

INTERNAL  
USE ONLY

Guide

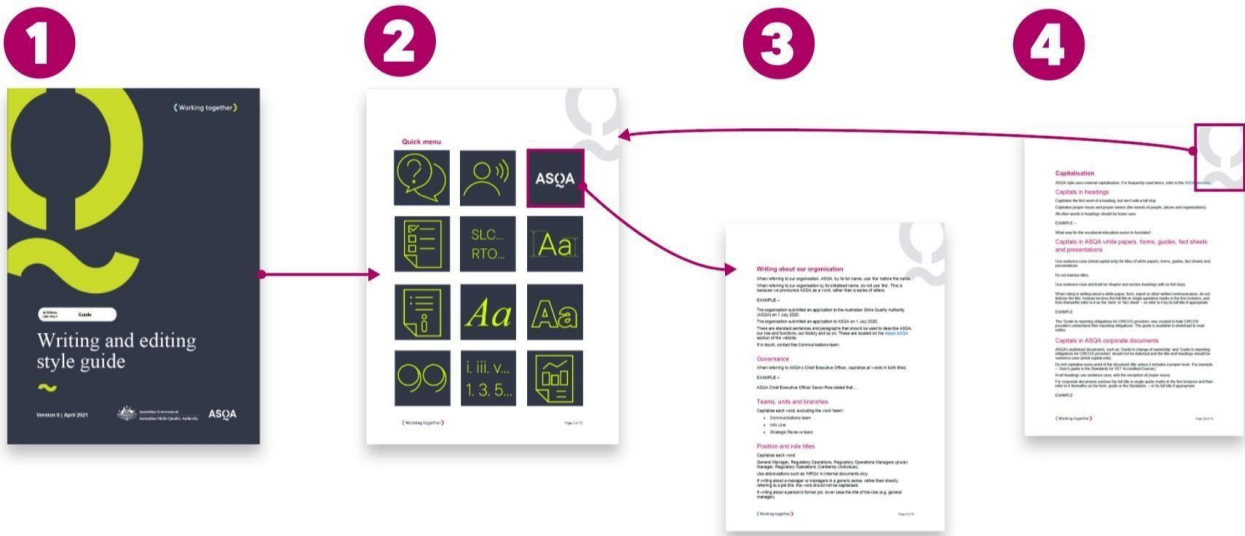
# Writing and editing style guide



## Quick menu

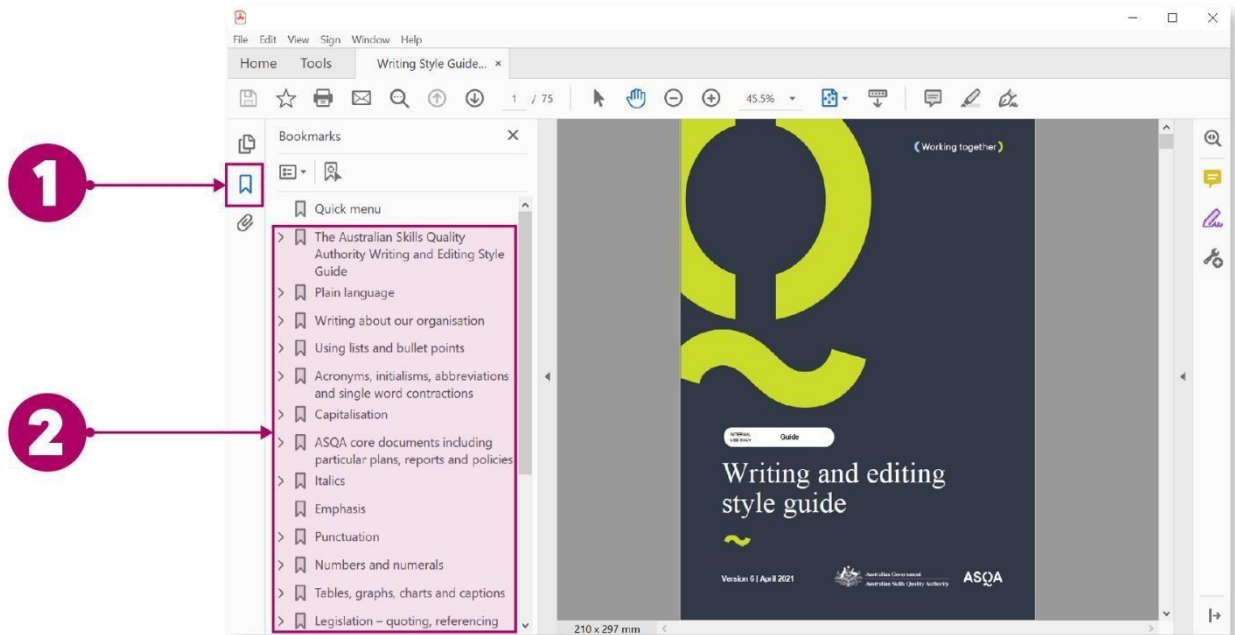


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# The Australian Skills Quality Authority Writing and Editing Style Guide

This style guide outlines some simple guidelines for creating communications materials. Following these guidelines will help you to communicate clearly and effectively with your readers.

When writing and revising a document, please refer to the following checklist. Each item on the checklist is discussed separately in this style guide.

## Writing and editing checklist

- Is your document written in plain language and appropriate for readers' needs? •  
Have you used 'active voice' in the majority of your sentences?
- Have you used inclusive and non-discriminatory language?
- Is your document written in an appropriate tone?
- If you're writing for the internet or intranet, have you followed the rules for online writing?
- Have you carefully reviewed your document and had it reviewed by the [Communications team](#) if it is to be published externally?

## Plain language

When writing content for the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), one of the most important things to remember is that your words and sentences work best when pitched at a level that is easily understood by readers. Your writing should be clear and concise.

Four things to remember when writing in plain language are:

1. Plain language is a message, written with the reader in mind and with the right tone of voice, that is clear and concise. Usually, our tone is helpful and person-centric because we are supportive. Sometimes, our messages are better suited to a more direct and purposeful approach.
2. Avoid industry jargon – this is a sure-fire way to confuse and alienate readers. Because we're transparent, we speak with clarity and confidence. If you do need to use a word or phrase that could be unfamiliar to your readers, highlight and explain it. Do this by adding a short explanation or a glossary.
3. Avoid unnecessary abbreviations and acronyms and, if they are needed, write them out in the first instance with the short form in brackets (e.g. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)).
4. Don't be overly formal. Because we're dedicated, we get to the point with purpose. Our [brand guidelines](#) provide guidance on how we communicate with our stakeholders including tone of voice.

Use active (see below), everyday words so the reader can move smoothly through the text with a clear idea about the meaning of the words and sentences.

For complex or long words, use a synonym finder to locate an alternative word that is simpler and shorter. Use your search engine to locate a good synonym finder and bookmark it for regular use. You may like to start with either [Dictionary.com](#) or [WordHippo](#).

Write short, concise sentences with simple words and phrases. It often helps to develop a description of who you're writing for (called a persona) because this helps to pitch your writing at the level most likely to connect with those readers.

If you're writing for an online audience keep paragraphs one to two sentences in length. Many people find dense text difficult to read onscreen. Most professional websites use short paragraphs to make reading more comfortable, and this formatting is what people reading across multiple and varied websites are accustomed to.

For long documents, and those that contain technical information, consider creating a glossary of terms (with corresponding abbreviations and acronyms in brackets).

## Active voice

There are two types of voice – active and passive. ASQA uses the active voice in most sentences. The passive voice is used when the sentence can't be written in any other way.

Most sentences have three components – a subject, verb and object. For sentences in an active voice, the subject is always performing the action described by the verb.

EXAMPLES –

The girl (subject) rode (verb) the bicycle (object).

The student (subject) completed (verb) the course (object).

The committee (subject) rejected (verb) the application (object).

**Remember this rule:**

‘Always place the subject of the sentence as close as possible to the beginning of the sentence.’

How is the active voice different to the passive voice? Let’s take a look.

## Passive voice

In a sentence using passive voice the subject is acted on by the verb; in other words, the subject receives the action.

This means the state of the subject is changed by the action performed by the verb; whereas, in the active voice it is the subject performing the action.

EXAMPLES –

The bike (object) was ridden (verb) by the girl (subject).

The course (object) was completed (verb) by the student (subject).

The application (object) was rejected (verb) by the committee (subject).

## Tone of voice

Tone of voice is not about what you say, but how you say it. It’s the personality of the organisation and the unified voice that makes communication consistent.

Tone includes the words you choose to use, how you put them together in a sentence and the level of formality they express.

There are three levels of formality – informal, standard and formal. At ASQA, most writing will use the standard level of formality, but there are some occasions when informal and formal are required.

Being aware of all three levels will help you understand the required tone of voice.

Informal                      Standard                      Formal

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**Informal** tone of voice:

- is more casual and familiar
- uses personal pronouns such as ‘you’ and ‘we’
- never uses slang.

EXAMPLE –

Dinner is at 6, and you're going to have to wear your best clothes.

Use Informal tone of voice when:

- writing select internal communications such as Reggie posts
- **Standard** tone of voice:
- is a mix of official and every day vocabulary
- is precise and easily understood by a wide cross-section of readers
- is not dense and is more action-oriented.

EXAMPLE –

Dinner starts at 6 pm and it's formal wear.

Use Standard tone of voice when:

- writing internal briefs (i.e. for the executive group)
- research reports
- fact sheets
- website new articles
- email notifications and reminders to providers.

**Formal** tone of voice:

- keeps readers at arm's length
- doesn't use contractions (i.e. isn't, haven't)
- uses formal rather than familiar terminology.

EXAMPLE –

The dinner commences at 6 pm sharp and dress code is formal.

ASQA's tone of voice is always respectful, clear, direct, concise and reasonable.

## Writing about our organisation

When referring to our organisation, ASQA, by its full name, use 'the' before the name. When referring to our organisation by its initialised name, do not use 'the'. This is because we pronounce ASQA as a word, rather than a series of letters.

EXAMPLE –

The organisation submitted an application to the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) on 1 July 2020.

The organisation submitted an application to ASQA on 1 July 2020.



There are standard sentences and paragraphs that should be used to describe ASQA, our role and functions, our history and so on. These are located on the [About ASQA](#) section of the website.

If in doubt, contact the Communications team.

## Governance

When referring to ASQA's Chief Executive Officer, capitalise all words in both titles: EXAMPLE

–

ASQA Chief Executive Officer Saxon Rice stated that ...

## Teams and groups

Capitalise each word, excluding the word 'team':

- Communications team
- Info Line

- Quality Assessment and Compliance group **Position and role titles**

Capitalise each word:

Executive Director, Quality Assessment, Quality Assessment Managers (plural) Manager, Quality Assessment (individual).

If writing about a director or directors in a generic sense, rather than directly referring to a job title, the word should not be capitalised.

If writing about a person's former job, lower case the title of the role (e.g. executive director).

Also see Capitalisation.

