

# Style Guide

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1. Submissions  
The Basics
2. The Writing
3. The Images  
The Videos
4. A Special Word About Linking Words  
The Homework
5. HTML Codes
6. Autostraddle's Amended AP Style

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Send any questions to [laneia@autostraddle.com](mailto:laneia@autostraddle.com)

## **SUBMISSIONS**

Each completed article submitted to Autostraddle will contain:

1. Title - no more than 12 words.
2. Excerpt - at least two sentences summarizing the article, or a relevant quote pulled from the article.
3. Draft - see "The Writing"
4. Images - amount varies depending on word count; at least two - see "The Images"

## **THE BASICS**

1. If you don't already have one, create an account on AS <http://www.autostraddle.com/register>. Complete your profile for ASS (Autostraddle Social). Upload your photo to [gravatar.com](http://gravatar.com) using the same email address used for your AS account. Gravatar's perpetually assy, so if you have any problems with this, email [laneia@autostraddle.com](mailto:laneia@autostraddle.com).
2. Send us PLAIN TEXT FILES ONLY! No docx files, pdfs, Word docs or Google docs! Approved forms of submission include unformatted email, and notepad or textedit attachments.
3. Follow AS's amended AP Style (attached).
4. Do not link or format text within the draft. When linking, italicizing or bolding text, you will code it as HTML yourself. You should be familiar with these basic HTML codes (attached). Drafts that are not properly coded will be returned.

NO:

This is part of my story that I don't want linked. But [these are some words](#) that I'd like linked.  
This is *italicized*. This shit is **bolded**.

YES:

This is part of my story that I don't want linked. But [these](http://www.url.com) are some words that I'd like linked. This is *italicized*. This shit is **bolded**.

## **THE WRITING**

### **Suggestions for Pitching Stories:**

1. Don't pitch a story we've already done. Do your homework, Google "topic + Autostraddle."
2. Be specific. Don't pitch "a piece on lesbians in fashion" -- that's not a story.
3. Be relevant. It's ideal if a piece can be tied to a current cultural phenomenon or specific event.
4. Feel free to pitch out of your traditional subject area.
5. Topics to avoid: Straight cisgender men, lesbian subtext in Rizzoli & Isles, etc.

### **Guidelines on Writing Stories:**

1. Goals for articles published on AS:
  - + Make a strong, original point that hasn't been made elsewhere.
  - + Teach readers something new.
  - + Condense and translate complicated information and ideas so they're easily understood.
  - + Start a dialogue in the comments / real life.
2. Ensure that your thesis is loud and clear and, ideally, toward the top of the piece. Use the rest of your article to reiterate and strengthen your point.
3. Briefly summarize and **link back to the article you're referencing** or responding to (see "A Special Word About Linking Words"). Also, link to other articles and websites throughout your piece whenever referencing a point made or fact stated. Citing your work, expanding on information and thoroughly fact-checking is very important.

Whenever possible -- which is often -- link back to Autostraddle's coverage of a topic, whether it's the url of one story or the url to a specific tag. Tag example: <http://www.autostraddle.com/tag/harry-potter/>

4. Be intelligent, but also approachable and conversational. No academic writing.
5. Say what you're saying in as few words as possible.  
Example: that sentence originally read, "Look over each sentence and ask yourself if the same point could be made using fewer words." DO YOU SEE WHAT I DID THERE.
6. Proofread your shit.

## **THE IMAGES**

1. Images should be jpeg or png (no tiffs), high-res(ish) and no larger than 1600px, no smaller than 300px and **ideally 640px**. Extremely large images should be resized before submitting.
2. Images should be attached to the email, not embedded in the draft. Indicate where you would like an image to be inserted and include any credits. Example:

[IMAGE: red toy.jpg]  
via {credits}

3. Each submission should include:
  - + one image suitable for homepage thumbnail (must be wider than it is tall, within reason)
  - + one image per 2-3 paragraphs of text (does not include homepage thumbnail image).We reserve the right to change or omit images. Please refer to the current homepage thumbnails for examples of "wider than it is tall, within reason."
4. When possible, provide credits for your images. Credit includes one or more or all of the following:
  - + photographer's name
  - + photographer's website name and link (this includes flickr)
  - + link to original website where image was foundWhen possible / feasible, obtain photographer's permission. This is rarely possible / feasible.
5. No full frontal nudity. If there is visible vadge or nip in your image, you need to cover that shit up.

## **THE VIDEOS**

1. No Flash videos.
2. When embedding from YouTube or Vimeo, use "old embed code" and choose the 640px dimensions when possible. See "HTML Codes" below for a complete example.

## **A SPECIAL WORD ABOUT LINKING WORDS**

1. NEVER\* link only one word. ALWAYS link phrases. The words / phrase that you link should, at least briefly, explain or describe what the person will find when they click your link.
2. Avoid linking words like 'this' 'here' 'website' etc.

NO:

[This](#) is really important so I learned about the extensive [history](#) of this topic by reading about it on a [website](#). I also read [an interview](#) about the way people feel about it. Certain people [said](#) they felt positively. [Others](#) felt negatively but they didn't let it stop them from drinking lots of [whiskey](#).

YES:

This [is really important](#) so I learned about the [extensive history of this topic](#) by reading about it on a website. I also read [an interview about the way people feel about it](#). Certain people [said they felt positively](#). Others felt negatively [but they didn't let it stop them from drinking lots of whiskey](#).

