

# ***MODDED***

2022 Style Guide

## **What is Modded?**

Modded is a site for men who always stay ahead of the curve. They're highly attuned to the latest trends, up to date and informed on cars, fitness, fashion and more.

Whether you're searching for info on the Indy 500 or planning a trip to the Appalachian Mountains, you'll find what you need. The question is – what are you looking for?

A new pair of boots? A good workout regimen? Maybe you're in the market for rims and want an expert opinion. Regardless of your interests, we'll keep you interested.

As the saying goes, a rolling stone gathers no moss, and a turning wheel gathers no rust. So keep pace with the latest by subscribing today. And remember...

You're behind the wheel. So rev that engine and let Modded do the rest.

## **Our Goals and Principles**

For every blog pieces and articles that we write and publish on our website, Modded bloggers should try to:

**ENTERTAIN** - Draw the reader in with some quick wit, but don't make that the main focus. The information is the most important part of each piece. That said, it won't hurt to make the piece more relatable by adding in a bit of humor here and there.

**ELEVATE** - Support your readers and encourage and elevate them to be the best men that they can be, whether that's in their clothing style, their outdoor activities, their car choices, etc. Modded is built for men and strives to help them achieve their goals.

**EDUCATE** - Educate the reader about different issues, conditions, situations and circumstances they find familiar. Along with covering these areas, aim to inform the reader on the ways that these same issues, conditions, situations and circumstances can possibly be mended, solved or remedied. You can also educate the reader on ways to perform specific tasks, enjoy outdoor or indoor activities, adopt clothing styles and so much more within the realm of men's lifestyle.

**RELATE** - Relate to your audience: Men! Talk about the struggles, interests and lifestyle habits and trends for men. Never talk down to your audience, but try to find commonalities.

## Accomplish these Goals by Making Sure Each Piece is...

**RELEVANT** - Do research on the topic and make sure that, as a writer, you understand the information you are presenting. Keep the writing clear and concise. Make sure that the information you're providing is on topic, up to date and from a credible source

**FUN, FRIENDLY, SOPHISTICATED** - Sure, our brand is for men. But that doesn't mean it needs to be dark and brooding. Men, just like women, are fun, friendly and sophisticated, and that's how we should come off in our writing. But even so, make sure that you are always being respectful of certain topics and situations.

**ENCOURAGING** - We work to encourage our audience in all that they do. This is why we give them tips and helpful facts. In a way, we try to give them the confidence to go out and take action, instead of stay in.

**ADVICE DRIVEN** - Advise, suggest and give options, but never guarantee that an option you present will fix their situation, problem, symptoms or hardship. As the writer, you aren't trained doctors, you are a messenger and advisor. Present the options in an objective manner and allow the reader to make their choice.

## Special Article Features

Our special features are recurring articles that might be weekly, monthly or yearly pieces. These include:

- **Equip** (Weekly): These articles are published weekly and they cover different items that are or could be useful to men. These items do not have to always be in a specific category.
- **Ride of the Month** (Monthly): As you might imagine, these are articles published every month on a "ride" or car/vehicle that we think should be spotlighted.

- **2020 Ultimate Guide** (Yearly): These articles or guides are published yearly and highlight the outdoor and gear products that stood out this year and are extremely useful.

## Sourcing Your Writing

### Finding Interesting Stories

Modded welcomes the opportunity to share and amplify the voices of wellness, lifestyle, car, fitness, male fashion, gear and outdoor experts. Some stories will require writers to seek interviews, comments or case studies.

We are looking to share what is “hot” and trending with our male viewers to keep them up-to-date with all of the latest looks, gear, style and activities and keep them entertained.

What kinds of stories would we love to see?

- Small businesses with exciting ideas in the wellness and men’s lifestyle space.
- Anything new or novel that would fit within one of the site’s categories.
- Grassroots efforts such as classic car restoration groups.
- Tips and tricks for outdoors work and activities.
- Information and updates on the car industry and how that may impact our males.
- Product reviews of different equipment and items useful to our audience.
- Hot new male fashion trends that our viewers should try.

