, a paper discusses both knowledge management systems **and** an individual knowledge management system, it should use both KMSs and KMS where appropriate.

3.9 Compound Modifiers

“When two or more words serve together as a single modifier before a noun, a hyphen or hyphens form the modifying words clearly into a unit” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 565).

Table 30. Compound Modifiers (Adapted from Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 565)

She is a well-known actor .
The conclusions are based on out-of-date statistics .
Some Spanish-speaking students work as translators.

Note, however, that *-ly* adverbs do not need a hyphen.

Table 31. Compound Modifiers (Adapted from Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 566)

They are clearly defined terms .
That is a swiftly moving train .

Also note that, when a “compound adjective follows a noun, hyphens are unnecessary” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 566). Many authors continue to hyphenate these words when they do not need to.

Table 32. Compound Modifiers (Adapted from Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 566)

The actor is well known .
The statistics were out of date .
Many students are Spanish speaking .

3.10 Ellipses

Use an ellipsis (“...” with no spaces) to omit information from the middle of a sentence in a quote. When omitting information from a quote with more than one sentence, add a period after the ellipsis when the period finishes a sentence (which keeps with our rule that a period must always end a sentence: “He thought it was silly.... Still, I like that.”). Do not use ellipses at the beginning or end of a quote—they are unnecessary.

Table 33. Ellipses

Correct:	LeBrocq (2002) said that “referencing...differs from field to field”.
Correct:	LeBrocq (2012) states that “this isn’t the case.... We must stay resolute”.
Incorrect:	LeBrocq (2012 states that “...this isn’t the case”.
Incorrect:	LeBrocq (2012 states that “We must stay resolute...”.

3.11 Sexist Language

While many publications agree that sexist language is inappropriate, they differ in their approach to eliminate it. One particular area of controversy concerns “their” and “they” in a singular usage. CAIS’s style is to use “they”, “their”, and so on in their singular usage **except when it introduces awkwardness**. That is, do not use **he/she, s/he, he or she** or other similar constructions to refer to both men and women, subjects of indeterminate sex, or humankind in general. Table 27 illustrates this.

Table 34. Sexist Language

Incorrect:	A good child never crosses his parents
Correct:	A good child never crosses their parents
Correct:	Good children never cross their parents.

Feel free to recast sentences that you feel are awkward as a result of using “they” in a singular usage. Typically, doing so requires changing the sentence’s subject to the plural case (see third example in Table 34). Using “one” is also acceptable. Also, “avoid using man or words that contain man to refer to all human beings” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 531). Table 35 lists alternatives.

Table 35. Sexist Terms (Adapted from Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 531)

Sexist	Non-sexist
Businessman	Businessperson
Chairman	Chair, chairperson
Mankind	Humankind, humanity, people
Salesman	Salesperson

3.12 Emphasis

Please use minimal emphasis. When doing so, use italics or bold—either is fine, but be consistent. When emphasizing details in quotes, please add “(emphasis added)” at the end before the citation to indicate that. If a quote originally has the emphasis, then use “(emphasis in original)”.

4 Other CAIS Style Points

This section lists some other points in alphabetical order.

4.1 Abbreviations

Always spell out abbreviations when first using them.

Table 36. Abbreviations

First mention of term:	The information systems (IS) discipline focuses on computers.
Subsequent mentions:	One can ask what exactly the relevance is of normative issues, ethics, and morality for the IS discipline.

CAIS does not require periods between each letter in an abbreviation (U.S.A., U.K., etc). The only exception to this is when the abbreviation serves as a prefix; for example, “The U.S. Government”.

4.2 Capitalization

Capitalize “Appendix”, “Section”, “Table”, and “Figure” when referring to a specific section / item (e.g., Figure 1, Function 1). Don’t use brackets around the figure: “Figure (1)”. Instead, use “Figure 1”.

Do not capitalize models, theories, laws, or statistical procedures in the text. Exceptions to this include those models, theories, laws, and so on that include a proper name.

Do not capitalize field/discipline names (e.g., use “information systems”, “neuroIS”, “accounting” over their capitalized forms).

Table 37. Models, Theories, Laws, and Hypotheses

Incorrect	Correct
Partial Least Squares (PLS)	partial least squares (PLS)
Self-Determination Theory	self-determination theory (SDT)
Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	structural equation modeling (SEM)
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	technology acceptance model (TAM)
chronbach’s alpha	Chronbach’s alpha

4.3 Commas

CAIS uses the serial, or Oxford, comma. That is, in a series (three or more items), a comma should separate each item (see Table 38).