EXAMPLE –

The matter was referred to the appropriate director.

She was the Executive Director from 2020–2021.

## Australian Government

'Australian Government' is ASQA's preferred term, rather than 'federal government' or 'Commonwealth Government'.

The term 'Commonwealth' is only used in particular circumstances.

When referring to levels of government, you should refer to the Australian, state and territory governments.

Refer to the [ASQA glossary](#) for the correct ways to refer to individual organisations.

## Initiatives and projects

In general, ASQA initiatives and projects should be referred to in sentence case and enclosed by single quotation marks.

EXAMPLE –

ASQA's 'Recognising and supporting quality in the VET sector' initiative was announced as part of the *Regulatory strategy 2017–18*.

## Inclusive language

ASQA is informed by the Australian Government *Style Manual* (2020) for editorial style on inclusivity and diversity. The *Style Manual* supersedes the sixth edition of the *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* and the Digital Transformation Agency's Content Guide.

In this section, ASQA style is based on the editorial principles in the *Style Manual* that cover:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- age diversity
- cultural and linguistic diversity
- gender and sexual diversity
- people with disability.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Use 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' when writing about First Nations Australians – or use the latter term.

Use the broad term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples', unless you know for sure that you're writing about people who identify either as Aboriginal or as Torres Strait Islander peoples – then use 'Aboriginal people' or 'Torres Strait Islander peoples'.

It's okay to use 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples' if it's not clear which they identify as. Keep in mind that some people identify as both.

When writing about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples speak to local Elders, the community and/or traditional owners if possible. A lot has been written about them without their knowledge or consent, and this has resulted in inaccuracies in published educational textbooks and on official websites.

## Use respectful language

- Consider using specific terms before reaching for broad terms (e.g. 'a Worimi woman' instead of 'an Aboriginal woman').
- Use plurals when writing about collective entities such as languages, nations and peoples.
- Always use present tense unless writing about something that happened in the past.
- Use empowering strong language.

## Don't cause offense

Do not use these terms:

- Shorthand terms such as Aborigines, Islanders, Thursday Islanders or acronyms including ATSI and TSI shouldn't be used.
- When referring to the beliefs of First Nations peoples don't use words such as folklore, legend or myth.
- 'Our' and 'our Indigenous peoples' imply possession and shouldn't be used.
- Don't use 'Australian Indigenous peoples' as it implies ownership.
- 'Half-caste' and other percentage measures are offensive and should never be used.

## Specificity

As a rule, it's more respectful to use specific terms than general ones.

If writing about a specific group of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples use their community or island name if possible.

If writing about an Aboriginal nation check the regional term and use it (e.g. Kooris).

For Torres Strait Islanders check if there's a regional term you can use that's more specific and personal.

For the broad term, 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' it's good to use more definitive terms such as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, First Nations Australians or First Australians.

Refer to [ASQA's Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country protocol](#) to understand the occasions where it is appropriate and expected to include a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country.

## General terms to use when there's no other option

'Indigenous Australians' is a term that's widely used and difficult to avoid. It is often found in publications produced by government organisations. Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples consider it a term that was imposed on them. Try not to use it, but if you do use it ensure 'Indigenous' is always capitalised and that it's used in general context only.

## Spellings and capitalisation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First Nation</li><li>• First Australians</li><li>• Torres Strait Islands</li><li>• Torres Strait Islander/s</li><li>• Rainbow Serpent</li><li>• Rainbow Snake</li><li>• Rainbow Spirit</li><li>• Wanjina</li><li>• Sorry business</li><li>•</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aboriginal person</li><li>• Aboriginal people</li><li>• Stolen Generation</li><li>• traditional owner</li><li>• the Dreaming/s</li><li>• Elder</li><li>• Aunty/Uncle</li><li>• Welcome to Country</li><li>• Acknowledgement of Country</li><li>•</li></ul>
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## Italicisation

Do not italicise names or words from First Nations' languages.

## Aboriginal nations

There are more than 500 clan groups or nations around the continent, many with distinct cultures, languages and customs. Some of these people prefer to be identified by the place they came from – their regional identity. Following is a non-exhaustive list of regional identities.

- Koori – Aboriginal person from southern NSW or Victoria
- Anangu – Aboriginal person from Central Australia
- Murri – Aboriginal person from parts of Queensland or NSW
- Noongar – Aboriginal person from south-western WA
- Nunga – Aboriginal person from southern SA
- Yamatji – Aboriginal person from mid-western WA • Yolngu – Aboriginal person from north-eastern Arnhem Land Source: *Macquarie Dictionary* (2020).

## Torres Strait Islander peoples

Torres Strait Islander peoples generally identify with specific islands, family groups and tribes. They may live in one community but have historical connections with a number of different islands. People who live in Melbourne or Adelaide may identify as Torres Strait Islander peoples because that identity remains connected to their ancestral homeland.

## Age diversity

If a person's age or age group is not relevant do not refer to it. Always use respectful terms when writing about age.

Don't use the terms 'old people' or 'elderly'. Instead write older people, retired people, retirees, older Australians, seniors or senior Australians.

When referring to young people, use the term young people or youth (singular).

Don't use 'youths' (plural) as it is not gender neutral and has connotations. Also avoid 'junior' and 'juniors'.

If the context allows use gender-neutral terms – adolescents, children, babies and kids.

If age is not relevant to the story, refer to students by their level of study (e.g. preschool students, high school students, university students, PhD candidates).

Don't use the term 'mature-age student' unless it is relevant to the story.

When writing about age spans use en dashes instead of 'to' but not in place of 'between' (e.g. '17–19 years of age', and 'between 18 and 20 years of age').

When age is written as an adjective before a noun, punctuate it with hyphens (e.g. 10-year-old Ben was the youngest swimmer in the competition.)

## Cultural and linguistic diversity

When writing about people from different cultural backgrounds use the term 'multicultural communities'.

Unless you're writing for a specific readership, avoid using the term 'culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities'.

Use language that speaks to the person, rather than their difference.

Don't use words such as 'ethnic Australians' or 'ethnic groups' and write about peoples' identity or cultural preferences only when necessary to the story.

When using the word 'Australian' to describe a person, explain what you mean because it can have multiple meanings (e.g. living here, citizen or part of a student cohort).

When writing about people with dual identities as an adjective, use an unspaced en dash to connect the two (e.g. Italian–Australian community), but do not use a hyphen or en dash when written as a noun (e.g. Japanese Australians celebrated the festival).

For people who have recently arrived in Australia, use the neutral words 'new arrivals', 'immigrants' or 'migrants'.

When writing people's names use the terms 'given name' and 'family name' – not Christian name, first name, forename or surname.

## Gender and sexual diversity

Use gender-neutral pronouns. These are words that don't specify a person's gender.

Use 'they' for singular references (e.g. The person signed the form and then they left). Instead of using he, she, him or her write 'they' or 'them'. Instead of 'herself' and 'himself' write 'themselves' or 'themselves'.

## Use gender neutral job titles

Following are alternatives to gender-specific job titles.

Gender-specific job titles	Non-gender-specific job titles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>policeman</b></li><li>• <b>fireman</b></li><li>• <b>actress</b></li><li>• <b>waitress</b></li><li>• <b>air hostess</b></li><li>• <b>foreman</b></li><li>• <b>businessman</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• police officer</li><li>• firefighter</li><li>• actor</li><li>• waitperson</li><li>• flight attendant</li><li>• supervisor</li><li>• business person or manager</li></ul>

Source: Adapted from *Style Manual*, Gender and sexual diversity. ©Commonwealth of Australia 2020.

## Titles

Check with the person prior to using these terms.

Female-identifying people may prefer the title 'Ms' because it doesn't disclose marital status.

For people who don't wish to be identified by their gender, the title 'Mx' refers to non-binary people, but always seek their permission before using.

## Forms and surveys

Forms and surveys sometimes ask people to specify their gender. Don't ask for gender or their title unless it is necessary to the function of the form.

## People with disability

Focus on the person not the disability and mention it only when it's related to the content.

The *Style Manual* recommends engaging with people with disability through user research. The page on the *Style Manual* website helps you, the writer, determine what the reader needs from the text and how to write to that need. Users' needs are likely to be specific and diverse and once you've defined them you can write accessible content for those users. The key point here is that you're writing for 'the user, not the audience'.

ASQA, as a government agency, must design content that is accessible to people with disability. To do that it must address the following two criteria:

1. [Criterion 1: Understand user needs](#)
2. [Criterion 2: Make it accessible](#)

## Always use respectful language

Unless it is a person's preference, don't use a disability as an adjective that defines them. When you don't know community or individual preferences use person-first language (which doesn't focus on a person's disability).

This includes not writing that somebody is inspirational, a hero or a victim only because of their disability.

No	Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>person with a disability deaf person or hearing impaired</b></li> <li>• <b>blind person incapacitated</b></li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>• person with disability person who is deaf or hard of hearing person who is blind or has low vision person with intellectual disability, person with developmental disability</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Style Manual, People with disability. © Commonwealth of Australia 2020.

## People with mental illness

Write 'people with mental illness' not 'the mentally ill'.

When writing about specific illnesses, describe the person as 'having' the illness (e.g. Sally has depression. Jack has bipolar).

Autism and attention deficit disorder are considered neurological differences and not always a disability. The term 'neurodiversity' has been used for people on the autism spectrum and other conditions such as dyslexia.

## Learning difficulty

Learning disability and learning difficulty are not the same thing.

Learning disabilities have neurological causes (e.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia); whereas, learning difficulties can usually be overcome with teaching or training.

Some educators are known to group learning disability and learning difficulty together. Take care not to do this in your writing.

## Short points on writing for online audiences

Writing content for a website or other online forum is different in many ways to traditional writing.

Let's first look at how to present your writing.

### Headings

Use headings to break content into units of information. This helps the reader navigate the page and scan easily to a specific part of the content.

Headings should be short and on point. Don't create headings that do no more than describe the content under them. Try to make them interesting, as well as functional.

Make sure headings are hierarchical and that the hierarchy makes sense to the person reading it – as well as to screen readers.

Use the order of headings – H1, H2, H3 and so on. Avoid going over H5, as this can be confusing to the reader. Keep them consistent in the way they're presented (i.e. all bold and initial capital only – except for proper nouns).

Avoid italicising headings and never underline them.

Write all headings in sentence case (initial capital only).

See 'Capitalisation' for more information.

No full stops on headings – even if they're complete sentences.

Don't use acronyms or abbreviations in headings, unless they're well known (e.g. DNA, CSIRO).

### Sentences and paragraphs

Keep onscreen paragraphs brief – no more than three sentences. Keep sentences brief because long sentences can cause long paragraphs.

Many readers use laptops and mobile phones, and shorter paragraphs work best on these devices.

Sentences should be no more than 25 words – even technical content.

Construct sentences that are clearly expressed with vocabulary that is easily understood.

Use one paragraph per idea, but split the paragraph at an appropriate break if it is too long.