We encourage writers to contact experts for quotes, insights and case studies when relevant to the topic. These strengthen our copy and add credibility to each piece.

If you come across an intriguing story, please pitch it to us!

### Finding Credible Information

Along with what we are looking to write about on Modded, we also want to make sure that we are using sources that are credible for our focus. Since Modded is mainly a lifestyle blog for men that focuses on trending topics, we don’t have to stress too much over financial and health credentials.

However, we want to make sure everything we publish is accurate, credible and up-to-date. We want to focus on verifying trending news whenever we pick up a story. You can do this by verifying:

- Press releases from the businesses and brands mentioned

- Scoops picked up by legit journalists

Watch out for taking a lead or tip on a story from any site that is disreputable or considered spammy. Modded is not in the business of publishing inaccurate or slanted information about brands, people and products.

Where do we often pick up credible stories?

- [PR Newswire for Journalists](#)
- [Google News](#)
- Our RSS feeds curated with topical news sites

A few more credible blog or editorial sources that you could use for your copy include, but are not limited to:

- [Active.com](#)
- [Automotive News](#)
- [Men's Journal](#)
- [The Adventure Junkies](#)
- [CarBuzz](#)
- [The Atlantic](#)
- [Gear Patrol](#)
- [Motortrend](#)
- [Wired](#)

## Grammar and Mechanics

Keeping our writing clear, concise and consistent is the result of following some of our basic brand grammar and mechanics rules. It may seem like a lot now, but you'll get the hang of it in no time.

### Basics to Remember

**WRITE FOR THE READER** - This may seem obvious, but what we mean is that you should write so that any reader would be able to find the information they need or want. This means that some may just want to skim the article, so you should be using easy to understand headings and subheadings. And for those who want to read the entire article, make sure you explain something when necessary and provide them all of the information they may need.

**KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING** - Have a plan for your piece. Don't blindly go into writing it and hope that you'll find your message, purpose or set up along the way. Doing that will result in an article that seems jumbled, all over the place and off topic. Sit down and plan an outline

before you get started. This way you know what you want to write and can check yourself if you get off topic.

**GIVE EXAMPLES** - If there is a possibility that you can provide the reader with an example, do it. Giving examples will allow the reader to fully understand what you are trying to convey. If you've experienced something in your own life that's relevant to the material, don't be afraid to offer an anecdote from your own life.

**BE CONCISE** - Don't ramble on and on about one topic for paragraphs, beating around the bush. Dive right in. Give a quick intro, jump to the main points, and give examples. There is no need for extra verbiage or fluff. But don't feel like one or two sentences that give the article character or personality are bad either.

## Specific Guidelines

Modded follows AP Style. When in doubt, the [AP Stylebook](#) should provide specific guidelines to help writers navigate particulars.

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

Are you writing with abbreviations and acronyms that you think the audience won't recognize? A quick, easy solution for this is to spell out the full phrase, name or title the first time you use it in your piece, and then use the abbreviation or acronym the second time.

After the second time, you can use the abbreviation or acronym for all other mentions of the phrase, name, or title.

If the abbreviation or acronym is not directly related to the fully spelled out version, specify this by placing the abbreviation or acronym in parentheses directly after the first mention.

- First Use: Seasonal Affective Disorder
- Second Use: SAD
  
- First Use: Comprehensive Environmental Response (CERCLIS)
- Second Use: CERCLIS

This does not apply to abbreviations and acronyms that are well known by audiences, such as CDC. In most cases, the audience will know what this stands for, so it isn't absolutely necessary to explain or spell it out first.

## Active voice

Passive voice sounds natural in some cases and in others, it makes your sentences seem wordy and confusing. So, our brand strives for active voice.

With active voice, the subject of the sentence is *doing* the action. With passive voice, the action is being done *to* the subject.

- Active: Daniel cleaned the kitchen.
- Passive: The kitchen was cleaned by Daniel.

Watch out for words such as “was”, “am”, “is”, “are”, “have been”, “has” or any form of “to be”. These can all be indicators of passive voice. Consider going back and changing these sentences to active voice construction when you notice them.

