Style Council

Latin shortened forms (i.e. and e.g.)

No, this isn't referring to the ancient Roman bureaucratic system for collecting personal information. Rather, those pesky abbreviations i.e. and e.g. that get thrown around and used interchangeably, often without their correct punctuation. So, let's get back to basics.

First, i.e. is short for *id est*, which translates to 'that is' or 'in other words' in English. Thinking of i.e. as a short form of 'in essence' is helpful as it is followed by examples that clarify a statement.

E.g. is a short form of *exempli gratia* or 'for example' and is followed by a short list of examples, again clarifying a point. The 'egg' sound at the beginning of 'example' is a helpful reminder of how this short form should be used. In both cases, the examples that they introduce should only contain a few items, not an exhaustive list of all possible options.

Secondly, although technically they are part of a foreign language, they're in such general use in English that the short forms don't need to be italicised.

Thirdly, in Australian English use, full stops are used after each letter. This also makes them more accessible by helping screen readers to announce them.

Finally, we follow the English style of not using a comma after the full stop regardless of what follows in the sentence. US English uses the comma in most cases but Australian style is to leave it out.

- Find out more about Latin shortened forms

Hyphenation

The English language is in a constant state of change, particularly due to the rise of computers and digital word processing. That means some of the spelling and grammar rules you learned at school might no longer apply.

Hyphenated words are a great example of how our language is evolving. Many words have moved or are moving through different use phases; from word phrases to hyphenated words to compound words. Examples include co-ordinate to coordinate, or well being to well-being or wellbeing.

One helpful rule is that many prefixes are hyphenated but most suffixes are not, for example, 'anti-terror' and 'terrorist'. As with all grammar and punctuation, consistency is key so it's always good to check the TEQSA preferred spellings list for guidance. And if still in doubt, consult your dictionary – the Macquarie and the Oxford Australian dictionaries are standard references for Government communication.

- Find out more about hyphenation

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Dashes

Dashes are increasingly popular in sentence construction and are now often used instead of commas and semi-colons, perhaps to mask uncertainty on the best ways of using those curly punctuation marks.

But while you are dashing off dash after dash, there are a few things to remember about their use – they don't all perform the same function.

The spaced en dash – with spaces either side of the mark – is often used to create a pause in a sentence. The spaced en dash is Australian Government style for a textual dash, however, it's best to use them sparingly, perhaps breaking up a long sentence containing several commas.

For example:
Santa's reindeer – Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donder and Blitzen – are often led by Rudolph (see what I did there?).

Unspaced en dashes link spans of numbers and locations, financial years and show equal relationships. Travel during the 2020–2021 financial year was severely affected by the COVID pandemic with few Melbourne–Sydney flights available.

Em dashes are also used as textual dashes but tend to be used more for omissions in speech and in quoted speech.

And hyphens should never be used as textual dashes, they are used only as a minus sign and to link prefixes and compound words and names.

You can create an en dash by hitting Ctrl + minus on your numeric keypad.

- Read more about dashes

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That vs which

That or which? They're interchangeable, right? Well, not exactly.

As relative pronouns, these two words help to clarify meaning and show whether information is essential or not.

The updated TEQSA preferred spellings and acronyms glossary explains how to use 'that' and 'which' correctly, suggesting writers use 'that' in sentences to indicate a clause or piece of information is essential and 'which', with punctuation, for non-essential information.

My favourite style guru, Grammar Girl, offers two examples to demonstrate the difference in how they should be used correctly:

- Diamonds that are expensive make a great gift.
- Diamonds, which are expensive, make a great gift.

"In the first example—Diamonds that are expensive make a great gift—I'm saying there are two kinds of diamonds: some that are expensive and some that aren't expensive," she says.

"In the second example—Diamonds, which are expensive, make a great gift—I'm saying that to me, all diamonds are expensive."

The Australian Government Style manual also stresses the correct use of punctuation with relative pronouns, such as commas around non-essential information.

- Read about 'that' and 'which' in the TEQSA preferred spellings and acronyms glossary

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Is 'nuther' a real word?

Pseudowords. No, these are not the lyrics to songs by Pseudo Echo. These words are commonly used but they are not real nor are they accepted as standard Australian English. Examples include:

- irregardless, likely a combination of the words 'irrespective' and 'regardless'. You should always use 'regardless' meaning 'without regard', 'independent of' or 'anyway'
- alright - in casual speech, you can probably get away with this as one word with one L. Technically, it should be two words with two Ls (all right)
- mischievious - the correct spelling is 'mischievous' with three syllables, not four
- undoubtably - be careful with that spelling and pronunciation, as you should be saying 'undoubtedly' instead. It's close, but note the -ed before the -ly, not -ably, as the ending.

Another pet peeve is 'nuther'! Websters dictionary says that it is an actual word dating back to the 14th century, but that it is only used informally and mostly spoken rather than written. Correctly used, another

means 'an' or 'one' other. ‘A nother’ or ‘A nuther’ doesn’t make much sense.

