

# TEQSA editorial style guide

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#### Accessibility

- This style guide aims to ensure that WCAG 2.1 accessibility guidelines are considered and incorporated throughout all levels of communication practice, from inclusive language to the way documents and webpages are interpreted and read by electronic screen readers.
- Accessibility information is constantly being updated in the Style Manual. The TEQSA style guide will also be updated when new information is available.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for accessibility and inclusion](#)



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#### Acronyms, abbreviations, contractions and initialisms

- Punctuation is not necessary for contractions, acronyms, initialisms or the abbreviations Mr, Dr, etc unless they end a sentence. Spaces are not required for:
  - common shortened forms, e.g. CSIRO, RMIT
  - degrees, e.g. BA, BBus, GradDipHealthSci
- Acronyms are usually written as all capitals but use lower case for some familiar acronyms ('radar', 'laser', 'scuba'). Use an initial capital for familiar acronyms that are proper nouns ('Qantas').
- Initialisms are often all upper case ('VOIP', 'FOI') but there are exceptions ('HTML'). Consult a dictionary if you're unsure of the capitalisation.
- Although there is a trend to omit the full stops in 'e.g.' and 'i.e.', the unstopped versions are not widely accepted. As such, retention of the full stops is recommended.
- [Access TEQSA's list of preferred spellings, abbreviations and acronyms](#)

- [Access the Style Manual entry for abbreviations](#)
- [Access the Style Manual entry for acronyms and initialisms](#)
- [Access the Style Manual entry for Latin shortened forms](#)



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#### Ampersand (&)

- In most circumstances 'and' should be used instead of '&'.
- Use the ampersand in business names only if it is a company convention or registered name e.g. Ernst & Young.
- The legal names of providers should be checked against the [National Register](#).
- The ampersand (&) is no longer used in in-text parenthetical reference to joint authors. 'Black & Brown 2009' - should now read 'Black and Brown 2009'.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for organisation names](#)



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#### Apostrophes

- Apostrophes show possession and contractions. Don't use them for descriptive phrases or plural nouns.
- For proper names ending in letter 's', add an apostrophe and another 's', even if you don't pronounce the final 's' in the noun: Burns's report, James's profession.
- You don't need an apostrophe with possessive pronouns: Put the report in **its** place.
- Don't use an apostrophe for Australian place names involving possessives: Kings Cross, Mrs Macquaries Chair.
- However, you should use an apostrophe for plurals of single letters and single-digit numbers. These have an apostrophe before the 's':
- Binary code uses 0's and 1's.
- Dot your i's and cross your t's when you edit the report.
- Always check – online is easiest - whether an apostrophe forms part of the official name of an organisation:
- National Farmers' Federation
- Australian Workers' Union.
- No apostrophe is needed for the plural form of a noun: the 2020s, fresh avocados.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for apostrophes](#)



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#### Australian usage

- Use Australian terms and spelling for an Australian audience. However, some international organisations use 'z' instead of 's' e.g. World Health Organization.
- Examples of Australian terms include footpaths and lifts, not sidewalks and elevators.



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#### Block quotes

- Australian government style recommends using block quotes without quotation marks for long quotes. It also specifies not using italics in block quotations, but instead enclosing the quote in quotation marks.
- Some report, presentation and digital content templates include italicised block quotes making it difficult to conform to these rules.
- If the source material includes italicised text such as publication or legislation titles, that part of quotation needs be written in plain text so it stands out from the surrounding text.
- Block quotes of quotations of more than 30 words should:
  - begin on a new line with the block of text indented
  - ensure line spacing is set to '0'
  - be separated from its citation, which should appear on the next line in parentheses as per referencing rules.



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#### Brackets

- There are three types of brackets:
  - parentheses (round brackets) are used to enclose additional clarifying information, e.g. The test result was 10% higher (50 km/hr) than that of the other vehicle
  - square brackets show additions to quoted material, e.g. He said, 'I went to university in Paris [Texas]'
  - angle brackets enclose email and web addresses, e.g. <teqsa.gov.au>.
- Use brackets only where they make content clearer to people. For example, always use brackets in author–date citations.
- Too many brackets, or badly used brackets, can make a sentence more complex and difficult to understand. You can usually rewrite a sentence so the content in brackets can be its own sentence or can even be removed.
- If the content inside the brackets is a full sentence, include the end punctuation inside the brackets.
- Brackets should be in the same type (roman, italics, bold) as the text around the brackets. This is regardless of the type of the text inside the brackets.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for brackets and parentheses](#)



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## Branding and tone of voice