### Links/URLs

External links are important connections that can save time, reinforce content and refer a reader to evidence and research.

Link to an external site only when necessary, and only if it helps meet the readers' needs. Too many outbound links can reduce the credibility of your content.

When you do link, ensure you're linking the reader to reliable, reputable content, and make sure there are no firewalls or logins that prohibit their access.



Internal links are opportunities to guide readers to other sections of the ASQA website.

Keep internal links to a minimum, and always weigh the extent to which they benefit the reader.

It's often a good idea to link to a source, rather than reproduce their content. Linking will usually have no copyright implications; whereas, you may need permission from the copyright owner to republish their content on your page.

Link directly to the page you want readers to see, not the homepage.

Use text for links, if possible, not URLs, and ensure the anchor text informs the reader where they're going.

Don't use terms such as 'Click here'. Instead write 'Open our application from'.

When presenting email addresses for readers include the name and email address

(i.e. Silver@zxy.com). **Lists**

For a more extensive discussion about Using lists and bullet points, go to [page 28](#).

Lists are one of the digital writer's key tools. They break up dense text, provide opportunities to present text in a different format and they provide key points for quick reading.

Consistency is vital when creating a single list or a series of lists.

Use minimal punctuation for all lists. Don't use commas or semicolons at the end of bullet points.

Don't use 'and' or 'or' after list items, unless it's critical to the meaning.

Don't write 'etc.' at the end of any bullet point.

There are three types of lists – full sentence, sentence fragments and stand-alone lists.

## Emphasis

Don't use underline to emphasise text.

Don't use italics to emphasise text.

Use bold to emphasise text, but don't overdo it. Slabs of bold text can be distracting for readers. Use it sparingly and consistently.

Don't try to connect ideas by bolding text in different places. If it's not going to be clear to the reader why it is bolded don't, do it.

Don't bold links/URLs.

## Italics

Italics serve a distinct purpose in publishing. They're used for the titles of books, journals, legislation and legal cases, foreign words and phrases, and for several other things.

Also see Italics on p 34.

Don't use italics as a design tool – that is, to make text stand out or to emphasise it.

Don't italicise slabs of text, as this will make it difficult for readers to decipher.

## Punctuation

There's no need to minimise punctuation in online writing if you follow this ASQA style guide. Punctuation serves specific purposes that remain constant across different publishing environments.

Semicolons and commas, for example, generally aren't placed at the end of bullet points in Word documents or on websites.

Don't use more than one exclamation mark online or when writing in a Word document.

There are five basic situations in which you should use a comma – both online and in a Word document. Read about these on [page 35](#).

## Text boxes

Draw attention to information in content by placing it in a text box.

Don't overuse text boxes as they can quickly become burdensome for readers to navigate.

Text boxes should sit close to the text they support.

Text boxes can contain the following information:

- summaries
- checklists
- examples
- case studies
- quotes
- links to related information
- definitions

Source: Style Manual, Text boxes. © Commonwealth of Australia 2020.

Don't use text boxes in Microsoft Word or PowerPoint because they're not accessible on a number of screen readers. Instead use paragraph styles and borders. Also make sure that all text boxes are available on all devices for all readers.

Use the same capitalisation, punctuation and lists as other content, and place a heading on any significant text box.

If there are a number of text boxes in the content, number them sequentially.

## Capitalisation

ASQA style uses minimal capitalisation. For frequently used terms, refer to the [ASQA glossary](#).

## Capitals in headings

Capitalise the first word of a heading, but don't add a full stop.

Capitalise proper nouns and proper names (the names of people, places and organisations).

All other words in headings should be lower case.

EXAMPLE –

What now for the vocational education sector in Australia?

## Capitals in ASQA white papers, forms, guides, fact sheets and presentations

Use sentence case (initial capital only) for titles of white papers, forms, guides, fact sheets and presentations.

Do not italicise titles.

Use sentence case and bold for chapter and section headings with no full stops.

When citing or writing about a white paper, form, report or other written communication, do not italicise the title. Instead enclose the full title in single quotation marks in the first instance, and from thereafter refer to it as the 'form' or 'fact sheet' – or refer to it by its full title if appropriate.

EXAMPLE –

The 'Guide to reporting obligations for CRICOS providers' was created to help CRICOS providers understand their reporting obligations. The guide is available to download to read online.

## ASQA core documents including particular plans, reports and policies

ASQA has a number of core documents including plans, reports and policies that are title case in all instances. The capitalisation rule for these core documents is specific to these documents and supersedes all other styles in this guide:

- Privacy Policy
- Service Standards
- Gifts and Benefits Register
- Regulatory Strategy
- Corporate Plan
- Annual Report
- Information Publication Scheme.

The decision to include any new documents in this core category is made by management.

Over time, management will add new core documents that will also require title case. Please check this ASQA Style Guide for guidance when needed.



## Regulatory Strategy

The formal title 'Regulatory Strategy 2020–22' is capitalised.

'Regulatory Strategy' without the date (full title) is capitalised in body text.

Treat it as a proper noun and capitalise it in headings.

'Regulatory Strategy' is a core ASQA document as is capitalised wherever used.

## Corporate Plan

Capitalise 'Corporate Plan' in every instance it is referring to ASQA's 'Corporate Plan'. It is an ASQA core document and is capitalised wherever used.

## Capitals in ASQA annual reports

Capitalise 'Annual Report', but do not italicise it.

When writing complete title – 'Annual Report 2020' use capitals.

Capitalise 'the Annual Report' when the year is not included. When referring to a past annual report use capitals as well.

Don't write 'this report' or 'the report', instead write 'this Annual Report' or 'the Annual Report'.

### EXAMPLES –

Annual Report 2020 The

Annual Report

Annual Report 2010

Use sentence case in headings inside the report (initial capital only, except for proper nouns).

Take care to ensure consistency of capitalisation throughout.

Use capitals for current job titles, but lowercase former job titles – especially in Board members' bios.

Use capitals for committee names.

Use minimal acronyms and abbreviations in annual reports. If unavoidable, write out in first instance and place short form in brackets.

Consider adding a short glossary in the Annual Report containing any acronyms and abbreviations used.

## Capitals in journals, magazines and other periodicals

Write and style the names of journals, magazines and periodicals in the same way they do.

Use italics for these publication titles.

EXAMPLES –

*Australian Journal of General Practice*

*Australian Law Journal*

Use sentence case when writing or citing chapter or section titles and enclose with single quotation marks.

EXAMPLE –

The article 'Psychological consequences of social isolation and quarantine: issues related to COVID-19 restrictions' was published in the *Australian Journal of General Practice*.

## Capitals in book titles

Use sentence case (initial capital only) and apply italics for book titles.

Capitalise proper nouns and proper adjectives in book titles.

Use sentence case (apart from proper nouns and adjectives) and single quotation marks around book chapter headings.

EXAMPLES –

*An Australian political biography*

*A guide to legislation: what you need to know* |

read the chapter 'Bob Hawke's legacy'.

## Capitals when writing about external reports

Use sentence case (initial capital only) for titles of reports.

Do not italicise titles.

Use sentence case and bold for chapter and section headings with no full stops.

When citing or writing about a report in body text, enclose the full title in single quotation marks in the first instance, and thereafter refer to it as the 'report' – or by its full title if appropriate.

## Capitals in legislation

Use maximum capitalisation for titles of Acts.

Use italics when Act is written in full with year.

In first instance write Act in full with year and jurisdiction.

EXAMPLES –

*Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)*

*National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cth)*

In second and subsequent instances use the short form of Act, unless required for meaning in text.

EXAMPLES –

There were changes to the NVR Act from 1 July 2020.

It is covered under the Copyright Act.

The basic unit of an Act is a section.

Use lower case for section (s) and also subsection, paragraph and subparagraph.

## Bills

Use title case for bills before parliament.

Do not use italics for bills.

Use a capital (Bill) when referring to a specific bill (e.g. this Bill or the Bill).

Use lower case when writing about bills generally.

EXAMPLE –

the Religious Discrimination Bill 2019

The basic unit of a bill is a clause.

Use lower case for 'clause' and also subclause, paragraph and subparagraph.

## Capitals in quotes

When quoting direct speech, and from written or published material, always commence a quoted sentence with a capital letter.

When quoting a part sentence, phrase or a single word do not capitalise the first word.

Capitalise proper nouns and adjectives within quotes.

### EXAMPLES –

'Our Annual Report reflects a year of unique challenges,' the CEO said.

The CEO said the Annual Report reflected 'a year of unique challenges'.

## Capitalisation for members of the Australian parliament

Capitalise the titles of current holders of the positions of Prime Minister and Treasurer.

If writing about former prime ministers and treasurers, always use lower case.

If referencing prime ministers and treasurers generally, use lower case.

### EXAMPLES –

The Prime Minister held a press conference this morning.

The PM was there.

Australia's former prime ministers were at the celebration. The

Treasurer was working on the budget.

The treasurer from the Keating government was there.

Capitalise titles for current senators and members of the Australian parliament.

Note members of the upper house take Senator and members of the House of Representatives take MP.

### EXAMPLES –

Senator Kimberly Kitching

Mr Tim Wilson MP

When office holders have served on the Federal Executive Council, they are given the title of 'Honourable'. They retain this title for life.

Write 'Honourable' as 'Hon' and insert it before their name.

### EXAMPLES –

The Hon David Coleman MP

Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Finance

## Capitals in medical conditions

Use sentence case for diseases, viruses and syndromes unless they are named after a person (usually the person who discovered them).

EXAMPLES –

Hendra virus  
coronavirus  
Alzheimer disease

Always use general names (lower case) for pharmaceutical drugs not brand names (upper case)

EXAMPLES –

Write 'paracetamol' not 'Panadol'.

Write 'antidepressant' not 'Zoloft'.

## Capitals in films, podcasts, and television and radio programs

Use sentence case (initial capital only) and apply italics for films, podcasts, radio and television programs.

Capitalise proper nouns and proper adjectives in these as well.

For parts of works, such as episodes, use roman type and single quotation marks.

For the names of channels, platforms, streaming services, production companies and networks use the spelling, capitalisation and type that the company uses.

Use complete names of organisations in the first instance.

For unpublished work use roman type, not italics.

## Capitals in shortened forms

Not all spelt out acronyms and initialisms take capitals – even if they have capitals in the acronym or initialism. Check how they are commonly written and adhere to that practice.

EXAMPLE –



My friend's neighbour died of tuberculosis (TB).

To check whether any word is capitalised consult the *Macquarie Dictionary*.

For capitalising government terms see [page 23](#).

## Emphasis

Emphasis should be used sparingly in ASQA communication materials.

Writing clearly and effectively should prevent the need to add emphasis in a document.

Use bold text for emphasis, but keep it minimal.

Do not bold excessively – one to three words is enough.

Do not use italics, underline or capital letters for emphasis.

Avoid using exclamations marks.

Do not use single quotation marks for emphasis. ASQA uses these for quoting dialogue.