Table 38. Serial Comma

Correct:	The cat hates turnips, lettuce, and rice.
Incorrect:	The cat hates turnips, lettuce and rice.

Also, take care that the commas do not occur inside quotation marks (see Section 2.3).

4.4 Consistency

Do not refer to “the information systems field” on page one and then refer to it as “the information systems discipline” later on without specific cause to do so. That is, choose a term and use it consistently. Changing between different terms when you mean the same thing creates ambiguity. Using two, three, or more terms for the same concept is sometimes referred to as “elegant variation”.

Table 39. Elegant Variation

<p>“The Emperor received yesterday and today General Baron von Beck.... It may therefore be assumed with some confidence that the terms of a feasible solution are maturing themselves in His Majesty’s mind and may form the basis of further negotiations with Hungarian party leaders when the Monarch goes again to Budapest” (Fowler & Fowler, 1908, p. 178).</p>

4.5 Hyphens, En Dashes, and Em Dashes

CAIS uses em dashes—like this—to set off auxiliary information. Do not use a hyphen (-) or en dash (–) for this purpose—they are not the same size. To insert an em dash, hold alt and type 0151 on your number pad or use your software’s “insert symbol” command.

Please use a hyphen (-) to indicate “to” instead of an en dash (–) (such as in pages (77-80) or date ranges (January-February)).

4.6 Footnotes

The superscript number that denotes a footnote should occur periods but after other punctuation such as quotation marks. In the actual footnote, the footnote numbers and text should be 8pt Arial. The number should be in superscript. CAIS does not use endnotes.

Table 40. Footnotes

I went to the shop ¹ , but the “cat was gone” ² .
However, what information systems includes is a debated subject ¹ .

4.7 I.e., E.g., and Etc.

Do not use “e.g.,” “i.e.,” or “etc.” outside of parentheses. Instead, spell the terms out: “for example,” “that is,” and “and so on”. A comma should follow every instance of “e.g.” or “i.e.” in parentheses (e.g., like this). Further, “etc.” should always have a period with it.

4.8 It is/ There are

Where possible, avoid beginning sentences with “it is” and “there are”. One can often more clearly express a sentence with its proper subject.

Table 41. It is / There are

Say:	One can often more clearly express a sentence with its proper subject.
Don't say:	It is often clearer to express a sentence with its proper subject.
Say:	Also, several other reports, such as the Interactive Advertising Bureau's (IAB) annual report, call it a display ad.
Don't say:	It is also called a display ad in several other reports such as the Interactive Advertising Bureau's (IAB) annual report.
Say:	No single stream of reasoning can fully explain why organizations choose to outsource their IS functions.
Don't say:	There is no single stream of reasoning that can fully explain why organizations choose to outsource their IS functions.

4.9 Key Terms

Introduce key terms, words, and phrases with quote marks. Thereafter, do not distinguish them in any way.

Table 42. Key Terms

In this study, we focus on whether “hybrid systems” affect how a person interprets the world around them. Hybrid systems are...

4.10 Nominalizations

Nominalizations (itself a nominalization) are nouns formed from verbs, adjectives, or adverbs. They usually result in longer sentences that are harder to understand.

Table 43. Nominalizations

Sentence with unnecessary nominalizations:	It might be employed in a number of ways – for instance, in the evaluation of the capabilities of an enterprise system or in the formulation of queries on data warehouses.
Sentence without nominalizations:	It might be employed in a number of ways – for instance, to evaluate an enterprise system’s capabilities or to formulate queries on data warehouses.
Sentence with unnecessary nominalizations:	Perceptions of organizational climate guide individuals’ interpretation of events, prediction of possible outcomes, and judgments of the appropriateness of their subsequent actions.
Sentence without nominalizations:	The way in which individuals perceive their organizational climate guides how they interpret events, predict possible outcomes, and judge the appropriateness of their subsequent actions.

Note that, in some cases, one must use nominalizations, such as with “information”. Changing this word to “inform” would not mean the same thing. (See also Section 3.5).

4.11 Numbers

Please use numerals for numbers over 10 (including 10) except if they begin a sentence (in which case, spell them out). For example, note what is spelled out in this sentence with five, 20, and 100. Twenty, however, starts this sentence, so it is spelled out.