- Information about TEQSA's branding and tone of voice can be found in the [TEQSA Brand Identity Guidelines](#).
- The document outlines the guidelines and principles for using the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) Visual Identity. It includes information about our logos, colours, graphic elements, typefaces and photography as well as showcasing how they apply to a suite of products. It also contains a Brand Voice Guide detailing our vision, our mission and how we speak to our audiences.
- [Access the TEQSA Brand Identity Guidelines](#)



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## Capitalisation

- **Minimal capitalisation, also called 'sentence case'**: capitalises the first word of a title and any proper nouns and names (and their derivatives). For example:
- titles of books (which should also be italicised), e.g. *The leap to equality* or *A town like Alice*
- titles of articles and of chapters within a published work; these must also be set apart by quotation marks, e.g. 'Internationalising the curriculum' in last week's *Campus Review*.
- **Maximal capitalisation also called 'title case'**: capitalises all words in a title except for articles, conjunctions and prepositions.
- Maximal capitalisation should be used for:
- all reports produced by TEQSA, e.g. Assessment Reports, Statement of Reasons
- all published official higher education provider documents or reports such as plans, policies, procedures, reports, e.g. the Student Handbook, the 2012–13 Business Plan, Monitoring and Evaluation Policy
  - all published official higher education provider documents or reports should also be italicised
  - use lower case when referring to higher education provider documents in the generic sense, e.g. the plan, the policy, the register, the survey, the report
  - generally a business plan or strategic plan has a time span included which is part of the title, e.g. The University's 2012–13 Business Plan. It is good practice to search for those dates and include them in the report to differentiate from similar titles.
- all higher education provider programs or projects e.g. Collaborative Research Networks program, the Migrant and Refugee Support project ('program' is in lower case as it isn't part of the official title)
- titles of books, legislation and periodicals (journals, magazines and newspapers) must also be italicised, e.g. *The Age* or the *Journal of English Linguistics*

- when 'The' is shown in a periodical's masthead as part of the title it should be capitalised when it does not coincide with the ordinary use of the definite article, e.g. He writes for *The Age* but... in the *Age* editorial
- the Academic Board or the Board of Directors, or particular committees or councils of institutions
- the chairperson of a board or a committee, as in the Chair
- titles of specific persons, institutions, departments or academic schools, committees, governing boards and proper nouns: e.g. Wombat University, Faculty of Business, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality), Master of Applied Science, the Academic Board, the Board of Directors, the Audit and Risk Committee, the Chair
- use lower case when more than one individual with the title is referenced, e.g. assistant deans (teaching and learning), pro vice-chancellors.

#### Lower case

- use lower case when referring to: generic programs, e.g. masters degree, honours degree; business faculties; departments; heads of school etc
- use lower case when referring to a committee in a generic sense, e.g. a library committee
- do not capitalise university unless using it as an abbreviation of the institution's full name, e.g. Wombat University (the University), but Wombat University achieved university status in 2001
- do not capitalise college unless using it as an abbreviation of the institution's full name
- do not capitalise provider or higher education provider
- use lower case when referring to an institution's mission, vision, values, goals, objectives, or strategies
- use lower case for discipline names, e.g. humanities, science, theology, youth work.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for punctuation and capitalisation](#)



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#### Capitalisation and use of terms associated with government

- Generally, terms associated with government should be capitalised when using the full or abbreviated official name. Use an initial capital for both words only when they occur together. Refer to the national government of Australia as the 'Australian Government'. Capitalise when using a term adjectivally. Otherwise lower case should be used. For example:
- Australian Government, Victorian Government, but it is the function of government to ...
- Commonwealth Government, Commonwealth Parliament: 'The Commonwealth of Australia' is the name of Australia in the Constitution. Use an initial capital for 'Commonwealth'. Do not use the phrases 'Commonwealth Government' to mean 'Australian Government'
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency or the agency
- Department of Education and Training or the department

- Federal Court of Australia
- Northern Territory or the Territory
- States and Territories are capitalised when referring to a particular jurisdiction but lower case otherwise
- Act(s), Regulation(s), Bill(s)
- Minister for Education and Training but minister when no particular parliamentarian is specified
- Common TEQSA titles:
  - 'We consulted the Assistant Director, Quality Assurance ...' but 'All assistant directors were consulted ...'
  - 'The Assessment Manager spoke to the provider ...' but 'This guidance applies to all TEQSA assessment managers ...'
- [Access the Style Manual entry for Government terms](#)



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#### Commas, colons and semicolons

- A comma marks the smallest break in the continuity of a sentence and can enhance clarity. Using commas is a matter of judgement and personal preference. Consider whether a comma is needed to ensure the message is clear in meaning and delivered effectively. See also [Lists](#).