## Capitals in ASQA corporate documents

ASQA's published documents, such as 'Guide to change of ownership' and 'Guide to reporting obligations for CRICOS providers' should not be italicised and the title and headings should be sentence case (initial capital only).

Do not capitalise every word of the document title unless it includes a proper noun. For example – 'User's guide to the Standards for VET Accredited Courses,'

In all headings use sentence case, with the exception of proper nouns.

For corporate documents enclose the full title in single quote marks in the first instance and then refer to it thereafter as the form, guide or the Standards – or its full title if appropriate.

EXAMPLE –

Examining the Standards.

## Standards for Vet Accredited Courses 2012

The Standards were created under subsection 188(1) of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011(Cth).

Use both italics and title case (capitals) for all words in the Standards.

## Using lists and bullet points

Lists with bullet points provide clarity for readers. They group information that is related, provide a summary of relevant points or present information by order of importance.

There are three types of lists used at ASQA:

- Full sentence
- Sentence fragments
- Stand-alone lists



## Tips for writing effective bullet points

If bullets are a mix of sentence fragments and complete sentences, rephrase them so that all bullets use the same sentence structure.

Bullet lists can be ordered or unordered, but a numbered list must always be ordered.

Bullet lists lose clarity if they are too long. Keep them short and concise.

Use consistent formatting for all lists in the same piece of content – even if they are different types.

Do not have too many lists in the same piece of content.

Ensure bullet points are all in the same tense.

## Full sentence

This type of bullet list is straightforward. Each bullet point is a complete sentence with a capital letter and full stop.

It must have a lead-in sentence at the top with a colon.

### EXAMPLE

The committee came to two important conclusions:

- Officers from the department should investigate the feasibility of developing legislated guidelines for future investigations.
- Research should be funded in the three priority areas.

## Sentence fragments

This type of list has a lead in with a colon at the end.

Each bullet point must follow on from the lead in and be in lower case letters.

Place a full stop only at the end of the final bullet point.

### EXAMPLE

Assistance is available in several forms:

- monetary assistance
- equipment or environmental modifications • advisory services.



## Stand-alone lists

This type of list is ideal if you're working with sentence fragments and creating a technical document or brochure.

Use a heading, not a lead-in.

Each bullet commences with a capital letter.

There are no full stops, including on the last item – no punctuation at all is needed.

EXAMPLE –

Plants for sale

- Virginia creeper
- Geranium
- Gardenia

## Numbered lists

These can be either full sentences or sentence fragments. Either can be an ordered list.

EXAMPLE–

Break up in-line numbered lists for easier reading.

Rather than –

The chairperson will 1) welcome board members, 2) introduce the auditor, and 3) close the meeting.

Write as follows –

The chairperson will:

1. welcome board members
2. introduce the auditor
3. close the meeting.

Note: Avoid using ordinal numbers in general text.

## Multilevel lists

Use a maximum of two levels in a multilevel list, as some readers find more than two levels difficult to follow.

Use a hollow bullet for the second level.

EXAMPLE –

These features can be summarised as follows:

- physical characteristics
- considerable climatic variability
- extensive coral reefs and offshore islands
- ecosystem characteristics
  - many unique species of plants and animals
  - limited and highly variable water resources

## Punctuating lists in sentence form

Sometimes a list may be presented in the form of a sentence, rather than as a bullet list.

In this case use semicolons to separate clusters of items within the list if individual list items contain commas.

EXAMPLES –

Semicolons – There were oranges, limes and lemons; peaches, apricots and plums; and watermelon in the basket.

No semicolons – There were oranges, limes, lemons and watermelon in the basket.

If writing a list in sentence form, ensure that ‘and’ is used after the last semicolon.

EXAMPLE –

Back in the 1970s, the most popular vocational courses for women were in the ‘caring’ professions such as the community, health and welfare sectors; hospitality and tourism; and creative areas such as printmaking, photography and textiles.

## Acronyms, initialisms, abbreviations and single word contractions

Shortening words and names is a writing device that is commonly used to avoid repetition and to save space. However, ASQA prefers to avoid acronyms, initialisms and abbreviations. Use them only when they can’t be avoided.

### Acronyms and initialisms

Acronyms are pronounced like words and are formed from the initial letters of other words such as ANZAC, ASQA or TAFE.

Initialisms are abbreviations that are pronounced one letter at a time. Examples are the ACTU, CSIRO and DNA.

Avoid these wherever possible in communications.

Where acronyms and initialisms must be used:

- Write out the term in full the first time it appears in body text, and introduce the short form (acronym or initialism) in brackets.
- If the first usage is in a heading, use the acronym or initialism in the heading. Write out the term in full in the second usage.
- If the full term appears only once in a document, there is no need to introduce the acronym or initialism.

#### EXAMPLES –

The report was read at the Australian Football League (AFL) dinner.

The student attended the local technical and further education (TAFE) institution.

The article ‘the’ is generally used before an initialism (e.g. the ACTU, the RSPCA). It’s generally not used before an acronym (ASQA, ACCI, APRA).

Refer to the [ASQA glossary](#) for advice on how to shorten specific terms used in the vocational education and training sector.

## Abbreviations

Abbreviations are truncated words. They are shortened or cut off for convenience and to save space. Examples of every day abbreviations are ‘etc.’ for et cetera, ‘e.g.’ for example ‘km’ for kilometre, exam for examination and ‘St’ for street.

ASQA discourages the use of abbreviations in written communication, unless they are unavoidable and commonly known. An exception to this is in tables and brackets with ‘e.g.’ (for example) and ‘i.e.’ (that is), which can be used because space is often a factor. When using acronyms, such as ASQA or NCVER, always write them out in full in the first instance with the short form in brackets and then use that short form from that point on.

#### EXAMPLE –

The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) is the national regulator for vocational education and training. ASQA regulates training providers to ensure nationally approved standards are met.

## Single word contractions

Single word contractions are the first and last letters of a word, and sometimes letters in between are used.

There are a number of specific single word contractions that ASQA does use. Examples include a jurisdiction such as ‘Cth’ (Commonwealth) when citing legislation, ‘Dr’ for doctor, and ‘Ltd’ for Limited.

#### EXAMPLE –

The writer consulted the Copyright Act 1968 (Cth).

Don't commence a sentence with a one-word contraction.

Capitalise one-word contractions in the same way you would the complete word.

Don't add full stops to the ends of contractions.

## Italics

Italics have a specific purpose in publishing and should generally be used for those purposes only. Don't use them randomly or inconsistently.

Italics make words stand out and when overused they lose their effectiveness.

Don't use italics for large blocks of text.

## Published works

Note that people with reading difficulties find italics challenging to read.

Don't use italics for titles of unpublished work, use italics for:

- books, journals and magazines
- plays
- classics
- ballets and operas
- most musical compositions
- films, videos, podcasts
- blogs
- artworks
- televisions and radio programs
- the full title of a training product including the code (no italics are needed when the full title of the training product is not used).

EXAMPLE –

Jack read *The Economist* before watching the *7.30 Report*.

## Foreign words and phrases

These should be avoided in government writing, but sometimes there may not be an alternative.

Don't italicise foreign words or phrases that are well-known and can be found in the English dictionary. If unsure confirm in the *Macquarie Dictionary*.

EXAMPLE –

Latin legal term: ‘The thing may speak for itself, but it doesn’t prove itself’ – *Res ipsa loquitur*.

Don’t use italics for Latin shortened forms such as ‘i.e.’ and ‘etc.’

## Ships, trains and aircraft

Italicise the names of ships, trains and aircraft.

EXAMPLES –

They caught the *Orient Express* from Strasburg to Paris.

We saw the *RMS Queen Elizabeth* at the port in Southampton.

## Scientific names of animals and plants

Italics are used for genus, species and subspecies, but not for common names.

EXAMPLE –

There was an outbreak of *Staphylococcus* at the hospital.

## Standards for VET Accredited Courses 2012

The Standards were created under subsection 188(1) of the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011*(Cth).

Use both italics and title case (capitals) for all words in the Standards.

## Legislation and legal cases

The formal names of legal cases, Acts and Ordinances are italicised.

Note the name of the Act and the year is italicised, but the jurisdiction is not.

Write the Act in full on the first instance it is mentioned (e.g. *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth)), and then refer to it in shortened form ‘Corporations Act’ thereafter.

The titles of bills before parliament aren’t italicised.

EXAMPLES –

The *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth)

The *Corporations Act 2001*

The *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011* (Cth)

The *Owners Corporations Act 2006* (Vic)



*Mabo vs Queensland (No 2) 1992*

*Lakes (Amendment) Ordinance 1992 (ACT)*

*Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*

See also 'Capitalisation' on [page 19](#).

## Punctuation

ASQA uses minimal punctuation. This doesn't mean it leaves off required punctuation, but that it uses correct punctuation and short concise sentences.

To minimise punctuation you should try to keep sentences to 25 words or less. When sentences run on, the reader struggles to follow their meaning.

Strive for short, clear sentences and this will keep punctuation to a minimum.

## Apostrophes

The apostrophe is used to show ownership.

The apostrophe is also a mark that shows the omission of letters (called a contraction).

Apostrophes can show sounds in words in other languages, such as 'Qur'an. Do

not use apostrophes in descriptive phrases.

## Apostrophes that show ownership

In order to show possession, you need to ask, 'Who is owning what?' If

it's a **singular ownership** then the apostrophe goes before the 's'.

EXAMPLE –

Laura's new car is red.

If it's joint or **plural ownership**, then the apostrophe goes after the 's'.

EXAMPLE –

Laura and Bens' new car is red.

If Laura and Ben each have their own car, then we need to show them having singular ownership of their separate cars.

EXAMPLE –



Laura's and Ben's new cars are red.

We could also single them out.

EXAMPLE –

Laura's new car is red and Ben's new car is also red.

Laura's new car is red and Ben's new car is green.

### Plural nouns that end in 's'

When a plural noun ends in 's' (e.g. trees, books, babies) add an apostrophe only. EXAMPLE

–

The books' pages were yellow.

### Plural nouns that don't end in 's'

When a plural noun doesn't end in 's' (e.g. children, sheep, crowd) add an apostrophe and an 's'.

EXAMPLE –

The sheep's wool was wet.

### Given names and family names ending in 's'

These (e.g. Byrnes, Chris, Thomas) take an apostrophe only. Do not add another 's'.

EXAMPLES –

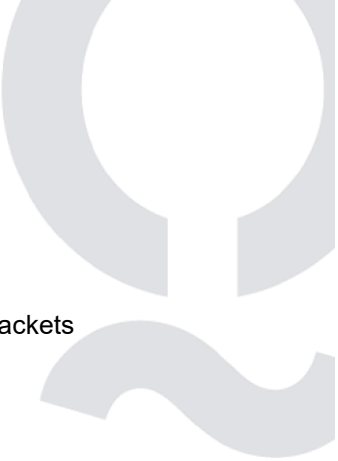
The room was full of Chris' books.

