

Inconsistent

Anne stepped into the sunlight and looked around. There were few houses here, maybe only 10 or fifteen, but those that did exist were big and painted with vibrant colours. She recognized the street—her old school was here. She had studied music at that place for years. Back then, she had spent hours a day practising – on the weekdays at least. Her parents hadn’t known, but her and her friends had, on the weekends, ditched practice for more fun things like skating, swimming or jumping between theaters and cafés.

‘Hey Anne’, she turned to see a man wearing a blue jumper and red pants running down the centre of the road towards her. “Anne, it’s me, Jonathan!”

She didn’t recognize him, but he clearly recognised her, so she greeted him with a polite smile.

Answers

Anne stepped into the sunlight and looked around. There were few houses here, maybe only 10¹ or fifteen, but those that did exist were big and painted with vibrant colours. She recognized the street—²her old school was here. She had studied music *at* that place for years. Back then, she had spent hours a day practising on the weekdays at least. Her parents hadn’t known, but her and her friends had, on the weekends, ditched practice for more fun things like skating, swimming³ or jumping between theaters and cafés⁴.

‘Hey Anne’,⁵ she turned to see a man wearing a blue jumper and red pants running down the centre of the road towards⁶ her. “Anne, it’s me, Jonathan!”

She didn’t recognize him, but he clearly recognised her, so she greeted him with a polite smile.

(Where **bold** indicates spelling, underline indicates punctuation, and *italic* indicates grammar; yellow indicates inconsistencies and blue indicates author preferences.)

If you’re curious about what this text would look like with a style guide, check out the next page where I have corrected it first to a UK-based style sheet and then to a US-based style sheet.

¹ It is not uncommon to have a style guide that states digits for numbers 1–10 and word for numbers eleven and above.

² A semi-colon would also work here.

³ The infamous Oxford or serial comma. There is often debate over this punctuation, but many presses have a preference to omit/keep the comma (though it is worth noting that a serial comma may be kept if it aids in clarity).

⁴ Using accents on words of foreign origin is more common than not, and some people like to distinguish these words by putting them in italics.

⁵ Placing a comma outside of the quotation marks is more common in UK English; keeping it inside the quotation marks is more common in US English.

⁶ Toward/towards is often seen as a US/UK divide, but it is just as much author preference as anything else – especially if your prose is stylised (e.g., medieval (or mediaeval in the UK) high fantasy or futuristic sci-fi dialects).

UK Style

Anne stepped into the sunlight and looked around. There were few houses here, maybe only 10 or 15, but those that did exist were big and painted with vibrant colours. She recognised the street; her old school was here. She had studied music at that place for years. Back then, she had spent hours a day practicing – on the weekdays at least. Her parents hadn't known, but her and her friends had, at the weekends, ditched practice for more fun things like skating, swimming or jumping between theatres and cafés.

'Hey Anne', she turned to see a man wearing a blue jumper and red trousers running down the centre of the road towards her. 'Anne, it's me, Jonathan!'

She didn't recognise him, but he clearly recognised her, so she greeted him with a polite smile.

(For this version the author has opted for en-dashes over em-dashes, semi-colons, numbers as digits, accents on foreign origin words, and no serial/Oxford comma. Spelling and grammar variations, as well as punctuation (singles quotes with comma/full stop outside) have all been corrected to UK English, as per their style guide.)

US Style

Anne stepped into the sunlight and looked around. There were few houses here, maybe only ten or fifteen, but those that did exist were big and painted with vibrant colors. She recognized the street—her old school was here. She had studied music in that place for years. Back then, she had spent hours a day practising—on the weekdays at least. Her parents hadn't known, but her and her friends had, on the weekends, ditched practise for more fun things like skating, swimming, or jumping between theaters and cafes.

"Hey Anne," she turned to see a man wearing a blue sweater and red pants running down the center of the road toward her. "Anne, it's me, Jonathan!"

She didn't recognize him, but he clearly recognized her, so she greeted him with a polite smile.

(For this version the author has opted for em-dashes over en-dashes with them being used in favour of semi-colons where appropriate, numbers as words, no accents on foreign origin words, and serial/Oxford commas. Variations in spelling and grammar, as well as punctuation (double quotes with the comma/period inside) have all been corrected to US English, as per their style guide.)

There is no right or wrong when it comes to style, but there is when it comes to consistency. If no style guide has been provided, a proofreader will spend time to comb through your work and find the most common expression of each point, then ensure consistency in line with the most common usage in your work.

You can download a sample style guide from my website, or I will be happy to make one for you as part of my service.