This facsimile of The Star Copy Style sheet is one of the most often-requested pieces of memorabilia relating to the history of The Kansas City Star. This is the document that Ernest Hemingway would have been given during his tenure writing police and emergency-room items at The Star in 1917 and 1918. Hemingway later remarked to a reporter that the admonitions in this style sheet were “the best rules I ever learned in the business of writing.”

This early Star style sheet exists today in two different versions, but neither can be dated definitively. The version reproduced on the reverse of this page is believed to be the one used at the newspaper around 1915. It is likely that Hemingway used either this rule sheet or another very similar version.

This reproduction is the best available copy of the original deteriorated document.
Use short sentences. Use short first paragraphs. Use vigorous English. Be positive, not negative.

The style of local communications is To The Star. Spelling and punctuation are in the style of this form. Salus, Kas. – To The Star:

Charles Wakefield

The community was absent during the day, not to longer live. This is common. Slang to be enjoyable must be fresh.

Don’t say: “He had his leg cut off in an accident.” He wouldn’t have had it done for anything.

Don’t use revolver or pistol, not gun, unless a shot -

Don’t say “as a verb. This wrong use

Eliminate every superfluous word as “Funeral service will be at 2 o’clock Tuesday, not ‘The funeral services will be held at the hour of 2 o’clock Tuesday.” Said he better put in the columns of The Star.

The verb precedes the time: He sold yesterday afternoon. He saw a negro, not a negro saw him. In certain instances, euphony or smoothness may admit a deviation from this rule.

The use of the word also. It usually modifies the word it follows closest. He, also, went.

“None of them is so sorry as myself,” not “none of them are so sorry as myself.”

A man is not arrested for “He was ill during the month of July, not 9:30 o’clock this afternoon or 9:30 o’clock this evening. A broken leg, not a leg broken. It is improper to write “He saw a cripple.”

Try to preserve the atmosphere of the speech in your quotations. For instance in quoting a child, do not let him say “Inadvertently, I picked up the gun” – if you know the number.

“He was” not “He was.”

“He was” not “He was ill.”

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