



COMMUNICATION AND CHANGE BRANCH

Infrastructure and Arts web style guide

Tips sheet

July 2024

This tips sheet is designed to help you create content for our external infrastructure.gov.au and arts.gov.au websites. It outlines our style preferences in terms of tone, voice and how information is displayed. It summarises key points in the [Australian Government Style Manual](#) and links to more information to help you understand the key principles.

Use it as a quick reference guide when writing or editing content for our website, or use the [Website news story and social post template](#) when writing a news story for the website.

Overarching principles

The following principles should form the basis of our web content. Our content should be:

1. **plain language**
2. in the **active voice** (for example 'The Australian Government launched the grant round on 5 October', not 'a \$20 million grant round was launched by the Australian Government on 5 October')
3. **inclusive**
4. **relevant**
5. **engaging**
6. **informative**
7. **grammatically correct** (for grammar tips, refer to the [Grammar, punctuation and conventions section](#) of the Style Manual).

Writing for our audience

Our content needs to be accessible to everyone, regardless of their education. This means writing in plain language and using everyday words that are easy for everyone to understand. Our stakeholders or industry experts won't stop understanding content just because it's written clearly and succinctly.

Content should be written at a reading level 2, or Australian year 7 equivalent.

You can use the Microsoft Readability Tool in Word to test the level of your writing. You may need to [set up the tool first](#).

Our tone

Tone is the **way you express ideas**. It includes the words you use, the way you put them together and their level of formality.

We want to speak to our audience using clear and concise language: use content that's open, active, relevant and worthy of meaningful conversation.

The Style Manual outlines 3 types of tone for government communication: formal, standard and informal. We use a 'standard' tone.

Standard tone tips

Write this: Have your say about basic online safety expectations by 31 December 2021 [standard tone]

Not this: You must provide your written submission to the basic online safety consultation by 31 December 2021 [formal tone]

Our voice

Voice captures **who is writing** – a persona people understand when they engage with the content. Our voice – or persona – should be consistent across our website. It is personal and friendly, as opposed to objective and institutional.

Voice tips

Write this: Our work touches every Australian community and underpins our economy and society. [Personal voice, standard tone]

Note this: The department's work affects communities across Australia and makes a substantial impact on the country's economy. [Institutional voice, standard tone]

To read more about adapting your tone and voice, refer to the [Voice and tone](#) section of the Style Manual.

Simple language

Use shorter, everyday words such as: 'help' instead of 'assist'; 'can't' instead of 'cannot'; 'it's' instead of 'it is'; 'because' instead of 'due to the fact that'; 'for' instead of 'with regard to'; and so on.

Use simple verbs such as: 'we manage' instead of 'we are managing'; 'we will review' instead of 'we will be reviewing'.

Refer to the [table in the Style Manual](#) for more examples of plain language alternatives.

Use personal pronouns

Use an active voice and tone to engage users. Personal pronouns, such as ‘we’, ‘you’ and ‘us’ should be used most of the time. Active voice and tone makes it clear who must do what and is generally a friendlier, more approachable form of expression.

Using personal pronouns

Write this: Our communication guides can help you to plan your next project.

Not this: Refer to the department’s communication guides for assistance in the planning phase of your next project.

Avoid jargon

Avoid buzzwords, jargon, slang and idioms. Instead, use words that most people will understand. For example, not many people know what ‘digital economy’ means.

Avoiding jargon

Write this: They changed their decision in response to new information.

Not this: They changed their decision in light of new information. [‘In light of’ is an idiom.]

Use inclusive language

Use language that is culturally appropriate and respectful of the diversity of Australia’s peoples. Use respectful and inclusive language that talks to the person, not their difference.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

There is a wide range of nations, cultures and languages across mainland Australia and throughout the Torres Strait. Given this diversity, respectful language use depends on what different communities find appropriate. As a result, there are very few hard rules.

The Style Manual has a wide range of guidance on writing with, for or about First Nations Australians, including naming protocols and appropriate terminology. Review the advice on the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander section of the Style Manual](#) when preparing your web content.


Cultural and linguistic diversity

Mention people’s cultural affinity or identity only when you need to. You can use the general term ‘multicultural communities’ to write about people from different cultural backgrounds. Avoid using words such as ‘ethnic Australians’ or ‘ethnic groups’. For more help, refer to the [Cultural and linguistic diversity section](#) of the Style Manual.

