

KLAB ENGLISH STYLE GUIDE

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

This guide sets out KLab's rules and best practices for English text. Each title will have its own specific rules regarding style, but such rules should always use this guide as a base.

All text should be in standard American English unless otherwise stated. Non-American or non-standard English may be preferable for a particular title, or for the sake of characterization, but this should always be agreed on first.

The majority of KLab content is displayed on small, mobile devices. As such, space is at a premium, so the most important thing when writing copy or translating is to KEEP IT SHORT. Japanese often uses more words and phrases than English, so don't be afraid to cut words or even whole sentences from the source language where doing so will save space without removing or unnaturally distorting the meaning of the original. For more on writing concisely, see section 10 of this guide, "[Writing Concise Copy](#)," and chapters 1, 2, 7 and 9 of the Yahoo! Style Guide.

The main aim when translating is to create English text that reads like it was written from scratch by a native speaker, rather than obviously translated. It is perfectly acceptable to change clause, sentence, or paragraph structure and order to make the text flow naturally.

1.2. Standard References

Please refer to The Yahoo Style Guide on issues of grammar, punctuation, and writing best practices, and Merriam-Webster's dictionary (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/>) for spelling. If a term is not found in the Merriam-Webster's, please refer to Dictionary.com (<http://dictionary.reference.com/>). If you do not have access to the Yahoo Guide, the grammar rules found in the Chicago Manual of Style are also acceptable, but the Yahoo Guide will always take precedence in the event of any discrepancy.

This guide deals with reoccurring issues that need stressing and cases that are different from, or not covered by, the Yahoo Style Guide. If there are any issues not covered by either guide, please contact KLab.

2. PUNCTUATION

As mentioned in section 1.1., KLab content is usually displayed on small screens. This means that space is at a premium, and any measures that can be taken to unclutter the screen should be used. Please keep punctuation to a minimum. Japanese often contains far more punctuation than English, especially in comics and games. Just because a punctuation mark appears in the Japanese original does not mean it needs to appear in other languages. Consider the inverted question mark in Spanish. It is not necessary to include this in translations. So it is with other punctuation marks.

2.1. Exclamation Marks

The above point about using punctuation sparingly applies most to exclamation marks. Japanese text is often littered with exclamation marks, sometimes going so far as to have one at the end of every sentence, but copying this style in English reduces the impact of an exclamation mark and leaves the text looking hyperactive and juvenile.

Only use one exclamation mark, unless it fits a character (like an excitable high school girl). Three exclamation marks may sometimes be acceptable, but something must be truly remarkable to warrant this. (The announcement of weekly event number 26 does not count as remarkable enough to warrant “!!!”.)

2.2. Square Brackets “[]”

Do not use them. These are a common feature of Japanese, but are rarely used in English.

2.3. Quotation Marks

The Japanese quotation marks 「 」 are often used for emphasis rather than for quoting, and do not necessarily need to be rendered into English as speech marks. English already has capitalization, italics, and bold face type that can all be used to highlight text or define terms. Some titles may also have macros available to change the color of a term to highlight it. Quotation marks are usually unnecessary where a term is already highlighted by one of these methods, as in the example below. Excessive use of quotation marks makes text look messy and difficult to parse, so use them sparingly or not at all.

Correct

Tap the Home button to return to the main screen.

Incorrect

Tap the "Home" button to return to the main screen.

Speech marks should not be used when a character is explaining what they think or feel.

Japanese Original

スクールアイドルと聞いて、最初は『ああ……また穂乃果が突飛なことを思いついたんだ』と、そう思いました

Correct

When I heard about school idols, my first thought was Honoka's being her weird self again.

Incorrect

When I heard about school idols, my first thought was "Oh, Honoka's being her weird self again."

Direct quotation is also rare in English outside of academic papers or journalism. Wherever possible, change direct quotations in Japanese into indirect speech in English

Exception: Quotation marks may sometimes be preferable when introducing or defining a specific term, such as in a tutorial. Note how only the first instance has quotation marks. Once the term has been defined, the quotation marks are no longer necessary.

Example

Songs have "Attributes," and your score is influenced by the Attributes of the song and your team.

2.4. Ellipses

An ellipsis (...) is usually used to indicate that one or more words are missing, but it can also indicate a pause, or a trailing off at the end of speech. In the second case, it should normally show that words are missing and should not come at the end of a complete sentence.

Correct

I want to go with you; it's just that...

Incorrect

I want to go with you; it's just that I have to feed my cat...

When appearing mid-sentence to indicate a pause in speech, there should be no spaces before and after the ellipsis.

Example

What...the hell...was that?

An ellipsis can also be used to indicate that waiting is necessary on the part of the user (usually because a process is taking place).