A list of preferred spellings and commonly confused words is available in the TEQSA Editorial Style Guide.

Do you have a favourite pseudoword? Please feel free to share by emailing comms@teqsa.gov.au.

Read more about non-words

- Non-Words People Often Use (But Don’t Exist)
- Words that don't exist in English

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Italics

At TEQSA we often use italics when referring to legislation in our communication. For example, our agency was established under the *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act). But it can be confusing to understand the correct use of italics and when to use roman or normal type.

The shape of italicised letters are much harder to read than normal type, that’s why they should be used sparingly. The Government *Style Manual* team has changed their stance on italics in recent years so it can be hard to keep up but here is a summary of their latest advice.

Italics makes text stand out from surrounding content. The contrast can help readers notice important words, identify differences and find those words again. *Style Manual* recommends using italics in a small number of specific circumstances.

Correct use of italics include:

- titles of publications, legal cases and Acts
- foreign words and phrases – do not use italics for names or words from First Nations languages. They are Australian languages, not foreign languages
- some well-known mathematical theorems and formulas
- instructions or stage directions in film and music scripts
- the official names of vehicles
- scientific names.

Italics can also be used to emphasise a specific word or to convey emotion. But be careful not to use italics for large blocks of text – such as in a block quote – as they can lose their effectiveness when overused. The use of quotation marks is usually enough to make it clear to a reader that you are quoting a passage verbatim.

So, back to our legislation example, *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* (TEQSA Act), why is it written in a mixture of italics and normal type? Well, italicising the full titles of legislation and publications shows that you are referring to the formal name but shortened forms work like nicknames, so they are written in normal type.

There’s more information in the updated TEQSA Editorial Style Guide.

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Betwixt or between? Thou or you? Whilst or while?

The English language is constantly changing and much of what constituted 'proper English' in Shakespearean times no longer works for clear expression in modern corporate writing.

'Whilst' is a great example of a word that is often used when the simpler form 'while' would suffice. The Macquarie Dictionary blog says that when used as a conjunction whilst and while are completely interchangeable. It also says that while is used more commonly in Australian English than whilst but 'whilst seems to be regarded by some as more formal in register, and is, therefore often adopted in formal situations by those who would usually use while'.

The Australian Government style manual and the TEQSA list of preferred spellings and acronyms both recommend using 'while' instead of 'whilst'. It also specifies using 'amid' instead of 'amidst' and 'among' not 'amongst'.

- More preferred spellings

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To be sure, to be sure!

Two is better than one when it comes to spaces after a sentence, right?

Well, it was in the past, possibly when you or your teachers were learning to type at school.

Back in the days of carbon copies and offset printing machines, double spaces at the end of each sentence signalled to typesetters that a full stop was intentional, not an accidental ink splotch from the pen nib or typewriter ribbon. People also inserted spaces either side of other punctuation marks including commas and colons for the same reason. You might see examples of this if you look at old hardcover books.

But computers and digital printing have made punctuation much cleaner and clearer, and double spaces can muck up the spacing in text, particularly when the sentence layout is justified.

So just to be clear, single spacing between sentences is now correct.

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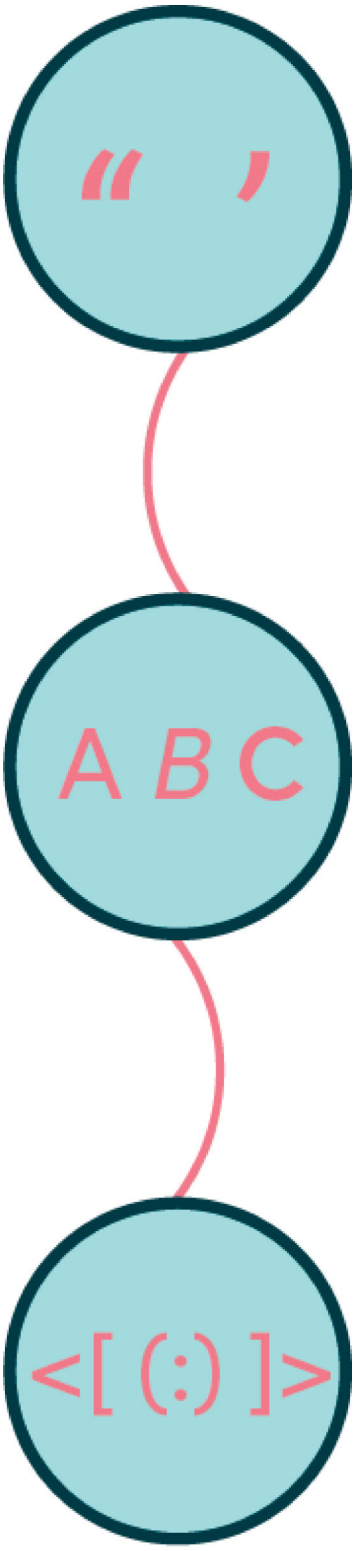
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