## Capitalization

Our brand follows AP Style rules for titles, headlines and the beginnings of sentences.

In titles of articles, headlines and subheadings, all words should be capitalized except for smaller words, such as “at”, “are”, “and,” etc.

- Example: **Grammar and Mechanics**

The beginning word of each sentence should always be capitalized. Consult the AP tab of [this tool](#) if you're unsure.

While writing content for Modded, keep in mind that some words do need to be capitalized. These may include company names or brands, specific models of vehicles, and locations. These are determined on a blog to blog basis. If you aren't sure if certain terminology should be capitalized, simply do a little bit of research to find out.

## Contractions

Contractions are perfectly fine to use with our brand. Just remember that, for the most part, we want to use positive language. An overuse of negative contractions such as “don't,” “can't,” “aren't,” etc. can register as negative language.

## Emojis

Emojis are very informal, and though you want to come off as friendly, fun, and sassy at times, emojis should not be used in your copy.

## Numbers

Numbers can be a tricky topic to figure out when writing. In general, always spell out a number if it is used to start the sentence or if it is below ten. Any number above ten can be written as the numeral.

- Sally had three pieces of chocolate.
- Donald watched 11 movies in the last two weeks.
- Fifteen people could be seen in the van.

Larger numbers should be separated with commas if they are over 3 digits long and should always be written out in full numerals.

- 1,000
- 300,000
- 2,000,000

### Dates

Dates are used infrequently in our brand copy. If you do find that you need to write out a date, spell out the day and the month, but keep the date in numeral form.

- Sunday, March 1

### Decimals and Fractions

Make sure to spell out fractions.

- Two-fifths, **NOT**  $\frac{2}{5}$

If the number can not be easily written out in fraction form, use decimals. For instance, 1.45677 or 3.34.

### Percentages

When it comes to the use of “percent” or “%” in your copy, consider how the number is written out first.

Numbers that are spelled out — such as a number starting a sentence, or any number below ten — should follow it with the word “percent.”

If the number is represented in numeral form, then it should be followed by the percent symbol.

- Only three percent of people were able to solve the problem.
- Fourteen percent said “yes.”
- Scientists found that 26% of the test subjects did not want to continue with the experiment.

## Ranges and Spans

This also depends upon whether or not the number is spelled out or written in numeral form.

If the number range is under ten, the numbers should be spelled out with a “to” in between. If the number range is above ten, the numbers should be written in numeral form with a “to” in between them.

- The kids ranged from ages two to four.
- It will take 15 to 20 days for the package to arrive.

## Money

When writing about US currency, remember to place the money symbol before the numeral. Add decimals and exact change if applicable.

- \$40
- \$20.75

Though it is unlikely you will be writing about foreign currency, use the same symbol format if you ever do find yourself here.

## Telephone Numbers

Typically, you won't be using or writing phone numbers in your copy, but if you do, then there are simple rules to keep in mind.

Use dashes in between each number set without spaces. Also use a country code if your audience is from another country.

- 555-555-5555
- +1-555-555-5555

## Temperature

For temperatures, use the degree symbol and a capital F for Fahrenheit.

- 72°F

## Time

Use numerals with AM or PM with a space in between the two. If it is exactly on the hour, do not use minutes.



- 6 PM
- 8:30 AM

If you are dealing with a time period, then use a hyphen in this case. This is unlike ranges and spans where you would use the word “to.”

- 7 AM - 10:30 PM

If you find yourself writing about years or specific time periods in history, keep these rules in mind. When you are talking about decades within the last 100 years, abbreviate them.

- the 70s

When you are referring to decades over 100 years ago, be specific.

- the 1780s

## **Punctuation**

### **Comma**

For the most part, you can simply use writer’s intuition when figuring out where a comma should go. If you really aren’t sure, try reading the sentence out loud to see where you naturally take a pause or breath.

When it comes to listing things, do not use the oxford comma. Instead, the last two items or phrases should be connected by just an “and” or an “or.”

- I bought grapes, strawberries, oranges and bananas.