Please use numerals for data analysis results regardless of whether they are over or under 10 or where they appear in a sentence (when such an analysis result starts a sentence, we ask authors to recast the sentence to avoid the awkwardness).

4.11.1 Percent

In the main text, use “percent”, not “per cent” or “%”. In parentheses, tables, figures, use “%”.

4.12 Parallelism

“Parallelism gives similar grammatical form to sentence elements that have similar function or importance” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 420). Parallelism improves readability and makes sentences easier to understand. Table 43 illustrates common problems and how to fix them. Due to the frequency with which we see this error, we strongly recommend authors check for this problem before submitting their paper to *CAIS*.

Table 44. Parallelism

Correct:	First , we define “information systems”. Second , we review the literature. Third , we present our methodology.
Correct:	Firstly , we define “information systems”. Secondly , we review the literature. Thirdly , we present our methodology.
Incorrect:	First , we define “information systems”. Secondly , we review the literature. Thirdly , we present our methodology.
Correct:	“Three reasons why steel companies kept losing were inefficient plants, high labor costs, and increasing foreign competition ” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 421).
Incorrect:	“Three reasons why steel companies kept losing money were that their plants were inefficient, high labor costs, and foreign competition was increasing ” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 421).
Correct:	“Given training, workers can acquire the skills for and interest in other jobs” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 421).
Incorrect:	“Given training, workers can acquire the skills and interest in other jobs [Skills and interest require different prepositions, so both must be stated]” (Fowler & Aaron, 2012, p. 421).

4.12.1 Not Only...But Also

The “not only...but also” sentence structure is common in academic writing. Unfortunately, authors often incorrectly use it. Table 45 illustrates common incorrect and correct usages for this grammatical structure.

Table 45. Not Only...But Also

Incorrect:	Information systems scholars analyze not only information but also study computer systems.
Correct:	Information systems scholars not only analyze information but also study computer systems [they analyze information and study computer systems] .
Correct:	Information systems scholars analyze not only information but also computer systems [they analyze both information and computer systems] .

4.13 Spelling

CAIS uses American spelling.

Table 46. Spelling

organization	emphasize	realize	analyze
italicize	symbolize	recognize	capitalization
summarize	color	personalize	behavior

4.14 Very

Avoid using meaningless intensifiers such as “very”. They are hyperbolic and unnecessary. For example, consider the following sentence: “The motivation theory should be very useful for studying system-use behavior for several reasons”. The “very” here adds nothing to the sentence. Thus, remove it: “The motivation theory should be useful for studying system-use behavior for several reasons”. However, “very” is acceptable when introducing defined gradients (i.e., “very bad, bad, mediocre, good, very good”).

4.15 Vagueness

CAIS does not accept vague language; be specific and concrete wherever possible. Doing so will help readers to comprehend your paper.

Additionally, one can better explain words such as “several”, “a few”, and so on with the precise number. If you make three contributions, say “three” instead of “several”.

One repeated error papers make concern the word “this”. Please **always** clearly follow “this” with what ‘this’ actually is: don’t say “**we test this**”. Instead, say “**we test this relationship**”. When one does not clarify what ‘this’ is, the reader has to then determine what it refers to, which can be difficult when a paper discusses several ideas. As such, it’s always clearer to explicitly state what “this” is.

Table 47. Vagueness

Specific:	In Section 1 , we review the literature. In Section 2 , we explore information systems. In Section 3 , we present the findings. In Section 4 , we discuss contributions to knowledge.
Vague:	In Section 1, we review the literature. Next , we describe our methodology. After that , we present the findings. Following that , we discuss contributions to knowledge.
Specific:	The paper concludes by illustrating how increased emphasis on normative issues enhances IS practice and research, deepens empirical insights on technology use, and improves the IS discipline’s ethical status.
Vague:	The paper concludes by suggesting how such work further s information systems.