#### What not to do with commas

- Don't place a comma between a subject and its verb. This error is especially common when the subject is long:
- Pensioners whose aids require battery types not normally in stock will have to buy their batteries from commercial outlets.  
**not**  
Pensioners whose aids require battery types not normally in stock, will have to buy their batteries from commercial outlets.
- Don't use one comma only when there should be a pair:
- The conference was held in Strahan, Tasmania, during March.  
**not**  
The conference was held in Strahan, Tasmania during March.
- Don't misplace the commas around a parenthetic expression. If the parenthetic element is removed, the sentence must still make sense:
- We arrived at the gallery mid-morning and, because it had not yet opened, spent the next hour in a nearby bookshop.  
**not**  
We arrived at the gallery mid-morning, and because it had not yet opened, spent the next hour in a nearby bookshop.

#### Semi-colons

- The break provided by a semicolon is stronger than a comma but weaker than a full stop. A semicolon can be used to link two clauses that could be treated as separate sentences but that have a closer logical link.

## Colons

- After a colon, use lower case unless:
- the word that follows the colon is a proper noun e.g. The commander was confident: Special Air Service Regiment had enough ammunition.
- the text after the colon is a question that completes a sentence e.g. The election was fought on a simple question: Which party had the best economic credentials?
- Use a colon before the subtitle of a book or article.
- Colons are not necessary to introduce a quote within a sentence e.g. She said that it was 'time to start work'. Note that the full stop is placed outside the quotation mark as it is ending the sentence rather than just the quoted material.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for punctuation marks](#)



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## Dates

- In text, spell out the months of the year and arrange by day, date, month, year.
- No punctuation is necessary for dates when numbers are separated by text, e.g. Tuesday 1 January 2001. Writing September 2, 2005 and 2nd September 2005 does not follow Style Manual rules.
- Avoid abbreviations of dates in text, e.g. on Tues 1 Jan 2001.
- Words are preferred where numerals might otherwise start a sentence, e.g. The first of January 2001.
- When referring to a span of years, use the en dash (–) (Ctrl + minus on the numeric keypad) not a hyphen (-), e.g. 1975–99, 2005–06.
- Do not use the en dash as a substitute for the word 'and', e.g. the period between 1975 and 1999 (not the period between 1975–99).
- Do not use the en dash as a substitute for the word 'to', e.g. from 2 to 4 January 2005 (**not** from 2–4 January 2005).
- Separate the numbers in a numeric date with an unspaced slash, using the format 'day/month/year'. This format uses single digits for single-digit days and months. For example: 30/6/2021.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for dates and time](#)



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## Dictionary

- Australian English spelling and grammar is constantly evolving, particularly around use of word phrases and hyphenated and compound words. The move to digital publication is also resulting in changes to the way we communicate ideas. Cyber security is a case in point; do you write it as cybersecurity, cyber-security or cyber security?



- Visiting the Government’s Australian Cyber Security Centre webpage shows that they use the non-hyphenated, non-compound form of the word phrase ‘cyber security’.
- When that reference option is not available, it is best to refer to either the *Australian concise Oxford dictionary* or the *Macquarie dictionary* for spelling and punctuation usage. Choose the latest version of one dictionary to maintain consistency.
- When working in Microsoft Word, apply the English (Australia) dictionary as the spelling default.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for dictionary](#)



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### Ellipses

- Use an ellipsis (...), three consecutive spaced points (with a single space on either side), to indicate the omission of material within a quotation, e.g. ‘The new system will simplify current tax arrangements ...’.
- Don’t use a full stop, comma or semicolon after an ellipsis.
- You can use a question mark or exclamation mark after an ellipsis if necessary.
- If a quote ends in an exclamation mark or question mark, include the final punctuation mark after the ellipsis. Don’t include a space between the punctuation and the ellipsis.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for ellipsis](#)



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### Emphasis or stress of a word or phrase

- Use bold text sparingly to emphasise a word or phrase. Minimal use of bolding is preferable as overuse may diminish the effect and cause confusion to the reader.
- Italics and underlining should not be used for emphasis.
- Underlining is used exclusively for web and email addresses (hyperlinks).
- Italics reduce readability and are used for titles of books, periodicals, legislative acts and reports.



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### En dash

- Spaced en dashes (Ctrl + minus on the numeric keypad) create a pause in a sentence. These textual dashes can add extra meaning, similar to commas and brackets, and they are also useful in long sentences containing multiple commas or extra information: The allies – the USA, Australia and New Zealand – signed the pact in 1951.

