

INPUT GUIDE

Jean's Pet Peeves

by Jean Sexton

These are the things that annoy me to no end, mistakes that are not simply marked for correction, but which are accompanied by scolding, tsk-tsking, and stern Emails suggesting that you avoid future repetition of the offense. Remember that nothing gets published without crossing the desk of the Vice President of Proofreading and Product Professionalization, and to overly annoy me by refusing to learn how to write properly may mean your submission is sent back to be fixed and could miss the window for publication in a given product.

Arc: *He used his FA firing arc phasers.* "FA" means "forward firing arc" so you just write: *He used his forward firing arc phasers.* Go ahead and spell it out — we don't charge per letter used! If we need to shorten it, we can.

Brick: *I had a brick on my #1 shield.* What are you doing with fired-clay building materials on your favorite shield? If you are discussing your family's heraldic device, then the sentence is a tad odd, but understandable. Neither one of those discussions belongs in a tactics or "Victory at" article.

Capitals: *My Cruiser fired its Phasers, then launched its Drones and Suicide Shuttle.* Would you write: "The Criminal shot his Weapon"? No, you would not, because this sentence is wrong. (Even if you would throw in all those capital letters, you shouldn't.) Just say no to Creeping Capitalization Syndrome and random capitalization. Avoid letting yourself slip into the habit of capitalizing words that "look like they deserve respect". There is a capitalization list on the website. Use it. It may not be perfect, but it's better than taking a guess about what to capitalize. That list is also full of notes about preferred terms and spellings, and lots of other notes. If you plan to write multiple articles over a period of time and become a "known writer", or if you plan to write something seriously big (say, an RPG sourcebook), then you really should take the time to read the entire document. The following are game terms and are capitalized as shown when in tactics articles or scenarios: Outstanding Crews, Legendary Officers, Commander's Option Points, Green Crews, Erratic Maneuvers. They are not capitalized in fiction.

Dashes: Dashes should be used sparingly and do not replace commas, semicolons, or colons. There is never a time when a dash cannot be replaced by another punctuation mark. For example: *"My carrier -- and its escorts -- attacked the force -- which was in the next hex over"* could just as easily be written as *"My carrier along with its escorts attacked the force located one hex north."* Most of the time, if you feel tempted to use a dash, just say no. The only time you should use a dash is to indicate a "dramatic pause" in the sentence, where you are holding the words after the dash as a kind of surprise or double-take.

DirDam: *In the second round, I DirDammed the Scout.* First, "DirDam" sounds rude (and is jargon). Second, unless the ship is the *USS Scout*, capitalizing scout is wrong. The proper sentence is: *I used directed damage to take out the scout.*

HET: *After that, I HETed my ship.* "High Energy Turn" is a noun, NOT a verb. The sentence makes as much sense as "Lamp your cat." (Please note that ADB, Inc. does not suggest trying that at home without parental supervision and a signed consent form from the cat.) Your ship may "use an HET" or "perform an HET" or better yet, "use a High Energy Turn".

Hyphenation: This is tricky. Use a dictionary or your computer's spell check. Here are some examples.

These have no hyphens: interlocking, sublight, rearmed.

These do: mech-links, lock-on, Class-M planet.

These might: The adjective flat-footed has a hyphen, but the verb flatfooted does not. The noun setup is one word. The verb set up is two words. The adjective set-up is hyphenated.

Internals: *He did seventeen internals.* Okay, so he got kidneys, liver, stomach, and just how many internal organs do you have? Tsk, tsk. The proper sentence would be: *He did seventeen points of internal damage.* You could also write: *He scored seventeen points of internal damage.*

Names: One person has one name, at least in bylines and staff lists. Steve Cole, Stephen V. Cole, S.V. Cole, and Stephen Cole are all the same guy, and should be listed as Stephen V. Cole each time. Now, in a tactics article or dialogue or narrative, it can get kind of tedious to repeat the long form of a name over and over, and you may want to mix it up, but be sure (if there are several people in the story) that you use terms that are clearly the person intended. Not everyone knows that Paul Scott is known as "the Rock" and using the name and nickname interchangeably may confuse people as to just how many people are on board that ship.

Numbers: *The 2 ships were one thousand two hundred nineteen meters apart.* Spell out numbers from one to twenty. Use numerals for anything 21 and above. The proper sentence would read: *The two ships were 1,219 meters apart.*

Quotes: The only time that single quotation marks are used is when there is a quotation within a quotation. SVC said, "Did you hear Jean? She said, 'DirDammed!' I never thought she'd use such a piece of jargon."

Race: Do not use "race" when you mean "species" or "empire". Yes, I know that the WYN and LDR are not "empires" in any sense, but they aren't really "races" either. Klingons (with their Subject Races), Romulans (with their Suppressed Races), Hydrans (with their Exile Races), and the Lyrans and Kzintis (with their Subjugated Races) get to write about races only in those limited cases. Race is also used when referring to differences in coloration, such as with the three races of Gorns. Other "races" include the annual potato sack race at Star Fleet Academy.

Reigns: *He passed the reigns to someone else.* This terminology came from dealing with horses. You passed the reins (which control the beast) to someone else. You also "rein in your emotions" or give someone "full rein". Unless you are a king, you do not get to pass a reign to someone, and even then, you are more likely to pass the reins to some minion.

Series: When you have a series of points, use: 1. 2. 3. and not 1) 2) 3) or 1- 2- 3- or 1: 2: 3: or anything else.

Shift: *I forced him to fire into a two-shift.* He was pulling a double shift? As compared to being on duty all the time? Or was he working only an eight-to-five day usually? The proper sentence is: *I forced him to fire when he had a die roll shift of two due to electronic warfare.*

Subject vs. Verb: Keep track of what noun the sentence's verb is acting on. Consider: *I plotted a course around the asteroid field firing all weapons as I rounded the edge of the hex.* The asteroid field is firing all of its weapons? I call this type of error "I found a mouse unpacking my trunk." The mouse isn't doing you any favors, so the "unpacking the trunk" part needs to go close to the being who is really doing the unpacking. "Firing all weapons, my ship rounded the edge of the asteroid field."

Tails: *The Gorn used his mighty tail to thwack the Orion Pirate sneaking up behind him.* Sorry, but Gorns do not actually have tails. (They might have little short tails that don't even get outside the skin, like humans do.) No tails means no thwacking anyone with the (nonexistent) tail.

Tournament: In the *SFU*, we have tournament ships and we play in tournaments. Save "tourney" for your fantasy writing.