Example

Now loading...

It should not be used in the Japanese sense to show that something is disappointing.

Correct

You lose.

Incorrect

You Lose...

Caution

When using Excel, please make sure to turn off autocorrect for ellipses to avoid Excel automatically changing an ellipsis to a triple-dot glyph (⋯).

2.5. Surprising Questions

The common comic convention of expression incredulity with either “!?” or “?!” may be acceptable depending on the context, but please use it sparingly. While both forms are acceptable, please maintain consistency within a game.

2.6. Capitalization

Use headline capitalization for banners, buttons, and menu lists of sentence fragments, but use sentence capitalization for menus that contain full sentences, such as FAQs.

Example: Banner

Enter the Castle and Defeat the Boss!

Example: Button

Fight Boss

Example: FAQ

How do I invite friends to play?

Where do I buy coins?

Why am I playing this game?

Capitalize normal terms used in a non-standard way.

Example

“Use the Force, Luke.”

Capitalize game-specific terms. What constitutes a “game-specific term” will vary depending on the title, and will need to be listed in each title’s glossary, but try to keep these to a minimum to avoid excessive capitalization. In general, a game-specific term should only be capitalized if it is used in a non-standard way, or refers to a specific item or function.

Correct

We will be giving away Love Gems or Scouting Tickets as login bonuses.

Incorrect

We will be giving away love gems or scouting tickets as login bonuses.

Correct (football game)

Select a player to power up.

Incorrect (football game)

Select a Player to Power Up.

It may sometimes be preferable to capitalize whole words to make them stand out, such as on buttons or in tutorials.

Example

Tap SCOUT in the MENU BAR to get new MEMBERS.

All caps may also be used where italics would normally be used for emphasis in speech. Use very sparingly.

Example

“That would be VERY painful.”

Do not capitalize generic terms (screen, button, menu, etc.) outside of buttons, banners, or menus, unless that word is part of a game specific term that always includes the generic term.

Correct

Tap the Home button to return to the Home screen.

Incorrect

Tap the Home Button to return to the Home Screen.

2.7. Other Punctuation Marks and Symbols

Remove all non-standard symbols from the Japanese text, e.g. ♥, ■, ☆, etc. You may wish to include the odd universally understood symbol, such as a heart, in very light-hearted and informal text, but do so very sparingly, and only if it is supported in the in-game font.

2.8. Asterisks

In English, an asterisk is used to denote a footnote. It connects a piece of text in the main body of writing with a note at the bottom of the page. It is NOT used in the Japanese sense to indicate that a piece of text is of particular importance and should be read carefully by the user. If a note requires special attention, indicate this either by offsetting the text, including a “Please Note” header, or, in extreme cases, by putting either part of or the entire note in all capitals.

2.9. Accents and Other Non-English Characters (Fonts)

At times, such as for character or place names, you may wish to include non-English accents or other characters (e.g. Ê, Ö, Æ). Please contact KLab beforehand to confirm that the characters you wish to use are supported.

3. FORMATTING

As with punctuation marks, Japanese and English text have different formatting rules. Do not feel you have to follow the same formatting as the original. A translation should not only read, but also LOOK like a piece of natural English text. Feel free to alter sentence, line, and paragraph breaks, headings, indents, list layouts, or any other formatting issues to make the text as clear and natural as possible. This is especially true for line breaks at the end of sentences. Japanese often features a line break at the end of a sentence, where it would be much more natural for the English to continue on in paragraph form. However, this may not be possible if formatting is hard-coded into the text, as changing the formatting may cause bugs.

Example

Original Japanese

何度追い返しても、懲りずに攻め込んでくる愚かな蛮族どもには、容赦する必要はない。

遊牧騎馬民族は、草原で一生を終えればよいのだ。

二度と草原から出てこられぬよう、野蛮人共を完全に駆逐する必要があるだろう。

やつらが次に攻め込んでくるのを待つ必要はない。

すぐさま軍を編成し、こちらから攻め入り、やつらを全滅させてやれ！

Translation

There is no need to show mercy toward the foolish barbarians who continue to attack, despite being driven back again and again.

It is fitting for the lives of these nomadic horsemen to end on the steppe.

You will have to drive them away entirely, so that none will emerge again.

There is no need to wait for them to attack.

Quickly form a squad to attack and annihilate them!

Edit

There is no need to show mercy toward the foolish barbarians who continue to attack, despite being driven back again and again. It is fitting for the lives of these nomadic horsemen to end on the steppe. You will have to drive them away entirely, so that none will emerge again.

There is no need to wait for them to attack. Quickly form a squad and annihilate them!

3.1. Spacing

Use single rather than double spaces after periods to separate sentences.