- Using an en dash rarely increases its effectiveness – for example, drawing attention to a new and important detail for your main idea.
- Use an unspaced en dash to indicate a span of figures, such as page numbers, and time, e.g. pp. 306–7, 2006–07.
- For financial years, use four digits for the first number and only two digits for the second. Join them with an unspaced en dash. This will not create any issue for users who rely on screen readers. The 2019–20 budget [The financial year starting in July 2019 and finishing in June 2020].
- Do not use en dash to indicate a span of months, spell out March to June (see also [Dates](#)).
- Do not use an en dash as a minus sign or as a hyphen.
- Don't use an en dash as a substitute for the words 'and' or 'to' in a full sentence, for example: 'the period between 1975 and 1999' (not 'the period between 1975–1999'); 'from 2 to 4 January 2005' (not 'from 2–4 January 2005').
- When referencing in footnotes or endnotes, the abbreviation 'pp.' can be used with an unspaced en dash to denote a span of multiple pages, for example: pp. 23–5. (Use 'p.' to refer to a single page.)
- [Access the Style Manual entry for dashes](#)



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#### Foreign words or phrases

- Italicise foreign words or phrases that are not integrated into common English usage, e.g. *inter alia*. Italics contrast words and phrases that are not in English from surrounding text. Foreign words and phrases should generally be avoided in government writing, unless there is no English equivalent.
- Commonly used terms such as 'ad hoc', 'modus operandi' and 'bona fide' are not italicised. Accents and symbols should be retained, e.g. resumé.
- Refer to the Macquarie Dictionary or the Australian Oxford Dictionary to confirm whether foreign words or phrases should be italicised.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for foreign words \(italics\)](#)



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#### Headings

- Headings should use minimal capitalisation or sentence case, except the title of reports such as Assessment Reports, Statements of Reasons, etc. For example: 'Pay and benefits'.
- Page and section headings should be concise, fewer than seven words where possible.
- Page headings should not be framed as questions nor contain symbols.
- Use correctly formatted heading styles contain to ensure that screen readers work well for people with reduced visual ability. Bold and italicised text are not picked up by screen readers and create a poor accessibility experience.

- [Access the Style Manual entry for headings](#)



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### Honorifics and post-nominals

- The full titles of academics and professionals always have an initial capital letter. Use lower case for the names of positions when using them in a generic way.
- The Honourable is usually shortened to The Hon, e.g. The Hon Jill James MP
- Senator precedes the Hon if the minister is a member of the Senate, e.g. Senator the Hon
- Post-nominals should be in capitals (and not italicised) and follow the surname. Don't use full stops or spaces within post-nominals. Don't use commas before or between post-nominals.
- Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Dean of Arts (not Dean of the Faculty of Arts or Dean of the College of Arts). More information in [Capitalisation](#).
- [Access the Style Manual entry for honorifics and postnominals \(academics and professionals\)](#)



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### Hyphens

- Hyphens clarify meaning by connecting words and parts of words into a single unit of meaning.
- The Macquarie Dictionary tends to avoid the use of the hyphen except to avoid ambiguity.
- The [TEQSA preferred spellings and acronyms](#) document provides a guide to preferred usage. Examples include:
- hyphenate compound designators, e.g. Vice-Chancellor and Auditor-General
- compounds with well, ill, semi and non, etc. are not hyphenated when they follow the noun they modify, but are hyphenated when they are used as a descriptor, e.g. well-qualified applicant, well-known university but 'The two applicants were well qualified'
- when a compound adjective consists of two adjectives, or of a noun plus an adjective, the expression is hyphenated, e.g. bitter-sweet and colour-blind
- compounds that are set phrases consisting of a noun plus a noun or an adjective plus a noun are not usually hyphenated, e.g. higher education provider, English language proficiency
- first year experience, and work integrated learning
- compound adjectives involving present or past participles usually take a hyphen, e.g. a government-owned facility, a heart-rending image
- hyphenate to avoid awkward juxtapositions of the same letter, e.g. re-enrol, re-examination, part-time, etc. Everyday compound words, however, are not hyphenated, e.g. cooperation and coordination, along with postgraduate, proactive, audio-visual, onshore and offshore

- hyphenate all words where the e stands for electronic (with the exception of email), e.g. e-commerce, e-business, e-learning. Do not use ecommerce or eCommerce. Capitalise at the beginning of a sentence (otherwise use lower case), e.g. E-commerce is a growing industry.