### **Dashes and Hyphens**

In your copy, use hyphens (-) without spaces on either side in order to link words into a single phrase.

- Mother-in-law
- A pick-me-up

Use an em dash (—) without spaces on either side to distinguish another thought or aside.

- Without zinc, your nail bed could deteriorate — and no one wants that!

## **Ellipses**

Ellipses should be kept to a minimum. They should never be used in headlines, headings, or subheadings. Traditionally, they can be used to signify that you are trailing off before you finish your thought.

They can also be used to indicate that you are omitting part of a quote. If you use ellipses in this manner, they should be kept within brackets [...].

- “When testing the animal subjects, doctors found that several of them were getting sick, [...] Further studies showed that the sick animals only went on to live a few more days.”

## **Periods, Question Marks and Exclamations Points**

Periods should always go inside of any quotation marks that you use unless you are listing off single words as examples. There should be a single space after every period.

Question marks should go within the quotation marks if they are a part of the quote you are referencing.

Exclamation points should be used sparingly, if at all. Though our brand is informal, fun, and friendly at times, there are other ways to express this without using an exclamation point. Specifically, keep our male audience in mind here and how appropriate an exclamation point would be within the context of the piece. We want to keep things suave and sophisticated.

## **Semicolons**

Typically, semicolons breed longer sentences that may be able to be shortened or simplified. Instead of trying to use semicolons often, consider using the em dash (—) or creating a new sentence.

## **Ampersands**

Keep ampersands out of your copy, unless it is a part of another company's or brand's name.

- H&M
- Dolce & Gabbana

## **People, Places and Things**

### **Health Conditions and Issues**

When writing about mental and physical health conditions or issues, you need to consider when they should be capitalized or if they are ever capitalized.

Most health conditions will not be capitalized within a sentence, but you will have to determine this on a blog to blog basis. This means doing research on how the specified condition shows up in writing.

### **Pronouns**

Most of the time, you will be writing in second person and won't have to worry about pronouns because you will be using "you" to address the audience.

If you do find yourself writing a copy where you need to use pronouns, keep these house rules in mind.

When appropriate, use "she/her" and "he/his/him" pronouns. When you do not know the preferred gender pronouns of the subject, use "they," "them" and "their" as your pronouns.

### **Quotes**

Always use present tense when and if you are quoting a source. This will be rare.

- "The dog weighed 100 lbs," says Jane Doe.

Our brand does not embed quotes from similar publications in our copy. Instead, summarize the relevant findings from the source article and provide a link for readers to learn more.

Our linking guidelines provide more detailed information about sourcing later in this document.

### **Names and Titles**

When referring to a person in writing for the first time, introduce them with their first and last name. After that, you can refer to them only by their first or last name.

Capitalize the names of organizations, departments, or government programs.

## **Schools**

When mentioning a school (college, university, etc.) for the first time, write out their full official name. This is similar to the way abbreviations and acronyms work. Once you have stated the official school name once, you are free to refer to the school by its more commonly recognized abbreviation or acronym.

- Penn State University (PSU)

## **URLs and Websites**

Always capitalize the titles or names of websites or online publications.

When it comes to URLs, avoid spelling them out. But if you feel like you need to, then opt to not include the <http://www>.

## **Slang and Jargon**

Writing for medical and mental health topics can be tricky at times with all of the medical jargon. However, it's your responsibility to explain or define what these unfamiliar terms mean to your audience.

## **Text Formatting**

On a very small scale of formatting, always leave one space between sentences, not two.

Make sure to left-align your copy, not center, right, or justified.

Stay away from formatting your text to be italics, bold, underlined or all caps in the copy. If you feel a need to use all caps for a small one to two word phrase, it should only really be used once or twice in the copy.

## **Writing Positively and Negatively**

Try to always use positive language instead of negative language. Negative language is okay every now and again, but our brand strives to keep our content mainly positive and encouraging.

If you feel like you've written negatively, look for words such as "can't," "won't," "don't," "aren't", etc. and then go back and rework them.

