

Preface

This sample edit is here to show you what we actually *do* with your words—so you know it’s not just smoke, mirrors, and a red pen addiction. You’ll find two documents included:

- **The Sample**
- **The Style Sheet**

1. The Sample

The sample is taken from one of the short stories in *Del Plazo: The Island Chronicles, Volume II*. It’s four pages long—long enough for you to see how we tinker under the bonnet, but short enough that you won’t need a strong pot of tea and three hours to get through it. The story continues in the full anthology, but here it’s just a demonstration piece, not a cliffhanger.

2. The Style Sheet

At the end of the sample you’ll find the style sheet: the unsung hero of editing. While we work, we jot down everything worth remembering—character names, odd details, world-building quirks, and all the fiddly bits that would otherwise trip us (and you) up later. Think of it as your manuscript’s sat-nav: it stops us from driving your story straight into a plot-hole ditch.

It also covers the rules we’ve set for punctuation, capitalisation, spellings, and other thrilling matters of consistency. At the end, you’ll spot a commentary section, which explains why certain edits were made. This keeps the main document looking tidy and prevents it from resembling a battlefield of floating comment bubbles.

3. Formatting & Tracked Changes

When you send us your manuscript, we’ll tweak the formatting so there’s a bit more breathing space between lines. This makes it easier for you to see comments and edits, and it helps us catch sneaky mistakes that might otherwise slip through.

Now, if your sample looks like a massacre of red ink and baffling squiggles, don’t panic. We’ve got a handy guide to Tracked Changes on our website. It shows you how to view the edit as if every change has been accepted, and even how to compare the two versions side by side—like a satisfying before-and-after reveal, but with fewer dodgy makeover montages.

Every writer prefers feedback in different forms—some like direct comments, others prefer something neat and organised. This is our way of keeping things sharp and fuss-free. If you’re curious about style sheets (and who wouldn’t be?), there’s more detail waiting for you on our website.

Kaleidoscope

Renee Schnebelin

I walked alone through the forests of Flinn, the snow had just started to fall. I watched as each flake gently landed on a leaf or blade of grass. The snowflakes were perfectly formed: ~~as they fell,~~ they all had six arms, with an intricately detailed web of ice crystals. Each flake was unique, and I began to wonder how this was possible. ~~Something that I did quite often,~~ ~~think~~ about how things came to be.

I was told ~~that when I was born~~ the wet nurse fainted after looking into my eyes ~~when I was born~~. They were unlike ~~any eyes anyone had~~ ~~anything she'd ever~~ encountered, just like a kaleidoscope, the colours ~~were~~ webbed together to form a symmetrical geometric design.

~~That was before the Great Battle, and even before~~ ~~Before~~ the Great Divide, ~~w~~ We lived in a small town ~~just outside~~ of Plazo. Mum kept me hidden away from prying eyes, afraid ~~that~~ I would be taken to a test lab, ~~and she was probably right,~~ so I never ~~really~~ got to see nature and all of its glory until after the Great Divide. Sadly, Mum and Pa didn't survive, they had been ~~out~~ at the market when the first storm rolled in. I was tucked away in our cellar, oblivious to what was happening outside. I only came out after the rumbling ~~had~~ finally ceased and Mum and Pa hadn't come to fetch me.

Walking outside for the first time in years was frightening. All of Del Plazo had been torn asunder. Our little hut, now a pile of rubble. Trees were felled, the land ripped apart. I was ~~just~~ a wee lad and didn't know what to do, ~~so~~ I walked until I found a home that hadn't been swept away. Its prior inhabitants never returned, so I made do and learned how to take care of myself. At the time, I didn't know my future would take me ~~off of~~ away from Plazo and on an adventure.

Commented [r1]: I enjoy the imagery this opening line brings

Commented [r2]: Suggest to remove this line

Commented [r3]: See Commentary (Filler Words) Slight restructure to improve sentence flow.