- [Access the Style Manual entry for hyphens](#)



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#### Italics

- Only use italics for titles of published books, journals, legislation, plays, works of art, or when emphasising a conjunction such as 'not', 'or', or 'and', or a foreign word or phrase. Italicising longer sentences reduces readability and accessibility.
- Only put direct quotes in italics if the original text was italicised.
- Australian government style recommends not using italics in block quotations, but instead enclosing the quote in quotation marks.
- If the source material includes italicised text such as publication or legislation titles, that part of quotation needs be written in plain text so it stands out from the surrounding text.
- Some report, presentation and digital content templates include italicise block quotes making it difficult to conform to these rules. The main thing is to make sure the content is clearly understood and consistent throughout the document.

- [Access the Style Manual entry for italics](#)



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#### Legislation: Acts and Regulations

- Titles of legislation should use maximal capitalisation. Legislation should be spelled in full and italicised in the first instance, e.g. *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000*.
- After first mention, use the short title in roman type without the year, e.g. the ESOS Act.
- Always use the short title in italics the first time you cite the Act in your text.
- If there are subsequent mentions of the Act, use the short title in roman type without the year.
- In headings that are italicised, legislation should not be italicised.
- Regulations and other delegated legislation should use maximal capitalisation (title case) and should be italicised.
- Bills before parliament are in effect unpublished and should not be italicised but should use maximal capitalisation.
- For additional information about legal referencing, refer to [TEQSA's legal referencing policy](#).
- [Access the Style Manual entry for legal material](#)



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## Links

- Links and hyperlinks help people navigate documents and digital services or products. But they can also reduce readability and increase cognitive load. For this reason, use them only when they support a user need.
- Text links should accurately describe where a selected link will take the reader and open on the expected page – ‘check your pay’, ‘access induction process’.
- Embed links in descriptive text. Links should be embedded in text descriptions rather than displaying a URL containing symbols and slashes.
- Instructions for links should avoid using ‘click here’ as it is meaningless for screen readers and tells the reader nothing about the information they will find at the destination. Other instructions such as ‘read more’, ‘see further information’, ‘watch this’ and ‘listen now’, are not inclusive of readers with visual and hearing impairment.
- To link to an email address, use the email address as the link text so it’s not mistaken for a website address, i.e. belinda.bloggs@dta.gov.au. Use the mailto: prefix in the URL but not in the link text.
- A cited document that is available online may be referenced within the text, e.g. the TEQSA information sheet, ‘Xyz’ <teqsa.gov.au/xyz>. To turn a website reference into an active hyperlink, type the url then add a space. Add the angle brackets last.
- When the link loads a document, the document’s size and format should be indicated, e.g. View TEQSA’s International Engagement Strategy 2016-2020 (PDF, 256Kb).
- [Access the Style Manual entry for links](#)



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## Lists

### Sentence lists

- Short lists may be integrated into sentences. Use a colon to introduce the list items and commas to separate the items. For example:
- The map shows the following information: geographic features, population distribution and environmental constraints.
- In some circumstances, a serial comma (also known as an Oxford comma) may be required between the last two items to ensure clarity. For example:
- They should seek the support of landholders, philanthropists, government, and community and industry groups.
- If one or more items in a series or list within a sentence contain internal commas, use a semicolon to separate the items. For example:
- The results were surprising: adult males, 35%; adult females, 52%; and children, 13%.

### Bullet point/numbered lists

- For longer series, bullet (otherwise known as 'dot') point lists will help readers to absorb information, particularly when they are scanning material or viewing it on screen. Numbers or letters should be reserved for cases where it is necessary to show priority or chronology within the series or where individual items need to be identified for later reference.
- Avoid overuse of bullet point lists as documents with pages of bullets fail to convey hierarchy of information.
- When using bullet point lists, adhere to the following principles:
- Each series should be presented in a parallel format, and each point within it should flow logically and grammatically from the stem.
- A consistent approach must be taken to capitalising and punctuating bullet-point series throughout a document.
- There should always be more than one indented item in a series.
- Spacing should be single line with 6pt before and 0pt after.
- Uncheck the 'Don't add space between paragraphs of the same style' box in the 'paragraph' menu option.

#### Colons

- It is usually necessary to place a colon after the lead-in to clarify the link with the indented information that follows. Although this principle can be relaxed when both the introduction and the dot points consist of full sentences, a colon often remains preferable, particularly if the lead-in words and the first dot point are split between different pages or columns.
- Avoid using colons within the indented material itself unless the items are full sentences, otherwise there will be more than one colon within a single sentence structure. Do not insert a space either side of a colon when writing ratios.