The Thomas' appointment is tomorrow.

### RTOs and apostrophes

ASQA uses the term RTO to describe a 'registered training organisation'. The plural form is RTOs.

When writing about an RTO, use 'an' not 'a RTO'.



Write 'registered training organisation' in the first instance (lower case) with (RTO) in brackets after it and then use the short form from that point. For plural, simply add an 's' (RTOs).

EXAMPLES –

ASQA may need to visit an RTO's premises during an audit.

A new approach is organised around RTOs' practices and behaviours.

## Place names in Australia

We no longer use possessive apostrophes for Australian place names.

EXAMPLES –

Kings Cross, Crows Nest, St Georges Terrace, Fishermans Bend.

## Apostrophes in names of organisations

When deciding whether to add an apostrophe to an organisation's name, always do what the organisation does. If unsure search for the organisation online and use an apostrophe if they do.

EXAMPLES –

The Royal Children's Hospital; Brisbane Magistrates Court, but Melbourne Magistrate's Court; Melbourne Writers Festival but Sydney Writers' Festival.

## No apostrophes on plural nouns

Plural nouns such as 1920s, 1940s, fresh oranges, older 747s, don't take apostrophes.

## Apostrophes in singular compound nouns

Add an apostrophe and 's' after the compound.

EXAMPLE –

The Governor-General's home was around the corner.

EXAMPLES –

For a plural compound noun, add an apostrophe and 's'.

The Governors-General's homes were nearby.

## Apostrophes in contractions

Contractions such as it's (it is), hasn't (has not), shouldn't (should not) and haven't (have not) all have missing letters. An apostrophe is inserted in place of the letter/s.

EXAMPLE –

The surgeons weren't seeing patients today.

### Remember:

Contractions are not used, unless unavoidable, in formal AFQA writing.

They can be used in informal correspondence, such as emails and newsletters.

When unsure do not use them.

Contractions are one of the differences between the formal and the informal voice.

## Apostrophes in descriptive phrases

If nouns are descriptive, rather than possessive, they don't take apostrophes.

How do you know if they're descriptive? Ask whether they're describing the object rather than owning it.

EXAMPLES –

Officers mess (The officers don't own the mess.)

Visitors book (A book used, not owned, by visitors.)

Directors meeting (A meeting for directors, but not owned by them.)

## Apostrophes in expressions of time

Don't use an apostrophe in plural expressions of time.

EXAMPLES – seven weeks time, 10 months wages

EXAMPLES –

Do use an apostrophe in singular expressions of time a week's work, the day's wages, the year's bookings

## Hyphens and dashes (-, -, —)

There are three types of horizontal rules: hyphens (-), en dashes (-) and em dashes (—).

They each have particular functions.

Hyphens are used to connect prefixes and words so that meanings are clear. Maintaining consistency is an important consideration, and a steadfast eye must be used to avoid inserting hyphens inconsistently.

The [ASQA glossary](#) includes preferences for hyphenating regularly used terms. We refer to the glossary to ensure consistency, as some of the rules in this area are confusing and inconsistent. Where a term does not appear in the glossary, refer to the *Macquarie Dictionary*.

Use hyphens to:

- join a prefix to a word that starts with the same letter as the last letter of the prefix, such as 'pre-eminent' and 'anti-intellectual'. Words in common usage with a doubled-up letter that have shed their hyphen are 'cooperate' and 'coordinate'
- avoid ambiguity, for example – to show the difference between 'recover' (regain) and 'recover' (cover again); 'resign' (leave a job) and 're-sign' (sign again)
- create a new word by adding a prefix to an existing word, for example – co-design
- express fractions and larger numbers, for example – one-third, three-quarters
- connect numbers with words, for example – three-day conference and 24-hour turnaround.

## Hyphenating 'ly' words

Unfortunately, this error is regularly seen in newspapers, magazines and on websites.

Adverbs with 'ly' endings are often followed by modifiers (not nouns); therefore, no hyphen is needed.

Let's put it another way for clarity. When an adverb ends in 'ly' do not add a hyphen.

EXAMPLES –

highly regarded, newly married, barely worn, dimly lit

Some 'ly' words are not adverbs and these can take hyphens.

EXAMPLE –

The family-minded group made plans for Sunday.

## The en dash (–)

An en dash is twice as long as a hyphen, and its main use is as a linking device.

An en dash can be used spaced (with a space either side of it) or unspaced.

Don't use an en dash in equations to show a minus sign. Screen readers will read these as dashes not minus signs.

To ensure screen readers can read the minus sign use the mathematical symbol in Unicode (below).

**Unicode:**

In Unicode the en dash is U+2013.

In Unicode the mathematical symbol for minus is U+2212.

Also, don't confuse the minus symbol or en dash with a hyphen.

## En dashes in spans or ranges of numerals

The Government *Style Manual* instructs writers and editors to avoid using en dashes in number spans in most text.'

If the default settings are not changed on screen readers, then they won't generally read out the dashes.

However, there are exceptions to this rule

Date ranges in **financial years**, terms of office, birth and death lifespans can still be expressed with en dashes.

EXAMPLES –

1935–40 (four digits then two digits) 1990–2010 (four digits when spans cross centuries).

**Lifespans** use four digits with an unspaced en dash.

EXAMPLE –

Bob Hawke (1929–2019)

Use four digits for **terms of office**.

EXAMPLE –

Julia Gillard was Australia's first female prime minister (2010–2013).

ASQA uses unspaced en dashes in page number spans (e.g. pages 13–45).

Also see 'Page numbers' on [page 49](#).

## Use en dashes in technical content

When there are a lot of numbers use unspaced en dashes for number, date and page ranges.

## En dashes between nouns of equal importance

Unspaced en dashes are placed between nouns that retain their original meanings.

EXAMPLES –

I caught an Adelaide–Melbourne flight.

We had a mother–daughter night out.

The student–teacher meetings are working well.

Others include: federal–state, Asia–Pacific, cost–benefit.

## En dashes in prefixes

Prefixes are usually attached with hyphens, but if the phrase is not hyphenated then use an en dash between the prefix and the first word.

## Spaced en dashes to set off non-essential information

Spaced en dashes are effective for breaking up information in a sentence that isn't essential.

To do this correctly you must be able to remove the information enclosed within the en dashes, and the sentence must still run on logically and grammatically.

EXAMPLE –

You must provide three forms of identity – your birth certificate, driver's licence and passport – and all must be in the same envelope.

Take care that the en dash doesn't cause a bad line break (and be stuck at the end of the line when printed).

## The em dash

An em dash is twice as long as an en dash.

Spaced en dashes (not em dashes) are Australian Government style for digital content.

Em dashes may be required, for example – in submissions to publications or other organisations. If this occurs do not space the em dash. Always use an unspaced em dash.

Double em dashes can be used to show an interruption in a quotation ('He went for ——').

## Ellipsis ( ... )

An ellipsis is exactly three full stops. It indicates that words have been removed in the text.

EXAMPLES –

United States editorial style is to run the ellipsis on without a space at the beginning (i.e. Computers were packed away... the IT manager was searching for them).

Australian and United Kingdom editorial style is to insert a space both before and after the three dots (i.e. Computers were packed away ... the IT manager was searching for them).

## Forward slash (/)

The forward slash is usually used without a space either side.

Its also used to indicate alternatives in text and on forms and screens. EXAMPLE

–

student/teacher

A forward slash can be used in the term and/or, although it is better to decide which word is more appropriate and use it instead.

The forward slash can also be used as a substitute for ‘per’, ‘an’, or ‘a’ in abbreviated versions of units of measurement.

## Brackets (Parentheses)

Brackets are used to enclose supplementary or non-essential parts of a sentence.

One set of brackets is generally not enclosed within another. Use a combination of commas, dashes and parentheses instead. However, if it’s unavoidable – especially in technical content – then do enclose one set of brackets within another.

EXAMPLE –

The team manager went to a meeting at the doctors’ Melbourne office (the Australian Medical Association (AMA)).

A complete sentence within a set of brackets has a full stop inside the bracket as well.

Square brackets are used for editorial comment within a section of text written by somebody other than the original author. They can be used to enclose corrections, complementary advice or missing information.

EXAMPLES –

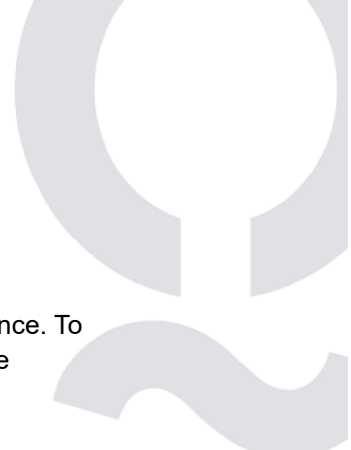
This year [2020] was particularly challenging for many people.

Today my colleagues from work [ASQA] turned up at my place to wish me well.

## The semicolon (;)

Semicolons can be misunderstood and overused.





They are used to link sentences, but take care that the result isn't one very long sentence. To link two sentences with semicolons they need to be closely related. Often short, simple sentences are best.

Do not use semicolons or commas between items on a bullet list.

It's often better to use a full stop followed by a new sentence, or a comma and conjunction – and, but, for, or, so, yet.

Remember that sentences shouldn't be more than 25 words. Consider whether a semicolon works in this context.

EXAMPLE –

One door closes; another door opens.

## Semicolons in transitional conjunctions

Use a semicolon and a comma to link two full clauses together using a conjunctive adverb such as 'however' or 'therefore'.

EXAMPLE –

Western Australia and Victoria have not agreed to refer powers; however, these states have agreed to introduce mirror legislation to ensure national consistency.

## Semicolons in a list

Use semicolons to separate items containing commas.

The most popular courses for women were in caring professions such as the community, health, and welfare industries; in hospitality and tourism; and in creative areas such as printmaking, photography and textiles.

## Ampersands (&)

ASQA does not use ampersands in any writing, unless they are part of an official name.

EXAMPLE –

Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority

## Single quotations marks (')

When quoting, either from written text or direct speech, take great care to reproduce what was written or said exactly.

Note that ASQA does not italicise quotations. Use a regular font consistent with the document, and use a pair of single quotes:

- to enclose direct speech (e.g. ‘It is complex,’ the Director said, ‘because it addresses a range of issues.’)
- to enclose a direct quote – whether it’s a sentence fragment, a whole sentence or more than one sentence (e.g. The Minister’s media release expressed confidence in what she described as ‘an effective agent for improvement in the sector’.)
- to refer to the title of an unpublished document, such as a draft of an article in a periodical
- for a PowerPoint presentation, a lecture or speech, or the title of an essay
- to introduce an unfamiliar or technical term in a non-technical document (e.g. The two senior executives will oversee ‘Regulatory Operations’ and ‘Risk Intelligence and Regulatory Support’.)
- to indicate a word or phrase coined for a specific sense
- for ironic emphasis (not often called for in ASQA publications)
- for colloquial words, nicknames, slang or humorous words and phrases when used in formal writing (also rarely used in ASQA publications).