Commented [r4]: Suggested restructure for sentence flow

Commented [r5]: See (Filler Words) Sentence reads a little clunky, so I suggest a slight altering of words to improve this. Removed repeated use of 'eyes' in short succession.

Commented [r6]: Is the Great Battle relevant yet? It is referenced later at a more important part of the story.

Commented [r7]: Perhaps use: 'on the outskirts' as a stronger phrasing instead of using filler word.

Commented [r8]: This filler word has remained as it works better with the use of 'wee lad' in this context.

Commented [r9]: See (Alliteration) Off, Of, On

26 As the years went by, I made a few friends, all of whom were special like me. Laine, Fez,
27 and Taina had all been separated from their families after the Great Divide. Magick at the time
28 was forbidden by the Aardsmen, so we had to be careful. After a few years of hiding, the four
29 of us decided to leave Plazo for good. Lanie had family on Flinn, and they had sent her a bird,
30 inviting her to their Sanfomar celebration. She suggested that we all go... that was seven years
31 ago. We never looked back. Life on Flinn was quiet and peaceful.

Commented [r10]: Should this be Lanie?

32 We had heard about the Great Battle and celebrated the win. At the time it felt like the
33 world would finally be at peace, but then I began to see them. At first, I just thought it was my
34 eyes seeing the wind as it rippled through the air—a Almost like a mirage in the desert—but
35 unlike a mirage this ripple didn't disappear as I approached it. It seemed to get bigger, almost
36 as if I could step right into it. I wasn't brave enough to do that just yet and definitely not on my
37 own.

Commented [r11]: Inserted comma

Commented [r12]: Improved sentence structure with the use of em dashes here.

38 I had'd heard some rumours about portals to other dimensions and perhaps even other
39 worlds, but never believed them to be true. Yet, here I was, staring at what appeared to be an
40 opening to something wonderful. The colours swirling around were various shades of blue and
41 purple. Tomorrow, I planned on bringing Lanie, Taina and Fez back here with me to show
42 them, to see if they could see it too. I backed away from the swirling vortex and then walked
43 home.

Commented [r13]: Improved sentence flow

Commented [r14]: Inserted comma

Commented [r15]: Perhaps switch words around to swirling colours

Commented [r16]: The use of 'bringing' nullifies these words

Commented [r17]: See (Repeated Words)

45 I woke everyone at first light. There was a lot plenty of grumbling about how early it was, but
46 I knew that if we were to enter this portal, we would need to do it while everyone else was still
47 asleep. We couldn't have anyone following us to the unknown. I wasn't even sure if we should
48 go through, but the pull was strong, and I just had to know what was on the other side.

Commented [r18]: Perhaps use a stronger word here like plenty?

Commented [r19]: Inserted comma

Commented [r20]: While this phrasing works, consider changing to: it had to be

49 As we approached the location I moved to the side and looked at their faces. No one
50 seemed to understand what they were supposed to be looking at.

51 “None of you can see it, can you?” I asked, ~~as I pointed~~ pointing to the ~~location of the~~
52 ~~swirling~~ vortex. It sat in between two large frumberry bushes.

Commented [r21]: Improved flow and structure

53 “I can’t see anything off,” Taina said.

54 “Do you trust me?” I asked.

55 “Of ~~course,~~ we do,” Fez responded.

Commented [r22]: Removed comma (see commentary)

56 Taina and Lanie both nodded, ~~in response.~~

Commented [r23]: See (Repeated words)

57 I grabbed Taina’s hand. “Now, everyone hold hands,” I instructed, ~~almost~~ feeling foolish.

Commented [r24]: Inserted comma

58 *What if this wasn’t actually a portal?* Without a second thought I stepped forward and into the

59 ~~swirling~~ vortex. ~~The effects were immediately felt as we were sucked in.~~ A kaleidoscope of

Commented [r25]: Consider changing to: *I felt the effects immediately as we were sucked in*

60 colours swirled all around us as we floated through the tunnel. I began to panic ~~a bit after not~~

61 ~~seeing~~ an exit. Taina had a tight grip on my hand as we were forced out of the tunnel and onto

Commented [r26]: Consider: *when I couldn’t see an exit*

62 solid ground.