5 Preferred Word List

Table 48. Preferred Words

Use	Don't use	Why?
contemporary	modern	Modern refers to a period before the 20th century, not to the current time.
20th century	20 th Century / 20th Century / twentieth century / etc.	CAIS style
use	utilize / utilization.	See Section 3.3.
enquiry	inquiry	Usage of “enquiry” or “inquiry” depends on the desired meaning: use enquiry when you mean to suggest the general notion of “asking”; use “inquiry” when you mean to refer to a more serious investigation (e.g., the police inquiry into John’s death).
percent	per cent	CAIS style
coordination	co-ordination	CAIS style
ecommerce	e-commerce	CAIS style
email	e-mail	CAIS style
website / webpage	web site / site / web page / Web Site / Website	CAIS style
paper	article	When referring to one’s own paper, use “paper” instead of “article” or other terms. Use article when referring to newspaper articles.
such as	like	Do not use “like” when giving examples; use “such as”. Use like when you mean that something is <i>similar</i> . Right: I like things such as cats and dogs. Wrong: I like things like cats and dogs. But: I hate cats like George’s cat (cats similar to George’s cat).
Within	in	“Within” is a pompous form of “in”. In usually suffices.
Internet	internet	CAIS style
comprises / includes	Consists of	Do not use “consists of”—use includes or comprises. Comprises is exhaustive (“The list comprises milk, salt, and butter” – there is nothing else on the list). Includes is not exhaustive (there may be other things on the list).

6 Referencing

All references should follow the American Psychological Association (2010) guide. This section contains examples for all types of referencing. Note that this style does not capitalize every word in a text’s title. In references, only the initial word and proper nouns should be capitalized. The only exception to this rule is with sources cited in conference proceedings. In these cases, the conference’s name should be fully capitalized. The following section provides examples for common reference types. The only major difference between APA and CAIS style is that CAIS does not use digital object identifiers (DOIs).

6.1 Examples

6.1.1 Journal Papers¹

Burton-Jones, A., & Straub, D. W., Jr. (2006). Reconceptualizing system usage: An approach and empirical test. *Information Systems Research*, 17(3), 228-246.

6.1.2 Magazine Articles

¹ Note the position of “Jr.” in this reference.

Ackerman, B. (2007). The perfect blend. *Consumer Goods Technology Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://consumergoods.edgl.com/media/publicationsarticle/art-mar07-6.pdf>

6.1.3 Books

Hare, R. M. (1981). *Moral thinking: Its levels, method, and point*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

6.1.4 Chapters / Sections in Books

Keren, G. (1990). Cognitive aids and debiasing methods: Can cognitive pills cure cognitive ills? In J. Caverni, J. Fabre, & M. Gonzalez (Eds.), *Cognitive biases* (pp. 523-555). Amsterdam, North Holland: Elsevier.

6.1.5 Conference Proceedings

Adams, C. (2001). Persuasion as education. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Information Systems²*.

Jones, D., & Gregor, S. (2006). *The formulation of an information systems design theory for e-learning*. Paper presented at the First International Conference on Design Science Research in Information Systems and Technology, Claremont, CA.

6.1.6 Working Papers

Acha, V. (2004). *Technology frames: The art of perspective and interpretation in strategy* (SPRU Electronic Working Paper No. 109). Brighton: University of Sussex.

6.1.7 Wikipedia References

When sourcing information from Wikipedia, use the following format:

Title of entry. (Year). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from www.URL.com

Make sure that there that there is no period after the URL. For example:

Abductive reasoning. (2010). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abductive_reasoning

When citing Wikipedia articles in text, use the format ("page title", year). For example: ("Abductive reasoning", 2010). Because Internet sources typically have no page numbers, these citations do not need them.

6.2 In-text Citations

CAIS follows APA's author-date system. This section clarifies common errors.

6.2.1 Ampersand

Use the ampersand (&) in all citations with two or more authors; do not use "and". However, when you explicitly refer to authors as part of a sentence (i.e., "Cayle and Rogers (2008) find that this isn't the case..."), use "and". When you first cite a text with three to five authors, include all their names in the citation (i.e., Cayle, Rogers, George, & Smith, 2008). After this first instance, use the first author's name and "et al." (Cayle et al., year). If the text has six or more authors, use the "et al." version exclusively.

7 Conclusion

Following these guidelines will ensure that your paper is better understood in the review process and, should it be accepted, published as quickly as possible. If you are unsure of any point in this style guide before submitting your paper or if you have any questions, please feel free to contact Adam LeBrocq, AIS Copyeditor, at copyeditor@aisnet.org. We look forward to seeing your best work submitted to CAIS.

² Note that we prefer a more simply style for papers in proceedings: given their nature, one cannot often easily find whether they have editors or publish locations (many do not provide such information). Thus, the paper's title and what proceedings it appears in is enough.

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