## Voice and Tone

Our voice and tone while writing are an integral part of our brand. We want our audience to feel welcomed upon arrival and informed by the time they leave our site. To accomplish this, we must be aware of our voice we use as writers and the tone we decide to take in each situation.

It's a common misconception that voice and tone are the same thing. In reality, they aren't. For instance, your voice does not change, but your tone will change with each topic, audience and even each the emotional state of the audience. Voice will always be important, but tone can directly impact whether or not a reader decides to stick around.

In the specific sections below, we'll cover both of these in detail to help you create content for Modded.

### Voice

We will never know the reason why our readers are searching for and reading about the topics we cover. Perhaps they are looking for possible solutions for a problem they are facing or are just curious about a certain topic such as cars, gear and outdoor activities.

Either way, our goal is to provide them with reliable information that will help them make a decision or take a step in the right direction, while still being friendly, fun, concise and honest.

When writing your content, remember to keep these voice principles in mind:

#### **Modded is conversational.**

Your voice should be conversational — as if you are talking to a close colleague. This means that you don't need to use complicated words you wouldn't normally use in day to day conversation with friends. For certain topics, field related words come with the territory. In these cases, consider whether there is a simpler way to explain the subject or if it can be better defined for the audience.

#### **Modded is friendly and sophisticated.**

You should also strive to keep a friendly voice that is welcoming, yet still sophisticated and professional. This means being upbeat, witty, and humorous at the appropriate time. If you don't see a moment to use humor, *don't force it*. It is more important to simply be friendly than force a joke or witty phrase that isn't there.

#### **Modded is informative.**

We are informative. You should always be looking to present the audience with new, up-to-date and relevant information that will benefit them.

**Modded is honest.**

We are honest with our audience. Beating around the bush is not something we subscribe to. Instead, we lay it all out on the table for our readers to see. Because we consider our readers close colleagues, it is only right to treat them how we would want to be treated. This means that we are honest and trustworthy.

**Modded is a leader.**

Finally, our voice is that of a leader. Our audience has come to our site to learn something new and we are the medium through which they will learn this information. We are conversational, but still working to guide our audience to a great end result or outcome for their needs.

**Quick Tips for Voice**

More detail on these tips can be found in the Grammar and Mechanics section.

- Mainly use active voice
- Explain any jargon used
- Write with positive language, not negative

**Tone**

Unlike our voice, our tone may change with the circumstances of the blog. This includes the subject, the audience, the audience's perceived emotional state and other factors.

When you understand these circumstances, it is easier to adjust your tone. For instance, if you are talking about a serious health issue, then you may be more serious and hold back on some of the witty or humorous comments. Your tone would change if you were talking about a new car model to how to flyfish to adapting your wardrobe to recent trends.

From day to day — and hour to hour — we change the tone we use with the people we encounter depending on who they are, how they are feeling and the overall context of the conversation. This is exactly the same for Modded blogs.

**How to Give Advice**

Some of the blog pieces on Modded will be advice-driven. This means that we may be providing our audience with how to handle certain situations, how to deal with certain issues, and ways to improve in all aspects. To do this, we need to understand how to give advice while keeping our tone and not overstepping our role.

In these instances, we are here to provide the information, the options, and the possible solutions for any problem our audience may be facing. We lay out the information, we guide and then we let the audience make their own decision.

Try to keep these three general rules in mind for our advice-driven blogs:

**Suggest, don't tell.**

Don't tell your audience what to do, but instead suggest a few options or possibilities. Leave the final choice up to them.

**Never guarantee something.**

You probably aren't a doctor, a therapist, or any kind of health professional, so you should not guarantee that anything will absolutely, 100% solve an issue, cure a sickness or fix a problem. Use credible sources and present them to support other information for "possible" solutions, cures or fixes.

**Put yourself in the audience's shoes.**

Always remember to put yourself in the audience's shoes. If you were looking for ways to solve a problem, you would want friendly advice that gives multiple solutions — right? That's what we're looking to provide to our readers.

## **Web Elements and SEO**

The subject, the grammar and mechanics, the voice and tone and the sourcing of our content is all important, but your writing also relies on smaller web elements and SEO tactics to even be seen by readers.