63 We were surrounded by lush green grasses and hearty brushlands. ~~In the distance dense a~~

64 ~~dense forest could be seen.~~ I didn’t know where we had landed, ~~all I knew was that~~ but it was

Commented [r27]: Tense is off here – see commentary

65 beautiful and filled with unimaginable colours.

Commented [r28]: If you’d like to reduce word count, sometimes one word works better than five, as is the case here.

66 “Where are we?” Taina asked, gripping ~~my hand tighter.~~

Commented [r29]: See (Repeated Words and Commentary)

67 “I don’t know. It’s ~~beautiful~~ though,” I said as I turned around to make sure the portal was

Commented [r30]: See (Repeated Words and Commentary) Consider synonym here

68 ~~still available~~ ~~there and.~~ ~~I~~ thankfully it was.

Commented [r31]: I feel that available isn’t the right fit for this sentence and Tuck would be more concerned it was *there* rather than available (they don’t know how it works properly yet to know about availability etc.)

69 “Do you think it’s safe?” Fez asked.

70 “I don’t know... I’ve never been here.” It was probably foolish of me to bring everyone

71 through. *What if it wasn’t safe here?*

72 “Let’s look around. I think I see something on top of that hill,” Lanie said.

73 “I don’t know if we should go exploring ~~just~~ yet. I just wanted to know if the portal

74 worked.” I had the urge to go back through and home to Flinn. Thinking ~~that~~ it may have been

75 a huge mistake, ~~coming through~~. “We need to go back and do some research before we begin
76 to explore.”

77 “Come on, just a little walk and then we go back,” Lanie insisted.

78 “I’m with Tuck, we should go back and do some research. Playing around with portals ~~can~~
79 ~~be~~ dangerous. Plus, we don’t want to accidentally bring back a plague,” Fez said as he ~~grabbed~~
80 my hand.

81 “Fine, but we’re going to come back. There something about this place that’s electrifying,”

82 Lanie said as she ~~grabbed~~ Fez’s ~~other~~ hand.

83 “Ready to go home?” I asked Taina as I ~~grabbed~~ her ~~hand~~.

84 Before Taina could respond, I stepped into the ~~swirling~~ vortex and felt the pull. Just like
85 our first trip the colours swirled all around us as we floated through the tunnel and hopefully
86 safely back to Flinn.

87

88

Commented [r32]: See (Repeated Words)

Commented [r33]: See Commentary

Commented [r34]: Inserted for clarity

Commented [r35]: See Commentary

Commented [r36]: Inserted comma

Style Sheet for Kaleidoscope by Renee Schnebelin

References

Style guide	Custom Client Style Guide (From previous book)
Dictionary	Oxford English (ISE spellings instead of IZE)

Formatting and Language

Acronyms	No punctuation (FBI and UK rather than F.B.I. and U.K.)
Chapters	Title Centered (BOLD) *** <i>Author (Italics)</i>
Contractions	Preferred in both narrative and dialogue
Indents	First paragraph of chapter or section not indented; all others set to 0.5
Internal thoughts	Italicised
Numbers	Spell out numbers below 100 and spell out above 100 if rounded in hundreds, thousands, etc. Spell out numbers in dialogue except for years or unless awkward Measurements in metric
Profanity	Yes
Section breaks	Three stars (***) with no space in between each, centered with one empty line above and below
Slang/regionalisms	Uses Scottish phrasing occasionally (<i>aye</i>)
Words as words	Use single quotation marks for words as words: He said 'love' like he didn't mean it.