## Double quotation marks (“ ”)

ASQA uses a pair of double quotes for quotes within quotes.

EXAMPLE –

‘A colleague from our Melbourne office recently remarked that “The big change I’ve noticed is that students are more aware of their rights.”’

## Quotation marks with other punctuation

When placing a quote fragment within a sentence, use a comma to introduce the quote.


EXAMPLE –

The ASQA CEO said that she wanted to, ‘ensure that quality providers are receiving the support they need’.

But, if a quote is being introduced by a grammatically complete sentence, or is a block quote, use a colon to introduce it.

EXAMPLE –

The ASQA CEO ended her statement with a comment about sector confidence in the organisation: ‘I want to ensure there is confidence in ASQA that our activities are reasonable, transparent and effective.’



A writer's work or speaker's comment is always quoted exactly. If we paraphrase a statement, it is no longer a quote, although we may still need to attribute the source. Omissions from a quotation should be indicated by an ellipsis (three dots).

EXAMPLE –

'It cannot be over-emphasised that guards, security officers and others need to fully understand that positional asphyxia can occur when a person is restrained ... in a prone, face-down position.'

To add words of explanation to a quote, use square brackets [sometimes called editorial comment].

EXAMPLE –

The report stated, 'Our concern is that the organisation [North–South Coast Training] is enrolling more students than its facilities permit.'

If sentence punctuation (full stops, question marks, commas and so on) is part of the quotation, then keep the sentence punctuation inside the quotation marks.

If the quotation does not include punctuation then any punctuation added should be placed outside the quotation mark.

EXAMPLES –

He asked, 'What courses are available?' She claimed that all available student places for 2010 were 'long gone'.

'Our concern is that the organisation is enrolling more students than its facilities permit.' Note ASQA does not italicise quotations. Use roman font consistent with the document.

### Quotations summary

- Be careful to reproduce what was written or said exactly.
- Use a pair of single quotation marks and do not use italics unless they originally appeared in the text being quoted.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose direct quotations, whether they are sentence fragments, a sentence or more than one sentence.
- Quotes under 30 words in length may be quoted within running text. If a quote is more than 30 words, separate it from the main text, indent it and reduce the font size by a point compared to the body text. This is known as a block quotation.
- An ellipsis indicates omissions from a quote.
- Use square brackets if adding your own explanation within a quote.

- Any punctuation added should be placed outside of the quotation.

## Numbers and numerals

What drives style for numbers and numerals is readability and clarity. Numbers as numerals are usually easier for people to scan.

### General rule for numerals in text

- Write numerals for 2 and above.
- Write the numbers 'zero' and 'one' in words.
- Follow this rule for headings and subheadings, except for the exceptions listed below.

EXCEPTIONS – Use words not numerals when:

- starting a sentence
- writing a fraction
- writing a proper noun that includes a number written as a word
- writing a publication title that includes a number written as a word
- quoting a figure of speech.

In addition, use words for numbers below 10 for specific government content that follows journalistic conventions (e.g. media releases).

Source: Australian Government Style Manual, <https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/style-rulesandconventions/numbers-and-measurements/choosing-numerals-or-words>.  
Accessed 12/12/2020

## Write all numbers as numerals in these specific situations

The exceptions are for using the words for 'zero' and 'one'. Write

all numbers as numerals:

- in units of measurement
- to show mathematical relationships – such as equations and ratios – and for decimals
- when comparing numbers

- in tables and charts
- for dates and times
- in a series of numbers
- in specific contexts – such as steps, instructions, age and school years
- in scientific content.

Source: Australian Government Style Manual, <https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/style-rulesandconventions/numbers-and-measurements/choosing-numerals-or-words>. Accessed 12/12/2020.

## Combine numerals and words for large rounded numbers

When using rounded numbers of 1,000 or more, use commas to separate numerals into groups of 3 (working right to left).

Use a combination of numerals and words for large numbers over a million when they are rounded. ASQA's style is 2.5 million not 2,500,000. Large numbers can be punctuated with a decimal point.

Numbers with 4 or more digits (starting from 1,000) need a comma. Use commas in both text and tables for these numbers.

Don't use a space between numerals because screen readers read them as separate numbers.

Don't use commas to the right of a decimal point (e.g. 122.534)

ASQA places a zero in front of a decimal point (e.g. 0.7)

In tables, graphs, figures, flowcharts, footnotes, captions and diagrams, million is abbreviated to m (and billion to b). There is no space after the numeral, for example – \$2m, \$10.5m and so on.

### EXAMPLES –

1,000

16,450

700,327,890

For tables – \$2.5m, \$1b, \$9.5010m

## Rules for dates

- ASQA style is to present dates in full without punctuation.
- Do not use ordinal numbers (e.g. 27th).
- Follow the format – day month year.
- Do not write the day of the week.

EXAMPLE –

12 December 2021

## Currency

ASQA expresses amounts of money as numerals combined with symbols. Do not write ‘dollars’ (e.g. \$150, \$99.50, \$10,272.50).

## Times

Use the 12-hour system and ‘am’ and ‘pm’ with a \*non-breaking space.

For the even hour, use two zeros after the decimal point, with the exceptions of noon and midnight.

For midday, midnight and noon, use words if possible.

Use a colon as a separator not a full stop to avoid people reading it as a decimal number.

EXAMPLES –

8:30 am noon,

midnight, midday 8:45

pm to 11:30 pm

### How to insert non-breaking spaces

1. Click where you need to insert the non-breaking space.
2. On ‘Insert’ click through to ‘Advanced symbol’.
3. In the ‘Special characters’ tab, click the ‘Non-breaking space’ row to highlight it and then click ‘insert’.

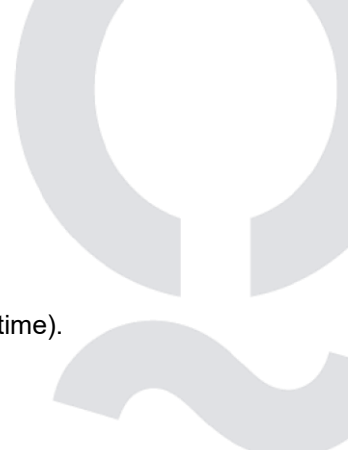
Note shortcut is: Control, Shift, Space bar.

## Time zones

ASQA is a national organisation that operates in a number of time zones. When we quote a time in text, including letters and emails, we should specify what time zone we are referring to, using initialisms.

EXAMPLE –

The meeting will be held at 10:00 am AEST.



When daylight saving is in place, substitute 'D' (daylight-saving time) for 'S' (standard time).

EXAMPLE –

The meeting will be held at 10:00 am AEDT.

Use [timeanddate.com](http://timeanddate.com)'s time zone convertor to check the time difference between Australian states or other locations.

Location	Time zone and abbreviation
New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland	Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST)
South Australia and Northern Territory	Australian Central Standard Time (ACST)
Western Australia	Australian Western Standard Time (AWST)

## Page numbers

When referring to a range of pages, use the fewest possible digits and separate numbers with an en dash. pages 57–9 pages 79–98 pages 96–109

To avoid confusion, we use more digits for page numbers between 10 and 19 in each hundred.

pages 215–17 (not 215–7)

Spell out 'pages' in normal body text.

Use 'p. 79' or 'pp. 79–82' in tables and flowcharts (note the space).

## Fractions

In body text write decimal values as numerals and fractions as words.

Use hyphens when expressing imprecise non-decimal fractions in words, unless the fraction is preceded by an 'a' or an 'an'.

EXAMPLE –

one-third of all students, a third of all students, one and three-quarters, two and a half Do

not write fractions as numerals with a forward slash or a fraction bar.

EXAMPLES –

0.5, half; 7.5, three-quarters

#### Rules

- Use fractions when an exact number is not important.
- Use decimals when you need to be precise.

## Percentages

Use the percentage sign (%) in body text, and use numerals for all numbers, including 1–9.

Use the % symbol in tables, graphs and diagrams.

Use 'per cent' at the beginning of a sentence, or reword the sentence.

Using numbers in research reports.

When quoting numbers in research reports, percentages should also be shown wherever possible. This applies to text, tables, figures and charts.

However, it is important to clearly identify what set of data the percentage is referring to.

EXAMPLE –

ASQA identified 123 RTOs as having one or more of the relevant security training qualifications on scope. A total of 100 responses were received (81.3% of those surveyed), while 23 RTOs (18.7%) did not complete the survey for a range of reasons. Of the 100 RTOs that responded to the survey, 50 (50%) provided comments.



## Tables, graphs, charts and captions

The same data should not be presented as both a table and a graph in the same report. If you want to show exact figures, a table will usually be the more effective format.

### Tables

All tables should:

- have a meaningful title
- be as clear as possible
- have an acknowledgement of the data source under the table.

### Charts, graphs and figures

When making a chart or graph for use in a research report, use the styles available in the ASQA document template available on Reggie in [Communications > Document templates](#). • If additional colours are required, please refer to the visual identity guidelines.

- Do not change the template charts to include additions such as drop-shadows or 3D effects. • Charts and figures should be formatted with no line around the outside.
- Do not use an image chart from a third-party source. Always use a chart created either in Excel or directly within the MS Word template.
- Always label both axes in a graph (unless there is a time period shown on the X-axis).

#### When choosing a chart type:

- Pie charts are good for representing a small number of categories where the total is 100%. It is not recommended to use a pie chart when there are a large number of categories, with each consisting of a small percentage.
- Line graphs are generally used when showing a variable over time.
- Column or bar graphs are suited for displaying discrete quantitative data. Each column or bar represents the value of a particular category. There is a gap between each group of columns and bars as the data are not on a continuous scale.

### Captions

Captions should be formatted using the caption style from the styles window. Captions should appear immediately before a table or chart, on the same page. Do not include captions inside a graph or table.

### Inserting a caption:

- Select the object (table, equation, figure or another object) to which you want to add a caption.
- In the 'References' tab, in the 'Captions' group, click 'Insert Caption'.
- In the 'Label' list, select the label that best describes the object, such as a figure or equation. If the list doesn't provide the label you want, click 'New Label', type the new label in the 'Label' box, and then click 'OK'.
- Type any text, including punctuation, that you want to appear after the label.
- Click 'OK'.

## Notes to tables and charts

Notes to tables and charts should be shown directly under the relevant tables and charts, not at the end of the page, on a different page or in endnotes.

Notes should be indicated with superscript symbols, used in the following order:

\* † ‡ § ¶ # \*\* †† ‡‡ §§

Notes should be formatted using the 'Note' style in the relevant template. This is typically a smaller font and/or a lighter text colour than the main body text.

These table notes can be found in the 'Symbols' menu.

## Legislation – quoting, referencing and writing about it

ASQA's approach to referencing legislation is guided by the Australian Government *Style Manual*, 2020.

This digital edition supersedes the *Government Style manual* 6th edn (2002).