4. AVOIDING OFFENSE

4.1. Sexist Language

Avoid assuming that the reader is either male or female. Use gender neutral second or third person pronouns when referring to players. While the use of “them,” “their,” or “they” in place of he or she is technically grammatically incorrect, it is becoming more widely accepted, and is preferable to the ugly and unwieldy “he/she,” and the pretentious deliberate use of “she.” Wherever possible, it is better to rewrite the sentence to avoid using a pronoun altogether, or to make the third person pronouns grammatically correct.

Correct

Tapping this link will direct users to the application on their device.

The player must choose a character before beginning the tutorial.

Incorrect

When a user taps this link she will be directed to the application on her device.

The player must choose a character before he/she begins the tutorial.

4.2. Swearing

KLab games are generally aimed at users of all ages, so check first before using any possibly offensive language.

4.3. Gender, Racial, and Religious Stereotypes and Discrimination

Avoid any words, phrases, modes of speech, or references that reinforce or could be construed as gender, racial, or religious discrimination, even if these are present in the original Japanese. If the original text contains anything you feel may be considered offensive, feel free to be creative in your translation so as to remove the offensive content, but please make sure to leave a comment to show that you have done this deliberately, so it isn't mistaken for a mistranslation by an editor.

Examples

Phrases such as "Even though she's a woman, she can fight well."

African American characters speaking only in Ebonics

Derogatory references to the prophet Muhammad

5. KLAB SPECIFIC ISSUES

This section contains examples of recurring issues within KLab games.

5.1. Smartphone Interface Terminology

Please use smartphone interface terminology when referring to actions by the user on their phone.

Correct

Tap the Open button.

Incorrect

Click on the "Open" button.

5.2. Differences Between Japanese and English Marketing Copy

Japanese habitually uses the volitional form in banners and other marketing copy. This is often literally translated as "let's," but should be changed to the imperative in English.

Correct

Visit Hokkaido This Summer!

Incorrect

Let's Visit Hokkaido This Summer!

5.3. Monetization Terminology

Many users react negatively to obvious attempts to get them to spend money. For this reason, do not use words such as "purchase" or "buy" until the user is at the final stage of completing a transaction. Use "get" or a similar word that is not explicitly related to money for links to monetization pages. Only use "purchase" or "buy" when a transaction is about to take place.

5.4. Login or Log In?

"Login" is a noun. "Log in" is a verb. This can be easily remembered with reference to the conjugated forms of the verb (logging in, not logging in). Both "log in to" and "log into" are correct, but unless space restrictions are so tight that you need that one extra character, use "in to." "Log out" is both a noun and a verb; There is no such word as "logout."

Example

Log in with your login password.

5.5. Rendering Japanese in the Roman Alphabet

It may sometimes be necessary to render Japanese into English without translation, such as with character names. Please use the Modified Hepburn system when this is necessary. Refer to this Wikipedia article for Modified Hepburn Romanization rules:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hepburn_romanization

5.6. Issue or Bug?

Use the word “issue” rather than “bug” for notices.

Exception: The word “bug” is acceptable in update notices in list format.

Example

Update Details

- *Added Invite Friends feature*

- *Fixed various bugs*

5.7. Indicating Actions or Sound Effects in Dialogue

If a section of dialogue contains actions or sound effects that the character is making, such as panting, sighing, or staring, offset the word that describes the action or sound with asterisks either side of the word, with no spaces between the word and the asterisks. Note that vocalizations that are commonly rendered as words, such as “ha ha” for laughing, “ow” for pain, “achoo” for sneezing, or effects such as “ghhhaaaa” for shouting and screaming do not need to be offset in this manner.

Japanese

じーーーーっ

English

Stare

5.8. Cultural Differences

Maintain elements of Japanese culture wherever possible. However, if you feel that a particular word or phrase will be hard for non-Japanese people to understand because they lack the necessary cultural context, feel free to either add a little explanatory text, or replace the word or phrase with something that can be more easily understood by an international audience.

Example

Japanese Original

ストーリーと言えば、『桃太郎』っていう物語を読んだわ。あの魔法の団子はアメイジングね！

Initial Translation

If we're talking about stories, I once read one called Momotaro. That magic dango was amazing!

Edit

If we're talking about stories, I once read one called Momotaro. That magic dumpling was amazing!

In the above edit, “Momotaro” has been kept as it is the name of a traditional Japanese story, and there is no need to replace it with a more western example such as “Snow White.” However, “dango” is more problematic, as the word and the confectionery it describes are not widely known or understood outside of Japan, so it has been replaced with the generic and more easily understood “dumpling.”

