

Richard Turnock — Master Writing Style Sheet

Upload this file at the start of any writing session and reference it by name.

1. FORBIDDEN CONSTRUCTIONS

These appear nowhere in any document, article, or narrative — no exceptions.

Pronouns & Vague References

- No “it,” “its,” or “itself” — replace with the specific noun
- No “which” — replace with “that” for restrictive clauses; restructure if non-restrictive

Passive & Weak Verbs

- No “to be” verbs used as passive constructions: is, are, was, were, been, being
- No auxiliary “had” — find the active construction
- No auxiliary “would” — find the direct declarative form
- No “there is / there are / there was / there were” constructions

Structural Habits to Eliminate

- No “subject — long description — verb” em-dash interruptions that separate subject from verb
- No front-loaded participial phrases that delay the subject
- No sentences that require the reader to restart to find the main verb
- When you spot an “ly” word at the end of a sentence, ask: does this modify the verb? If yes, find a stronger verb and cut the adverb. If the “ly” word modifies a noun (friendly, lonely), placement matters less.

WRONG: “Thomas, a man who had crossed two oceans and buried three children, rose at dawn.”

RIGHT: “Thomas rose at dawn. He had crossed two oceans and buried three children.”

2. ACTIVE VOICE RULES

Every sentence drives forward with a strong active verb.

- Subject performs the action — never receives it
- Verbs carry the narrative weight
- Short declarative sentences work better than long compound constructions
- Subject meets verb within the first five words whenever possible

Examples:

WRONG: “The land was cleared by Thomas in the spring of 1692.”

RIGHT: “Thomas cleared the land in the spring of 1692.”

WRONG: “A covenant had been established between the families.”

RIGHT: “The families established a covenant.”

3. GENEALOGICAL NARRATIVE STANDARDS

Timeline Discipline

- Write each generation from within their own time — no anachronistic framing
- A man born in 1650 knows nothing of what his grandchildren will face
- Attribute knowledge, fear, hope, and language only to what a person of that era and place could access

Dialogue Standards

- Colonial New England speech (1620–1750): formal, Biblical cadence, Puritan moral framework
- Characters address each other as "thee," "thou," "thy" in intimate contexts
- Public or deferential address uses "you," "your"
- Speech reflects the King James Bible, not modern idiom
- Characters reference Providence, covenant, God's will — not luck or chance
- 18th-century speech (1750–1800): transitioning from Puritan formality; more commercial, civic vocabulary enters
- Avoid modern contractions, slang, or psychological vocabulary in period dialogue

Naming Conventions

- First mention: full name — Thomas McLain
- Subsequent mentions: first name — Thomas (in narrative flow); full name restated at chapter breaks
- Name variants: document spelling variations in brackets — McLain [also MacLean, McLean, MacLaine]
- Women: use birth surname on first reference, then married name — “Mary Goodhue, who married John Dennis in 1684 and thereafter appears in records as Mary Dennis”

Marriage Arrangements

- Colonial correspondence marriages: agents in colonial towns corresponded with English families
 - Brides crossed the Atlantic for men they had not met — note this as period-typical practice
 - Record both wedding location and colony: "Ipswich, Essex County, Massachusetts Bay Colony"
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4. DOCUMENT STRUCTURE STANDARDS

Chapter Architecture

1. Foreword (external voice — optional)
2. Preface (author's personal statement)
3. Introduction (scope, methods, name variants, research standards)

4. Prologue (narrative scene-setter, storytelling mode)
5. Main Narrative (chapters organized chronologically or by family line)
6. Epilogue (generational patterns, legacy reflection)
7. Appendices (family trees, timelines, transcribed documents, maps)

Paragraph Construction

- One idea per paragraph in analytical writing
 - Narrative paragraphs open with action or image, not date or name alone
 - Transitions carry the reader forward — no orphaned paragraphs
 - Reading level target: 10th–12th grade for manuscripts; college level for analytical essays
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5. DOCUMENT PRODUCTION STANDARDS

Apply these standards to all .docx files produced or edited.