These guidelines are also based on the *Australian Guide to Legal Citation*, fourth edn (2018) by the Melbourne University Law Review Association in collaboration with the Melbourne Journal of International Law Inc, which is available as a free download [here](#).

### The golden rule

Take great care to cite legal sources in a uniform and accurate way across different government jurisdictions.

Ensure that you are reproducing the written content of the legislation exactly as it was published.

## Titles of Acts and Ordinances

Titles of pieces of legislation should be quoted exactly, without any alteration to the official spelling or capitalisation. However, most Acts or Ordinances have a short formal title that can be used for citation purposes. For example:

- Data Provision Requirements 2012 (Data Provision Requirements)
- Financial Viability Risk Assessment Requirements 2011 (FVRA Requirements).

On the first mention of an Act, use maximum capitalisation and italics.

EXAMPLES –

*National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cth)*

*Education for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cth)*

Do not use italics on shortened versions of Acts.

EXAMPLES –

NVR Act

ESOS Act

Italicise the full title of a piece of legislation when writing it on the ASQA website.

In reference lists, do not italicise the titles of Acts, use roman type.

The year the legislation was first enacted is part of the title, add it with no comma.

If the Act's title includes a number add it too (e.g. *Supply Act (No .1) 2019–2020*).

## Writing about legislation in body text

For in-text references to legislation aim to provide readers with all the information they need.

EXAMPLE –

The *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) provides content creators with safeguards that protect their work.

If writing about, citing or referencing legislation from another country, the title of the legislation should be in roman type with the jurisdiction of the legislation in parenthesis following it.

EXAMPLE –

Employment Relations Act 2000 (NZ)

## Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction is the scope of legal authority exercised by a given government entity.

Add the jurisdiction in brackets in roman type unless you are sure the reader will know the jurisdiction from the context.

EXAMPLES –

*National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011* (Cth) or NVR

Act.

*Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cth) or ESOS

Act.

### Use these shortened forms of jurisdictions in the title of an Act.

- Cth (the Commonwealth)
- ACT (Australian Capital Territory)
- NT (Northern Territory)
- NSW (New South Wales)
- Qld (Queensland)
- SA (South Australia)
- Tas (Tasmania)
- Vic (Victoria)
- WA (Western Australia).

Source: Australian Government *Style Manual*, [https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/style-rulesandconventions/referencing-and-attribution/legalmaterial/actsparliament#jurisdiction\\_is\\_an\\_important\\_detail](https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/style-rulesandconventions/referencing-and-attribution/legalmaterial/actsparliament#jurisdiction_is_an_important_detail). Accessed 12/12/2020.

## Legislative instruments

Legislative instruments are a form of law made under the authority of parliament, but not by parliament directly. These include:

- regulations
- determinations
- ordinances
- rules
- by-laws
- orders
- standards

- principles

Use title case and roman type for writing about legislative instruments.

Do not italicise legislative instruments.

Capitalise 'Regulations' and 'Regulation' when writing about a particular regulation.

Lower case 'regulation' when referring to it generally.

## Sections of legislation and legislative instruments

Legislation and legislative instruments are composed of smaller parts that make up the Act or instrument (e.g. regulations, standards).

The abbreviations that should be used to reference these include s. (section or standard), ss.(sections), r (regulation) and rr (regulations). These abbreviations should never appear at the beginning of a sentence. Write them as words if they need to be at the beginning of a sentence.

Accepted approaches when citing sections of legislation

Standard 5 of the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*

In s. 5 of the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*

The *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*, s. 5

## Referencing subsections and subregulations

To cite units at the smallest unit below section level, follow the practice used by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in legislative drafting.

**These citations specify the smallest unit of text:**

- section 113V
- subsection 113V(4)
- paragraph 113V(4)(a)
- subparagraph 113V(4)(a)(ii).

Source: Australian Government *Style Manual*, [https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/style-rulesandconventions/referencing-and-attribution/legalmaterial/actsparliament#jurisdiction\\_is\\_an\\_important\\_detail](https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/style-rulesandconventions/referencing-and-attribution/legalmaterial/actsparliament#jurisdiction_is_an_important_detail). Accessed 12/12/2020.

EXAMPLE –

The *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*, s. 5.2(b)(i)

In Section 5.1(b)(i) of the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*

## Case law

### Tribunal decisions

When citing tribunal decisions, you should include the parties' names in italics, year, law report series and page number.

EXAMPLE –

*Registered Training Organisation and Australian Skills Quality Authority* [2002] AATA 123

Follow these general formatting rules when citing a tribunal case:

- Do not use full stops in abbreviations.

- Terminology around corporations and firms should be abbreviated, for example – co, pty, inc.
- Where parties are individuals, omit given names and initials.
- Only the first applicant and first respondent should be cited.
- Where the case involved more than one action, only the first action should be cited.
- Party names should be separated by 'and' – this should be italicised and must not be followed by a full stop.

### Court decisions

When citing Australian court decisions, you should include the parties' names in italics, year, volume, law report series and page number.

EXAMPLE:

*Australian Skills Quality Authority v Registered Training Organisation* (2002) 202 CLR 223.

Follow these general formatting rules when citing a court case:

- 

Do not use full stops in abbreviations.

- Terminology around corporations and firms should be abbreviated, for example – co, pty, inc.
- Where parties are individuals, omit given names and initials.
- Only the first plaintiff and first defendant should be cited.
- Where the case involved more than one action, only the first action should be cited.

Party names should be separated by v— this should be italicised and must not be followed by a full stop.

## Abbreviations

If a case is referred to more than once, or the name as it appears in the law report is very long, you may abbreviate references.

An abbreviated case name should be italicised and enclosed by single quotes, be in parentheses and follow the initial citation. Thereafter, the case may be referred to by the abbreviated name in italics, with the citation details following.

EXAMPLE –

Initial citation: *McGinty and Australian Skills Quality Authority* [2020] AATA 123 ('McGinty')

Abbreviated citation: *McGinty* [2020] AAT 123

## Referencing the Commonwealth

Where the party is the Commonwealth of Australia, 'Commonwealth' should be used.

EXAMPLE –

*Melbourne Corporation v Commonwealth* (1947) 74 CLR 31

## Legislation in reference lists

Only include legislation in a list of references if it is important to the understanding of a work. When including legislation in references, any examples should be separate from the main list and under the heading 'Legislation'.

Reference legislation using the Harvard system, also known as the Author–Date system.

In reference lists write the titles of Acts and legal cases in roman type – even though they're written in italics in the text.

ASQA's referencing style is guided by:

- Australian Government Style manual (2020) – available online at <https://www.stylemanual.gov.au>
- The National Centre for Vocational Education Research guide to referencing style. In research reports, use footnotes sparingly for asides in text and do not use endnotes.

## In-text references

Where possible, use in-text references at the end of sentences, unless the reference applies to only part of the sentence. For example:

... (Smith 1990, p. 64).

Smith (1990) says ...

... (Smith et al. 1990).

Smith et al. (1990) said ...

Smith and Jones (1990) agreed that ...

... (Smith, Jones & Brown 1990, pp. 21–36).

... as described by Smith, Jones and Brown (1990, pp. 21–36). ... Smith, Jones & Brown 1990; Smith 1991).

Use et al. only when there are four or more authors to list in the text.

## Correct referencing format

- References are listed in alphabetical order, according to the authors' surnames.
- Where there are no authors, list by the first significant word in the title (i.e. words such as A, An and The are ignored). • The title of a book or journal is shown in italics.
- The title of a chapter, article or conference paper in a proceedings book is enclosed in single quotes (with no italics).
- A document within a website can be regarded as a published document or a book and referenced in the same way. • Commas are used between fields and the reference ends with a full stop.
- If more than one item has been cited by the same author, they should be listed chronologically (from earliest to latest), using a 2-em rule. This means a 2-em dash (—) is used instead of the author's name for the second and subsequent entries. If more than one item has been published in the same year, add a, b, c etc. to the date to differentiate the items.
- The second and subsequent lines of a reference are indented.



## Examples by document type

Book – no author	Macquarie Dictionary, 8th edn, 2020, Pan Macmillan Australia, South Yarra, Victoria.
Book – single author	Flynn, CJ 2020, <i>Adult Minority Language Learning: Motivation, Identity and Target Variety</i> , Multilingual Matters Ltd, Bristol, United Kingdom.
Book – two authors	Derbiszewska, KM & Tucker-Smith TN 2020, <i>Super Charge Your Professional Learning: 40 Concrete Strategies that Improve Adult Learning</i> , Cast Professional Publishing, Wakefield, Massachusetts.
Book – corporate author	William Angliss Institute of TAFE Council 1997, Ministerial Review for the Provision of Technical and Further Education in the Melbourne Metropolitan Area, William Angliss Institute of TAFE, Melbourne.
Book – edited by single editor	Phillips, D (ed.) 2000, <i>The education systems of the United Kingdom</i> , Symposium Books, Oxford, England.
Book – edited by two editors	Fedeli, M & Bierema, LL (eds) 2020, <i>Connecting Adult Learning and Knowledge Management: Strategies for Learning and Change in Higher Education and Organizations</i> , Springer Verlag GMBH, Heidelberg, Germany.
Book – different edition	Melbourne Law Review 2018, <i>Australian Guide to Legal Citation</i> , 4th edn, Melbourne University Law Review, Melbourne, Victoria.
Report – part of a series	Bunning, F 2006, <i>The transformation of vocational education and training (VET) in the Baltic states: survey of reforms and developments</i> , Technical and vocational education and training: issues, concerns and prospects, vol.4, Springer, Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

Documents available online	New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission 2006, <i>Developing the second Tertiary Education Strategy: 2007/12</i> , Ministry of Education, Wellington, viewed February 2021, < <a href="http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/downloadable/dl11445_v1/final-pdfofdiscussion-document.pdf">www.minedu.govt.nz/web/downloadable/dl11445_v1/final-pdfofdiscussion-document.pdf</a> >.
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Chapter in an edited book	Billett, S 2001, 'Vocational educators: understanding practice at work', in <i>International perspectives on competence in the workplace: research policy and practice</i> , ed. C Velde, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, The Netherlands, pp.41–64.
Chapter in an edited book – two editors and part of a series	Akyeampong, A 2005, 'Vocationalisation of secondary education in Ghana', in <i>Vocationalisation of secondary education revisited</i> , eds J Lauglo & R Maclean, Technical and vocational education and training, vol.1, Springer, Dordrecht, Netherlands, pp.149–225.
Journal issue	<i>Adults learning</i> , vol.17, no.5, January 2006, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Leicester, England.
Journal article	Misbah, Z, Gulikers, J, Dharma, S & Mulder, M 2019, 'Evaluating competence-based vocational education in Indonesia', <i>Journal of Vocational Education &amp; Training</i> , vol. 72, no 4, pp. 488–515.
Conference paper not published in a volume of proceedings	Lee, T, Ashton, D, Bishop, D, Felstead, A, Fuller, A, Jewson, N & Unwin, L 2005, 'Cutting it: learning and work performance in hairdressing salons', paper presented at the 4th International Conference on Researching Work and Learning, 2005, Sydney, viewed June 2006, < <a href="http://www.projects.education.uts.edu.au/RWL4/RWL4Papers/.doc">www.projects.education.uts.edu.au/RWL4/RWL4Papers/.doc</a> >.
Unpublished report	Rushbrook, P 1996, 'Straws in the wind: the construction of technical and further education in Victoria 1945–1985', unpublished.