6. BEST PRACTICE FOR ERROR MESSAGES

Error messages should be in the passive to avoid attributing blame to the user.

Correct

An error occurred.

Incorrect

You caused an error.

7. NUMBERS

7.1. Dates and Times

Refer to the following rules when writing dates and times:

- a) Use the American month/day/year format, unless otherwise stated
- b) Use cardinal numbers, not ordinals, for dates.
- c) Leave out the year in most cases, unless utterly necessary.
- d) Unless character limits are very strict, write out the month in full rather than using numbers. This helps to avoid confusion in regions that do not use the American month/day/year format.
- e) Avoid abbreviating the day and month wherever possible. If abbreviations are necessary, see the Yahoo! Guide for all rules on abbreviating days and months.
- f) Use the 12 hour clock, unless otherwise stated.
- g) 00:00 and 24:00 are acceptable in circumstances where confusion may arise.
- h) Use an en dash with spaces on both sides to indicate a range.
- i) Use lower case “am” and “pm” with no periods.
- j) Ideally, there should be a space before am/pm, but this is not necessary if the character limit is very strict.
- k) If you know the time zone, include it in brackets at the end.
- l) Commas are not necessary in banners.
- m) Zeroes are not necessary when the time is a whole hour.

Examples

October 5

October 5, 2013

Saturday, October 5, 2013

5 am on Saturday, October 5, 2013 (UTC)

5 am, October 5 – 10 am, October 9 (UTC)

10/05/2012 (only if space is VERY tight)

7.2. Numerals in Body Text

The Yahoo! Guide provides detailed guidelines on the use of numerals or words when writing numbers. However, text restrictions may call for numerals rather than words where

words would normally be used. Numerals may also sometimes be preferable to make the number stand out more clearly, such as in pop-up notices, but stick to the Yahoo! Guide rules when writing formal text.

Example: Pop-up notice

Get 5 free items!

Example: Formal text

Players get five free items if they log in during the event.

7.3. Units of Measurement

The Yahoo! Guide also provides detailed guidelines on punctuation and other rules when writing units of measurement. For the sake of space, we usually advise no spaces between a numeral and its unit of measurement, even where the Yahoo! Guide suggests a space is necessary. Context should usually be sufficient to avoid confusion between similar units.

Example

The event will run for 2h, 10m. (2 hours and 10 minutes)

Run 100m to complete the mission. (100 meters, not 100 minutes)

8. BUTTONS AND USER INTERFACE

Avoid using “Yes/No” on buttons where the user is being asked to make a choice. Users will often simply tap the “Yes” button without reading the prompt, and may inadvertently perform an unwanted action. Instead, make at least one of the buttons a verb that clearly states what will happen when the button is tapped.

Example

Do you want to cancel the transaction?

CANCEL NO

Do not use “to” in buttons, even when the Japanese say “～へ.” The name of the button should be enough for the player to realize that tapping it will take them somewhere.

Correct

Home

Incorrect

To Home

Buttons and UI elements should be title capped, but you may want to write everything in all caps at times for stylistic reasons, especially single word buttons.

Punctuation is usually unnecessary in buttons and other UI elements.

9. FAQs

FAQs should be in question and answer format. The question should be phrased in the first person from the point of view of the user. The answer should be either in the second or third person.

Correct

Q: Can data be transferred if I change my mobile device?

A: When transferring data to a new device, confirm the transfer ID and password under the “Save game data” option. Please write down your ID and password so that you don’t forget them.

Incorrect

Q: About transferring data

A: I can transfer data to a new device by confirming my transfer ID and password under the “Save game data” option.

10. WRITING CONCISE COPY

The following are examples of ways to shorten your writing without losing meaning. These are just to give you an idea of how text can be made shorter, and all of these principles do not have to be applied to every piece of text.

- a. Change phrasal or multi-word verbs to single word verbs.

Before

You will be able to receive some prizes.

After

You can get some prizes.

- b. Change multi-syllable words to single syllable words.

Before

You will be able to receive some prizes.

After

You can get some prizes.

- c. Change complex phrases to simple ones.

Before

We would like to inform you that...

After

Please note that...

- d. Remove unnecessary words.

Before

However, your friends who are under level 10 will not appear on the list.

After

Friends under level 10 will not appear on the list.

- e. Change “the something of something” phrases to remove the preposition and article.

Before

To all the lovers of School idol festival

After

To all School idol festival lovers

- f. Use the simple past instead of the past perfect.

Before

You have been given a reward.

After

You got a reward.

- g. Change future forms to the present tense for system messages.

Before

The data will be saved automatically.

After

Data is saved automatically.

- h. Eliminate the subject and object when the context makes them obvious.

Before

You can only send XXX once per friend.

After

Limited to once per friend