#### Punctuating list items

- The Style Manual recommends designing lists for clarity while using less punctuation. There are several different approaches to punctuating dot points but whichever style is chosen, the construction of each point must be parallel, meaning that the tense and construction of each point clearly follows the introductory sentence and the other points in the list. Where possible, try to stick to one style within a document or on a webpage.
- Recommended list styles include:
- bullet point lists using sentence fragments. For these lists the first word of each bullet point is lower case – unless it is a proper noun - with no end punctuation apart from a full stop on the final point to show that the series is complete
- bullet points lists comprising full sentences. These lists require each sentence to begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop
- numbered or lettered point lists. These lists are used in legal texts or when priority of information needs to be clearly understood.

#### Conjunctions in lists

- There is no need to add 'and' at the end of the second-last (penultimate) dot point. The indented format, line spacing and clear wording of the lead-in text are sufficient to show the relationship between items.
- A carefully worded lead-in shows when dot points are being presented as alternatives. However, if a list comprises more than two items and gives alternatives,

an 'or' could be placed on a separate line before the last item in the list to reinforce the meaning. For example:

- Applications must be accompanied by one of the following:
- a valid passport  
proof of address  
or  
a tax return for the latest tax year.

#### Indented lists

- Indenting should generally be restricted to two levels of subdivision. Indents should use bullet points or dots for first level and a dash for second level. Do not use arrows or other mathematical symbols as they are confusing for people with reading difficulties and for electronic screen readers.

#### Stand-alone lists

- Stand-alone lists are often seen in display material, brochures and technical documentation. Generally, stand-alone lists have only a heading without any following lead-in information. Each item can have an initial capital and no full stop is required at the end of the list. For example:
- Furniture and equipment for meeting room  
Chairs (25)  
Desks (2)  
Lectern  
Microphone
- [Access the Style Manual entry for lists](#)



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#### Names

- Use initial capitals only for the formal names and titles of government entities and office holders. Use lower case for generic references. There might be exceptions if you are writing specialist legal content using terms defined in legislation.
- Use lower case when referring to an institution's mission, vision, values, goals, objectives, or strategies.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for names and terms](#)



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#### Numbers

- New rules apply to several number styles:
- Spell out 'zero' and 'one' then use numerals for '2' and above unless starting a sentence. This rule has been updated because numbers '0' and '1' are difficult for some users to read and they can also be confused with the letters 'O' and 'I'.
- Express percentages in numerals even when below 2%.
- Sentences should not begin with a numeral. Spell the number or restructure the sentence, e.g. Fifteen per cent of students were dissatisfied with the library facilities.

- Do not include commas in numbers between 1 and 999.
- Include commas for numbers greater than 999, e.g. 10,000.
- The word 'dollar' does not need to be spelled out, e.g. \$20,000. Do not use \$20 thousand or \$20k.
- The words 'million' and 'billion' should always be spelled out, e.g. \$9 million (not \$9m) or \$20 billion (not \$20b).
- Decades may be expressed as the 1990s, the '90s, or the 90s, but not as the 1990's.
- Use the unspaced en dash rule (Ctrl + minus on the numeric keypad) for spans of numerals, e.g. 9–12, 40–1, 45–50, 402–5, 421–39, 440–551. See [En dash](#) for more information.
- Within text, spell out 'pages', e.g. pages 23–5.
- Within reference lists, single pages use a single 'p', e.g. 'p. 10'. Multiple pages use 'pp' before the number span. For a range of page numbers, use the least number of digits, e.g. pp. 23–5, pp. 454–9. Note the space between the letters and the numerals and a full stop after the 'p'.
- Use commas to separate numbers within text to avoid confusion, e.g. The Board said that in 1986, 800 more vehicles would be needed.
- Fractions are spelled out in general text and only used when an exact number is not important.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for numbers and measurements](#)



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## Per cent

- Use the percentage sign next to a numeral in text. Don't use a space between the number and the percentage sign, e.g. 5%.
- In financial documents or tables, the % symbol is more appropriate. Always use numerals, e.g. 9%.
- When the percentage appears in parentheses during, or at the end of, a sentence, use digits and the % symbol, for example:
- 'A low risk was identified in relation to the relatively low graduate destinations rate (7%).'
- The % sign should be used when the number is represented in numeral form rather than spelled out, e.g. 15%.
- The latest Style Manual update stipulates that numbers should be spelled out up to, and including, the number one, and numerals used thereafter: zero per cent, one per cent, 2%, 3%, 4%.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for percentages](#)



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## Plural verbs



- While it is grammatically correct to use plural and singular verbs with the names of organisations, this is not Australian Government style. **Always use a singular verb.** This applies even if organisation names end in an 's' and look plural.
- Correct: TEQSA has been quick to respond.  
Incorrect: TEQSA have been quick to respond.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for organisation names \(plural verbs\)](#)