	If there are several words within a short period or the word is used within quotation marks, use italics: “M-W defines <i>justice</i> as...”
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Punctuation

Commas	Oxford/serial comma Commas used only when needed—use a light hand Comma before terminal <i>too</i>, <i>either</i>, <i>though</i> (except short sentences) Comma precedes <i>then</i> when short for <i>and then</i>
Colon	Capitalise first word if followed by a complete sentence or question
Ellipses	Used for trailing speech and thoughts. Three dots (not four) after completed sentence. Ellipsis character (...), not spaced periods Closed with preceding word
Em dashes	Do not retain question mark in question that’s cut off (“How did you—” instead of “How did you—?”) Used for sudden breaks in thought, speech, or sentence structure Unspaced on either side
Hyphens	Colour compounds: hyphen before noun <i>Half</i> compounds: hyphen if adjectives, but not noun or verb forms <i>Like</i> compounds: hyphen if not found in M-W <i>Well</i> compounds: hyphen if before noun or are hyphenated in M-W
Quotation marks	Doubles with nested singles
Semicolons	Used sparingly

Characters

A list of all characters in the story, which can be organised by appearance, alphabetically, or in significant groups (by family, role, etc.). Typically, this list will include each character's full name, pronouns, nicknames, titles, physical descriptions, roles and relationships, personality traits, and anything that's important to track.

If this style sheet covers a series of books, you may want to put the book in which they appear in brackets.

Fez –

Laine/Lanie – has family on Flinn.

Mum –

Tuck (Narrator) – Been on the run for a few years from the Aardsmen.

Pa –

Taina –

Places and landmarks

All geographical places and landmarks mentioned in the story in alphabetical order.

Del Plazo – Once a singular landmass, now split into thirteen islands.

Flinn – One of the islands of Del Plazo. Forests, snow.

Plazo – One of the islands of Del Plazo

World-building Terms

Terms that are unique to the setting, especially common in science fiction and fantasy novels. If the story takes place in the real world, this may not be needed. This section is broken down into various subheadings. Add or remove as needed.

Unique Terms and Phrases

Made up words/insults/curses or concepts. For new words add what the 'real' word means in parentheses e.g. Dodgast (gosh darn). (See Other Languages for additional information)

Great Battle –

Great Divide -

Sanfomar – A celebration, this world's version of Christmas.

Cultures

A list of the main cultures and details about them, like laws, structure, jobs and industries, where they live, etc.

Magic System/Technology

The rules, what it can do, limitations, learning, etc.

Magic Objects/Special Tech

List of properties, descriptions, limitations, etc.

Items of Interest

If an object is mentioned and will be relevant in the story, add it here. This may overlap with magic objects or special tech, but add it to whichever section you feel most relevant.

Portals to other worlds/dimensions. Colours swirl in various shades of blue and purple.

Nature

List of flora and fauna with physical descriptions and anything else relevant about them.

Birds are used for sending messages between islands.

Frumberry – A berry that grows on bushes.

Other Languages

If there are just a few words here and there (real or made up), list them in Unique Terms and Phrases. If there is a whole language system, or use of other real languages (Spanish, French, etc), list them here.

Word List

In alphabetical order, list unique or variant spellings, treatment of compound terms (hyphenated vs. open vs. closed), and special capitalisation.

Aardsman – Antagonistic force in Del Plazo

Aardsmen – plural of Aardsman

Great Divide

Magick – instead of Magic

Mum –

Pa –

Timeline

Keep track of timeline details here, including the year, month, day of the week, and time of day that significant events take place. If the events of the story are linear or the timeline isn't too complex, you might prefer using chapter summaries instead.

Commentary Notes

Line by line breakdown of the edits made in the manuscript where a more detailed explanation is needed. This saves space in the margins.

Alliteration – Use sparingly and try to avoid in short succession.