(Most paragraphs will not be linked this much. It's just an example.)

\*An exception to this strictly enforced rule is when linking one word is the funny / clever thing to do. If you feel strongly that your point would be better made via linking one word -- and this is a very special circumstance -- discuss this with your editor.

## **THE HOMEWORK**

Some examples of Autostraddle's hilarious yet super intelligent, thoroughly fact-checked and dialogue-starting articles are below. Read them for reference:

- + [Rachel's Prop 8 Trial Recaps](#)
- + [Newsweek Celebrates the Mormon Moment, Clearly Still Hates Gay People](#)
- + [The PP & Me: Why We All Need Planned Parenthood](#)
- + [Colleges Making Fancier Gyms Instead of Smarter Graduates](#)
- + [How the DADT Survey Breaks All the Research Methodology Rules, Has Issues, Is Useless](#)
- + [Conservative Group Fears Degrassi-Induced Transgender Plague Upon Your Children](#)
- + [Revolution Queer Style Now: Christian College Bans Students' Gay Zine](#)
- + [At Last, the Sex Discrimination Lawsuit Against Wal-Mart Has Come Along](#)
- + [The Anti-Gays Must Be Crazy](#)
- + [Are You Gonna Pay for the New York Times? Because Someone Has To](#)

## **HTML CODES**

Here are the most used codes, plus helpful examples pulled from actual articles with the HTML code in red for reference. **There are no codes for underlining or blockquotes on Autostraddle.**

### LINKS

`<a href="http://www.URL.com">words</a>`

This video stars `<a href="http://autostraddle.com/members/carlytron">`DJ Carlytron`</a>` with guest appearances from `<a href="http://www.autostraddle.com/celebrate-nys-marriage-equality-win-robin-roemer-for-your-big-gay-wedding-95806/">`Robin Roemer`</a>` and Cesar as well as the people on the streets of New York by the historic Stonewall Inn.

### ITALICS

`<em>words</em>`

### BOLD

`<strong>words</strong>`

On `<strong>`June 26th, 1964`</strong>`, LIFE Magazine published `<strong><em>`Homosexuality in America`</em></strong>`. Reading it is pretty intense, and a reminder of how far we've come --&gt; `<em>`"Homosexuals have their own drinking places, their special assignation streets, even their own organizations. And`<strong>` for every obvious homosexual, there are probably nine nearly impossible to detect."`</strong></em>`

### QUOTES (in lieu of blockquotes)

`<p style="padding-left: 30px;"><em>words</em></p>`

`<p style="padding-left: 30px;"><em>`... Obama said that gay couples "deserve the same legal rights" as all couples, and that New York State is having a proper, democratic "debate" on the legalization of same-sex marriage.`</em></p>`

### VIDEO

`<h4 style="text-align: center; padding-bottom: 25px;">video embed code</h4>`

`<h4 style="text-align: center; padding-bottom: 25px;"><object width="640" height="390"><param name="movie" value="http://www.youtube.com/v/Zsa5EkUR0hE?version=3&hl=en_US" /><param name="allowFullScreen" value="true" /><param name="allowscriptaccess" value="always" /><embed type="application/x-shockwave-flash" width="640" height="390" src="http://www.youtube.com/v/Zsa5EkUR0hE?version=3&hl=en_US" allowscriptaccess="always" allowfullscreen="true"></embed></object></h4>`

## **AUTOSTRADDLE'S AMENDED AP STYLE**

This is a basic guide to common grammar and punctuation issues.

1. Spell out numbers under ten and at the beginning of a sentence. Use numerals for ten and above, ages, days of the month, dimensions and scores. (*We saw nine lesbians. We saw 99 lesbians.*)
2. No Oxford commas.
3. Use "a.m." or "p.m." when referring to a specific time.
4. Use "U.S." in the body, "US" in the headline.
5. An en dash (-) is used for compound adjectives and ranges, i.e. June-July. An em dash (--) is for setting off a part of a sentence where there's a break in thought -- like this -- and then the sentence continues. Replace with commas when it makes more sense.
6. On first reference, list the person's full name. After that, use his or her last name.
7. Job titles are capitalized before names (*President Obama; Obama is president*).
8. Use "more than" rather than "over" when referring to a number. (*More than nine lesbians were there.*)
9. Abbreviations for these words are as follows: teaspoon = tsp; tablespoon = Tbsp.
10. Use quotation marks around quoted words, even if it's a single word, unless it's a quote within a quote.
11. "All right" never "alright."
12. Use a comma before "which" but not "that."
13. Hyphenate compound adjectives (*auto-related, gay-centric*) but not adverb phrases (*overly excited*).
14. Hyphen before "ish" (*gay-ish, Shane-ish*).
15. Use "ok" or "okay."
16. Use of "%" is permitted.
17. Capitalization for emphasis is permitted (*Then she decided to wear her Obviously Gay Shirt, which is obviously gay*).
18. Swearing is permitted, as well as censorship (*f\*ck*).
19. Slang is permitted when appropriate (*yeah, yep, nope*).
20. Contractions are encouraged (*she's, that's, I'm*).
21. Italicize book titles, album titles, publication names. Use quotation marks for chapter titles, song titles, article titles.