Color

- ALL TEXT MUST BE BLACK — NO EXCEPTIONS IN FINAL DOCUMENTS. This applies to body text, headings, table text, captions, footnotes, headers, footers, and any other text element. When editing existing documents, remove all non-black font colors (including colored headings, blue body text, or any styled color) and reset to black (automatic color). Never apply colored text in any new document or revision delivered as a final output.
- Revision exception: When revising an existing document to show changes made, use color markup to distinguish edits — for example, inserted text in blue and deleted text in red strikethrough, or tracked changes with author color. This color exists only as a revision-review aid. The final accepted document must return to all-black text.

Typography

- Body text: Arial, 12 pt, 1.2 line spacing, Regular weight. Black only.
- Headings (before a paragraph): Arial, 12 pt, 1.2 line spacing, Bold. Black only.
- Tables: Arial, Regular weight, black only. Use 11 pt font as the default; drop to 10 pt when a column carries enough text that 11 pt would make the table excessively long. The goal: keep the table compact without sacrificing readability.

Graphics

- When you create a chart or diagram, use large, bright-white text inside the graphic so the reader can see labels clearly. If the graphic cannot accommodate readable text at that size, do one of the following: reduce the text inside the graphic and describe the data fully in the body paragraph that precedes or follows it, or add an italicized caption directly below the graphic that covers the key information a reader needs.

Page Numbers

- Do not add page numbers to any .docx file. Pagination happens at the PDF stage. When handing over a PDF for pagination, add page numbers in the format “Page X of Y” — bottom center, Arial, 12 pt, black.
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6. ANALYTICAL WRITING STANDARDS

(Stellaris Meta-Framework articles, Substack essays, political analysis)

Capitalization — Always

- Stellaris Meta-Framework (full name, first mention and formal restatements)
- Stellaris Framework (shortened form in analytical passages)
- Fourth Turning
- Saeculum — capitalize first mention only; lowercase thereafter
- Prophet, Nomad, Hero, Artist (Strauss-Howe archetypes when used technically)
- S-curve

Capitalization — Always Lowercase

- extraction economy
- abundance economy
- feedback loop
- threshold
- generational archetype (descriptive use)

Abbreviations

- ERCOT, BESS, AI — all caps throughout

Sentence Architecture

- Front-load the claim, then add evidence
 - Definitions follow the verb: “A saeculum spans eighty to one hundred years — the length of a long human life.”
 - Never delay the main verb past five words
 - Short sentences hit harder than compound ones
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7. WORD-LEVEL PREFERENCES

Avoid	Use Instead
it / its	the specific noun
which	that
had (auxiliary)	past tense direct form

would (auxiliary)	direct declarative
there is/are/was/were	restructure with active subject
was/were (passive)	active construction
in order to	to
due to the fact that	because

8. PRIMARY FAMILY LINES & KEY DETAILS

Core Lineages (Colonial New England, 1600s–1700s)

- McLain / MacLean / MacLaine / McLean
- Dennis
- Blossom
- Goodhue
- Walker
- Hussey
- Choate

Associated Lines

- FitzRandolph (heraldic arms: Argent, a chief indented azure; motto: Jamais Arrière — Never Behind)
- Morrell / Morrill
- Brockett / Brocket

Geographic Centers

- Essex County, Massachusetts Bay Colony (Ipswich, Salem, Gloucester)
- Plymouth Colony
- Connecticut Colony
- Scottish Highlands (pre-emigration McLain origins)

Key Historical Contexts

- English Separatist and Puritan migration, 1620–1660
 - Strauss-Howe generational framework applied to colonial periods
 - King Philip's War (1675–1676) — Prophet generation crisis
 - Salem witch trials (1692) — generational stress marker
 - Imperial Frontier Wars — Hero generation formation
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9. QUICK CHECKLIST BEFORE SUBMITTING ANY DRAFT

- Zero instances of “it” or “its”
- Zero “which” — replaced with “that” or restructured
- Zero passive “to be” constructions
- Zero auxiliary “had” or “would”
- Every subject meets its verb within five words
- No em-dash interruptions separating subject from verb
- Dialogue matches the correct time period and colony
- Names follow first-mention / subsequent-mention protocol
- Colonial locations include colony name, not just town
- Reading level matches target audience
- All text black — no color in final .docx output

Last updated: April 2026