Website/web page	Australian Skills Quality Authority 2021, 'Users' Guide to the Standards for RTOs 2015', viewed 4 February 2021, < <a href="https://www.asqa.gov.au/standards">https://https://www.asqa.gov.au/standards</a> >.
Videos/YouTubes	ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) (10 May 2018) ' <a href="#">The Australian writer who could be the next Nobel Prize winner</a> ' [ <a href="#">video</a> ], ABC News (Australia), YouTube, accessed 29 May 2019.

## Order of information

The following information provides a simplified guide of how to order the pieces of information when referencing different types of document.

Books, reports, journals and book chapters	Journal articles
1. Author	1. Author(s)
2. Date (year published)	2. Date (year published)
3. Title (of book, report, journal, book chapter)	3. Article title
4. Title of book (if chapter is being referenced)	4. Journal article
5. Edition (if applicable)	5. Volume number
6. Editors (if chapter is being referenced)	6. Issue number
7. Series (if applicable)	7. Pages if article
8. Publisher	8. Date viewed and URL (if viewed online)
9. Place of publication	
10. Page numbers (if applicable)	
11. Date viewed and URL (if viewed online)	

Conference papers	Non-book materials
1. Author	1. Author

2. Date (year published)	2. Date (year published)
3. Title of paper	3. Title of paper
4. Conference name	4. Conference name
5. Date viewed and URL (if viewed online)	5. Date viewed and URL (if viewed online)
Note: Some conference papers are published as part of a volume of proceedings and these are treated as chapters in a book.	

Websites	Unpublished documents
1. Author(s)	1. Author
2. Date (year created/updated)	2. Date (year created)
3. Title (or name and place of sponsor of the source)	3. Title
4. Date viewed and URL	4. Unpublished

## Common errors

Use Australian spelling and follow the *Macquarie Dictionary* recommendations.

Words ending in –ise or –ize take –ise in Australian usage (e.g. realise, recognise, theorise, organise).

However, use the original spelling in quoted material and in the official spelling of an organisation's name (e.g. the World Health Organization).



**acknowledgement not acknowledgment** 'Acknowledgment'

is US spelling.

**affect or effect**

Affect is most commonly used as a verb—to have an effect on or act on.

EXAMPLE – This new knowledge affected the patient's diagnosis.

Affect is best avoided as a noun, but is occasionally used in psychology to describe an emotion or to signify pretense or deceptive behaviour.

Effect as a verb means to cause.

Effect as a noun means result.

EXAMPLE – The effect was substantial.

**alternative and alternate**

People often confuse the word alternate with alternative, but the words have different meanings. Alternate means by turns:

The journal is published in alternate months.

Alternative means one instead of the other:

We need an alternative program for the conference.

**among and between**

Use 'between' for two items and 'among' for more than two items. Avoid 'amongst'.

**amongst**

Considered old-fashioned, use 'among'.

**Budget**

Upper case current Budget (once it's passed as a Bill in parliament), but lower case future and past budgets.

**but**

Ninety per cent of the time 'but' will take a comma before it. The only exceptions are if what follows 'but' is very short, or a new subject is not introduced after 'but'.

**common sense** (noun); but **commonsense** (adjective)



**complement** (verb) **compliment** (verb)

To 'compliment' somebody is expressing admiration.

One thing 'complements' the other by enhancing or improving its overall effect.

**comprise and compose**

Comprise means 'to include'. Don't write 'x is comprised of y'. Use 'x comprises y' or 'x is composed of y'.

EXAMPLE –The units may comprise workshops and lectures **not** The units may be comprised of workshops and lectures.

By contrast composed means 'made up of'.

EXAMPLE – The unit was composed of several elements.

**coronavirus or COVID-19**

Select one of these forms and use it consistently throughout.

**ecommerce, ebusiness, elearning, ebook**

Refer to the *Macquarie Dictionary*, which lists ecommerce, ebook and ebusiness.

**enquire see** inquiry


**fewer and less**

Use 'fewer' for things you can itemise (e.g. 'fewer jobs'). Use 'less' with singular mass nouns or abstract nouns (e.g. 'less employment', 'less air').

**focused or focussed/focusing or focussing**

Use focused and focusing. The double 's' defies the rule that a two-syllable word with stress on the first syllable doesn't double the final consonant when an inflection is added. (Explanation adapted from *Macquarie Dictionary*).

**however**



'However' can be used to mean 'nevertheless' or 'but', and it can be used as a connector between two main clauses. When used to mean 'nevertheless' at the beginning of a sentence place a comma after it. When used to mean 'but' it's often better to just use 'but'.

EXAMPLE – However, he had gone home.

When used to connect two main clauses 'however' acts as a conjunctive adverb. To punctuate this correctly place a semicolon before however, and a comma after it.

EXAMPLE – The child was crying loudly after his puppy ran away; however, his father had run after it.

When 'however' is placed in the middle of a sentence and it means 'nevertheless' place a comma either side of it.

EXAMPLE – He had, however, gone home.

### **internet and intranet Use**

lower case.

**inquiry** (noun – investigation) **enquire** (verb – to enquire) The government launched its inquiry today.

I went to enquire at the local baths.

The US spelling is 'inquire' for both noun and verb forms.

### **its and it's**

An apostrophe is only used in 'it's' when it is a contraction of the expression 'it is' or 'it has'.

'Its' (without the apostrophe) is a pronoun (like 'my' or 'your'), which means 'belonging to' it. A good way to ensure your writing is correct is to expand 'its' into 'it is' or 'it has' and see if the outcome makes sense. If it does, you need an apostrophe.

At the office it's [contraction] important to submit each stationary order by its [possessive pronoun] due date.

**judgement** not judgment (US spelling)

**liaison** not liason

**myriad** (adjective and noun)

Myriad means an indefinitely great number. When your intention is descriptive or adjectival, use

'myriad forms' not 'a myriad of forms'. (To assist in correct usage mentally replace with 'thousands': 'a thousand forms' not 'a thousand of forms'.)

### **practice and practise**

In Australian English, 'practice' is a noun and 'practise' is a verb.

EXAMPLE – To sing well requires a lot of practice.

To become a professional singer, it is important to practise every day.

Note that in US usage, both the noun and verb are spelled as practice.

### **per cent and percent**

Use two words 'per cent'. 'Percent' is US spelling.

See also **Per cent**

### **that and which**

'That' is a defining relative pronoun used with essential relative clauses (i.e. it provides information that defines or limits the subject). EXAMPLE – We bought a house that was in need of renovation.

'Which' is used with non-defining relative clauses (it adds detail not essential to the main point). Non-restrictive relative clauses introduced by 'which' are punctuated with beginning and end commas (or a full stop if it runs to the end of the sentence). EXAMPLE – I sat under the tree, which was laden with golden leaves, and ate my lunch.

**Note:** with a parenthetical element such as 'which was laden with golden leaves', you need to be able to extract it from the sentence and it should still make perfect sense without it.

In a defining relative clause 'that' adds information that limits or defines the subject.

A good tip is that 'which' takes a comma unless it is preceded by a preposition such as—at, in, with, under, for, to, etc. If a comma doesn't work then you probably should be using 'that'. There are exceptions to this, but it's a good guide.

**they're** means 'they are'

**which** is a relative pronoun that is preceded by a comma unless a preposition is in front of it.

See also '**that and which**'.



## whilst

Avoid—use 'while' instead.

## who and that

Use 'who' when referring to people, and 'that' when referring to an organisation.

EXAMPLE – There are many financial professionals who rely on the company's investment strategies.

The company is a division of WaterforEveryone that publishes research and analysis on water quality and accessibility.

## Copyright – in brief

Copyright is a type of legal protection for producers of original material that grants the creators a level of control over their work. It also allows content creators to generate income from their own materials.

In Australia, copyright protection is free and automatic and works do not have to be published or display copyright symbols to be protected.

There are provisions in the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) that allow for certain uses of copyright content without the permission of the copyright holder. However, these exemptions are specific and limited.

It is important to remember that there is no provision for American-style 'fair use' in the Australian Copyright Act. Instead, the exemptions within the Act are referred to as 'fair dealing'. Fair dealing allows for use of copyright material without permission if reproducing content for one of the following purposes:

- criticism and review
- research or study
- parody or satire • reporting the news.

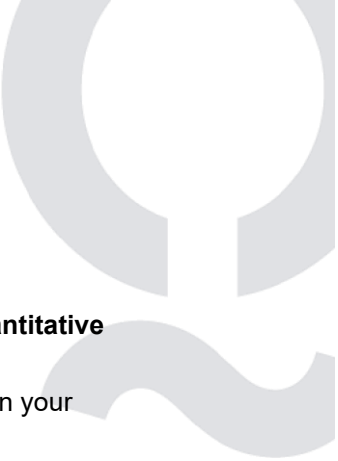
Of the above exceptions, the fair dealing provision that authors are most likely to apply is 'criticism and review'. This distinction is often a tricky one and can require a certain amount of subject matter expertise to define it.

Other instances in which content can be produced without permission are:

- if the work is no longer in copyright
- if the creator has waived their rights and the work has been released into the public domain
- if the amount of material being reproduced is deemed insubstantial.

In Australia, copyright generally lasts for 70 years after the death of the creator. There are some exceptions to this, and the [Australian Copyright Council](#) provides excellent guidance on duration in Australia.

The Copyright Act allows for reproduction of material without permission from the copyright holder provided it is an 'insubstantial portion'. However, the classification of 'insubstantial' is not



defined and can be difficult to assess. It is assessed on a **qualitative** rather than a **quantitative** basis. There is no word count that guarantees an extract is 'insubstantial'.

It is useful to keep these exceptions and exemptions in mind when including materials in your writing.

When using material from a secondary source, please ensure you **clearly identify and reference all material used from another source.**

## Adapted material

Adapted material should be acknowledged as having been adapted and full details of the original source should be provided. The right to make adaptations to content is held exclusively by the copyright holder. If the adaptation reproduces significant aspects of the original work, this is called a 'derivative work' or a 'derivation'.

Any derivation needs to be assessed in the same manner as original content. If the use does not fall under one of the exceptions or exemptions explained here, permission will need to be sought from the copyright holder.

It is more difficult to obtain permission for a derivative work than it is for an original work. Copyright holders can be protective of the way their work is used and often specifically request that no adaptations are made to it.

When adapting content, perhaps consider whether or not it would be easier to create your own material. Copyright does not protect ideas, only the manner in which they are expressed.