Filler Words – *I have removed filler words throughout the document as and where deemed fit to improve sentence structure and flow. I have left a few comments on the first instances to raise your attention to them, but for clarity in the margins throughout the rest of the document, I will simply remove them. (That, ever, even, etc.)*

Repeated Words – *Try to avoid repeating the same or similar words (e.g. Responded/Response) in short succession and consider synonyms where possible if you are struggling. Sometimes, the repeated word isn't needed at all if the descriptive word before or after is strong enough.*

5 - While this opening line works well and I enjoy the imagery it brings, a slight restructure could be made: *Snow had just started to fall as I walked alone through the forests of Flinn.* This reworking begins the story with a stronger descriptive word instead of using 'I', which will occur often in a first person story.

6/7 - As we already know the snowflakes are falling (*Line 5*) (and generally speaking, weather phenomena like snow and rain tend to only fall downwards), we can remove the extra words to improve sentence flow. I've also inserted a colon before the listed description of their appearance.

8/9 – I've suggested restructuring this sentence to improve the flow by removing filler words and inserting em dashes.

10/11 – These restructured sentences improve your sentence flow and removes filler words. With the new structure, it also removes the repeated use of 'eyes' as mentioned in the line above.

13 – Starting the sentence with ‘Before’ is stronger than using ‘That’. Also, is the Great Battle needed to be mentioned yet? It could leave readers wondering what it is without a resolution until later in the chapter. I think the first mention of the battle is better suited where it currently is on Line 31. With the removal of the start of the sentence, I have adjusted capitalization.

15-18 – Removed a few filler words here and added some extra punctuation to improve readability and flow.

22 – Slight adjustment to punctuation to separate sentences to improve flow. This removes the use of ‘so’ in short succession as referenced in line 23 below where it works better.

26 – Only instance of the use of Laine, where it should probably be Lanie, but wanted to confirm before the change was made.

40 – Removed ‘around’ as the use of swirling suggests they are moving around already, and flipping the two words works better with the rest of the sentence as it moves on to describing them.

41 – To improve sentence structure and potentially reduce your word count, keep an eye out for the use of repeated descriptors or words that aren’t needed. Similar to the use of the falling snow mentioned at the start of the story(which we know always falls), we know that Tuck plans on bringing his friends with the continuation of the sentence — to see if they could see it too — making the phrase ‘back here with me’ nullified. The reader should be allowed appropriate room to interpret your words in their mind and piece the scene together. I hope this explanation helps? Happy to discuss some more if you like.

42 – Removed swirling as a repeated word, and the use of vortex directly after is a strong enough word (and different to portal) to let the reader envision a swirling mass of colours.

46 – A slight change of phrasing will improve the flow of this sentence and not slow down the reader, it also adds a slight sense of urgency and importance.

51/52 – I’ve suggested the removal and changing of a few words here to improve the flow and structure of this dialogue tag.

55 – When ‘of course’ functions as a simple adverb meaning ‘certainly’ and doesn't require a pause, the comma is often omitted to avoid disrupting the sentence's flow, as in this case.

59 – The restructure of this sentence keeps the POV on Tuck’s feelings instead of slipping into an omniscient phrasing of *everyone* feeling the same effect.

60/61 – Slight restructure here to improve the flow.

63/64 – Rephrase this sentence to correct the slip in tensing: *In the distance I could see a dense forest*. I have also removed the accidental repeat of dense in the wrong place.

66 – We already know Taina has a tight grip on Tuck’s hand from when they left the portal a moment ago, so while this works, maybe it would be stronger imagery for her to let go of Tuck’s hand to look around here?

79 – Earlier in the story, Tuck mentions only rumours of portals, so it is unlikely that Fez knows portals *can* be dangerous here. Consider changing to: *is probably dangerous*. This fits with the more inquisitive nature of his dialogue.

79/82/83 – I’ve highlighted the three uses of ‘grabbed’ here for your attention to the repeated use. My suggestion here is to use synonyms or different words. We also need to consider the structure as the final ‘hand grab’ is important for Tuck to pull Taina through before she can respond. And we also need to consider how you actioned my above comment (Line 66) and if Taina still has hold of Tuck’s hand or not, which would make the final ‘grab’ void and need a different phrasing to work.