Here we will go over a few of those small web elements and SEO tactics that are expected for Modded blogs.

### **Headings and Subheadings**

Headings and subheadings are very important for the organization and structure of our content. They allow readers who may just be skimming through to get an overall sense of what the article covers and zone in on a particular section that they are interested in reading.

We use H1 headings for blog titles. These give the reader an idea about what the blog speaks on and have powerful SEO value.

Use H2, H3, and H4 headings for your subheadings. These will break the blog down into smaller, digestible chunks of information. Typically, Modded blogs will only use H2 and H3 headings.

Attempt to use the keyword or relevant keywords in your headings and subheadings. The headings and subheadings should also be relevant to the section.

Finally, all headings and subheadings should be in title case, unless it ends with a period. Then, it can be in sentence case. Otherwise, all words in a heading or title should be capitalized, except for a select few such as “to,” “and,” “at” and a few others.

## Links

Links are also a big part of our content. Links are an easy way to cite the sources that we use for some of the information that we provide in our blogs. It is important to link to these sources because it demonstrates credibility and allows the reader to check out an article that provides even more information.

## External

When providing an external link, the link should be embedded into relevant anchor text. Anchor text is a phrase that is about three to five — and up to seven — words long. As well, we retain the right to remove/edit any links in material we receive.

Concerning the information you cite, it should be presented in a summary, not a direct quote. You aren't writing an academic paper, so you don't have to quote the source or author. Within that summary, choose your anchor text, which should be relevant to the article you found your information in. Making it relevant will help the reader understand more about what the source article focuses on.

Take a look at this example below:

### TRY NOT TO USE DIRECT QUOTES

The article written by Bryony Gordon also quotes University of Wolverhampton psychologist, Neil Morris, who recently studied the impacts of bathing everyday for two weeks on 80 people. Morris stated, “I found that bathing improved general psychological wellness radically. There was a significant drop in feelings of pessimism about the future and increases in hedonic tone, the internal feeling of pleasurability.”

### TRY TO SUMMARIZE AND LINK

A University of Wolverhampton study on [the impacts of bathing everyday](#) for two weeks found that bathing improved psychological wellness substantially. 80 people that participated in the study, and researchers found a significant drop in pessimistic feelings as well as increases in pleasurability.

This anchor text should appear as a separate sentence beneath the descriptor text for the item, right before the next item in the list.



## **Internal**

Internal links help us strengthen SEO value and encourage readers to explore more of our content. Related topics, source information and updates on past articles are all great reasons to place an internal link.

We aim to include 2-3 internal links per article. Take the same steps for linking internally as you did for the external links. Summarize, find your anchor text and link to that article.

## **Lists**

Lists can be a very useful tool when writing copy. Lots of blogs for Modded may actually be described as listicle, which means the blog takes on a list format.

Here are some brand guidelines for using quick numbered lists:

- Give context before jumping into your list of points.
- Only capitalize the first letter of the first word.
- Use proper punctuation if the points are complete sentences.
- Keep each number or bullet concise and relevant.
- Use numbers if the order of the list matters, but use bullets if it doesn't.

Well, would you look at that? Now you even have an example of a list!

## **Titles**

Titles should be relevant to the topic they are covering and should contain the target keyword.

They are always in title case and should not be punctuated unless they end with a question mark.

The ideal character length for a title is between 50 and 60 characters. This prevents the title from being cut off in search results.

## **SEO / Keywords or Phrases**

Remember that we are writing for real people who want to learn about real possible solutions to real problems. Thus, you don't want to stuff your copy full of tactics that work for a computer, but scare away the readers.

Yet, we want our content to be easily found by search engines and our reader base in order for it to be shared further. Here are a few ways that you can make this happen in your content:

- Use the keyword or phrase at least two times throughout your copy, but do not keyword stuff.
- Put the keyword in the title.
- If you can integrate it in a relevant way, add the keyword to a heading or two.
- Make sure to stay focused on one main topic and use words that relate to that topic, keyword, or phrase to further help search engines understand our content.