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#### Post-nominals

- The rules for post-nominals stipulate writing the highest honour first, followed by degrees, membership of associations and then membership of parliament:
- post-nominals for honours and awards
- Queen's Counsel (QC) or Senior Counsel (SC) or Justice of the Peace (JP)
- university degrees and diplomas
- membership of professional associations
- membership of parliament.
- Do not use full stops or spaces within post-nominals.
- Do not use commas before or between post-nominals.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for awards and honours](#)



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#### Pronouns

- Use gender-neutral language. Find out the user's preferred pronoun.
- Use 'they' and 'them' rather than 'him/her' when referring to a person in a general sense (i.e. when not speaking of a specific individual whose correct pronouns are known).
- Using 'they' and 'them' is more inclusive language and eliminates use of the slash (/) which should not be used for alternatives.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for pronouns \(plain language and word choice\)](#)



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#### Publications

- When including titles of books, periodicals, chapters, articles, and documents placed on websites, the indefinite and definite articles (A, An, The) at the beginning of the title may be omitted to improve readability, e.g. He writes for *The Age*, ... in the *Age* editorial on Monday. Refer also to [Capitalisation](#).
- Use normal type (non-italics) for publication titles in headings where italics would normally be used, e.g. The Age not *The Age*.



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## Quotations

- Great care should be taken to quote a work verbatim. Capitalisation, spelling, italicisation or punctuation should remain unchanged. Any necessary editorial changes should be signalled to the reader in the appropriate way.
- Use single quotation marks for quotations and direct speech.
- Do not use quotation marks when text is within brackets, e.g. (the Commission) not ('the Commission').
- Use single quotation marks to highlight a technical or unusual term, or a word or phrase used in a specific sense. Quotation marks are not necessary in subsequent mentions. However, if more than 10 pages elapse between the first and subsequent mentions, then quotation marks may be reused.
- Use double quotation marks for a quotation within a quotation, e.g. Professor Jones told the audience: 'The research states, "It cannot reasonably be attributed to any one factor" and I tend to agree.'
- Use square brackets within quotations to signify editorial insertions or changes, such as:
  - a capitalisation change, e.g. [t]he – instead of The
  - the root word is altered, e.g. signif[ies] rather than signify
  - additional or clarifying information, e.g. While I was born in Wellington [New Zealand], I grew up in Sydney; the [professional doctorate] degree is equivalent in standard to the PhD
- to indicate a misspelling, grammatical peculiarity or error of fact by inserting [*sic*], e.g. Melberne [*sic*]. Note: *sic* is italicised. The use of [*sic*] is likely to embarrass the original author; therefore, use it with great caution. If you are in a position to check the bothersome expression with the original author, it is suggested that you do so rather than embarrass them. If you are quoting from a published work, then do use [*sic*]. [Grammarly says *sic* is actually a Latin word that means 'so' or 'thus'. "The *sic* you see in quoted text marks a spelling or grammatical error. It means that the text was quoted verbatim, and the mistake it marks appears in the source".]
- Use an ellipsis (...), three consecutive spaced points (with a single space on either side), to indicate the omission of material within a quotation, e.g. 'The new system will simplify current tax arrangements ...'
- Quotation marks, question marks and exclamation marks may be used after an ellipses. If the ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence, don't add a full stop.
- A colon should be used to introduce a quotation within text, and the capitalisation of the following first word can be retained, e.g. The University reported that: 'The students' usage of online resources was declining'.
- The punctuation used when ending a sentence with a quotation should be placed inside the quotation mark when there is no expression of direct speech (carrier expression), e.g. 'I love being an advocate.' The punctuation should be placed outside the quotation marks when there is a carrier expression, e.g. She said, 'I love being an advocate'.

- Block quotations, usually more than 30 words long, are indented on a new line and are often introduced by a colon. The block quotation is then italicised and as the quotation is differentiated from the text, quotation marks are not necessary.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for quotation marks](#)



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#### Ratios

- When making a reference to a ratio, authors can either spell (using hyphens) or use colons to denote the ratio, e.g. staff-to-student ratio of one to five, or staff:student ratio of 1:5.
- Using words instead of symbols improves accessibility.
- There is no space before or after hyphens or colons used to indicate a ratio.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for mathematical relationships](#)



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#### Referencing

- Authors are responsible for providing accurate references. All works cited in the text should be referenced using the author-date system. Spell out 'and' when two authors.
- When referencing texts apply the following style: Author (Year) Title, e.g. Garner H (2008) *The spare room*; Garner (2008); Blackadder and Davis (2006); Winter, Wiseman and Muirhead (2005) *Out of the shoe box*; *Beyond rhetoric*.
- For full referencing protocols refer to the Harvard referencing system.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for referencing and attribution](#)



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#### Registered provider names

- Express names in full in the first instance; acronyms or accepted shortened forms should be used thereafter provided the shortened form is written in parentheses after the first instance. Refer to the [National Register](#) for higher education providers for the correct name of an institution.
- For the names of providers' governing bodies and campus organisations use maximal capitalisation, e.g. the Kangaroo Association of Students (see also [Capitalisation](#)).
- [Access the Style Manual entry for organisation names](#)



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#### Slash

- No space is required between words separated by the forward slash, e.g. yes/no. But wherever possible, minimise the use of slashes. It's better to spell out 'yes or no' or 'yes and no'. And instead of writing 'and/or' it's much clearer to the reader and cleaner on the page if you can choose between the options.
- Separate the numbers in a numeric date with an unspaced slash, using the format 'day/month/year'. This format uses single digits for single-digit days and months, e.g. 30/6/2021.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for forward slashes](#)



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### Spacing

- Always use single spaces between sentences. Double spacing is unnecessary and can negatively affect text layout, especially in tables and when text is justified.
- Use a soft return (shift+space) to keep dates, names and numbers together rather than breaking across lines. Examples include legislation: section 17, dates: 25 January 2020, percentages: 25%, and names: Dr Smith.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for punctuation and capitalisation](#)



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### Spelling

- Preferred spellings are contained in the [TEQSA spelling and acronyms glossary](#).



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### Strategic planning terms

- Strategic planning terms such as mission statement, vision statement, objectives, goals, values and vision, should be written in sentence case unless beginning a sentence or part of a title. Refer to [Capitalisation](#) for more information.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for punctuation and capitalisation](#)



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### Tense

- Use of past, present and future tense should be consistent throughout documents.
- For example, in an assessment report you would write:
  - narrative of past events (including past findings and past responses to those findings) in the past tense
  - current findings, decisions and results in the present tense

- recommendations in the future tense.
- A single document might require the use of past, present and future tense throughout, however the distinction between the three should be clear. Headings and sub-headings are useful for further signalling and clarity.



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#### Time

- Use 'am' and 'pm' in lower case, with a non-breaking space after the number. You can use 2 zeros to show the full hour, but they aren't essential. Examples: 9 am or 9:00 am.
- Use a colon between the hours and minutes e.g. the bus leaves at 8:22 am.
- Use a colon to separate the hours, minutes and seconds in 24-hour time e.g. 23:59:17 [11:59:17 pm – includes hours, minutes and seconds].
- [Access the Style Manual entry for time and dates](#)



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#### Writing tips for publications and the web

- Writing for the web and for hard copy publications is similar in that all writing should be clear, accessible, jargon free, and follow the Style manual guidelines.
- All corporate writing should consider:
- Who is the audience?
- What does the audience need to understand?
- How can I present the information to suit readers' needs?
- Why is this information important? Why should they care?
- What should my subject or topic headings say?

#### Structure

- Where possible, use active voice for clear, succinct sentences. Sentences using passive voice and modifiers are often wordier and more convoluted in construction.
- Active voice: The chairman signed the contract this morning.
- Passive voice: The contract was signed this morning by the chairman.
- Keep text simple – use short, concise sentences and paragraphs.
- Paragraphs should not be longer than eight lines. Include the main idea in the first sentence of the paragraph. Expand the main idea in the following sentences.
- Break text into manageable chunks.
- Use subheadings and bulleted lists.
- Always include titles that are a concise, meaningful, plainly worded reminders of the content. These can also be used as bookmarks on your page.

#### Writing for the web

- Digital content should contain about half the number of words used in a hard copy publication.
- Readers will scan text for the main points of the message. Internet users tend not to read all the text until they have determined its relevance.
- Any text that goes over the equivalent of three A4 pages should include a short summary or abstract of three to five sentences. The full text can then be published as a downloadable file for readers to print rather than read from the screen.
- Split large documents into separate files (chapters or sections of a print document) and link them by hypertext.

#### Images and graphics

- Use images and graphics mindfully as they may slow the speed at which users can access and view web pages.
- When using images or graphics always ensure that alternative text (alt text) is included. Alt text should describe the message the image is being used to convey and ensures that people who are blind or cannot access information conveyed visually are not excluded.
- Information on how to add alt text to an image is available from Microsoft Office's support centre.
- [Access the Style Manual entry for clear language and writing style](#)