People with disability

When mentioning disability, focus on the person, not the disability. This means using person-first language, such as ‘people with disability’ rather than ‘disabled person’. If in doubt, refer to the [People with disability section](#) of the Style Manual.

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Note: For advice about the functionality of our website, or advice about making your content accessible to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines level 2.OAA standards, contact 

Gender-neutral language

Avoid references to someone's gender, sexuality or marital status unless it is the issue under discussion. Instead, you can:

- reword text to avoid the use of pronouns or use alternative pronouns, such as 'their'
- use neutral pronouns such as 'you' or 'they' rather than masculine or feminine pronouns such as 'he' or 'she'
- use neutral titles for occupations traditionally associated with masculine or feminine titles, for example 'worker' instead of 'workman', 'police officer' instead of 'policeman', 'actor' instead of 'actress'.

For more detail about using gender-neutral language, refer to the [Gender and sexual identity section](#) of the Style Manual.

Content structure

Content structure helps people make sense of the information presented and helps the user navigate our pages easily. It is also very important for people who use screen readers.

There are generally three types of structures to use when creating content. These are:

1. Hierarchical

Group content into topics or connected ideas, prioritised by level of importance.

2. Sequential

Used for instructional content, where you want the user to do something in a certain order.

3. Narrative

Guide the user from beginning to end, drawing them into the entire story. Use signposts that suggest where they are in the journey for ease of reference.

For more information about structure, refer to the [Structuring content section](#) of the Style Manual.

Other structural considerations

Page title

The title is the first item to appear in search results and is the first thing a screen reader will read out. Make it concise and meaningful.

Paragraphs

Use the first paragraph to make the purpose of your content easier to find in searches and to help people decide if they've found the right information. Limit each paragraph to one idea. A paragraph can be as short as one sentence if needed, but most will be 2 or 3. Sentences should be fewer than 25 words.

Section headings

Headings organise information and are specific to the topic they describe. Think of them as signposts for people and for search engines. They should tell the user what's in the content below it – but keep them short!

Headings help a user scan the page and find the information they need. They will greatly help a screen reader user make sense of the information they're hearing.

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Links

Hyperlink text should describe the destination to the user. It should not use generic text such as 'Click here', or a URL.

Link tips

Write this: Visit the [Office for the Arts](#) website

Not this: Visit [arts.gov.au](#)

Only use images for links if they meet a user need. If linking images, you should describe the link with alt text for accessibility.

Tables

Only use a table if there isn't a simpler way to present your content, such as a list, paragraph, text or diagram. Tables are appropriate to use for exact values and information that is too detailed for the text but are not accessible for users.

Content quick tips

There are some common writing 'rules' outlined in the Style Manual. Some of these may have changed since the previous hard copy Style Guide was published in 2006. Key ones to note include:

- Use 'the department', not 'the Department'. Use initial capital letters only when using our full name, for example the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts. (For more information on rules for capitalising government terms, refer to the [Government terms](#) section of the Style Manual.)
- Don't use a semicolon at the end of items in a bullet list. (Read more about lists on the [Lists page](#).)
- Unless each item is a full sentence or the last item in a list, don't use a full stop for items in bullet lists.
- Use numerals for 2 and above in text, unless you're starting a sentence with a number.
- Write the numbers 'zero' and 'one' in words.
- Don't use full stops between letters in an acronym or initialism.
- Don't use a comma or any punctuation when writing out the date. Use numerals for the day and the year but spell out the month in words, for example: 22 September 2021.
- Never use double spaces.
- Use sentence case (where only the first word and proper nouns are capitalised) for your content and headings.
- If the shortened form of a word represents a proper noun, start each word with a capital letter, for example New South Wales is 'NSW', but Queensland is 'Qld'.

If you're looking for more style conventions, refer to the [Grammar, punctuation and conventions](#) section of the Style Manual.

News stories

News stories appear on our homepage. You should use the same tone and voice for news stories as you do other web content: professional, personal and friendly. If you're drafting a web story from a media release, consider the tone and voice and adapt it to be warm and conversational, rather than formal. Break up longer articles with headings if needed and use short paragraphs, covering one idea per paragraph.

The title and the summary sentence should be as short as possible so they fit on the homepage and encourage the reader to click through for the full story.

Use the [Submit News +](#) feature, located within the Latest News section on the CONNECT home page and follow the conventions outlined.

Image selection and use

Images are generally only needed for news stories, however when it's appropriate you can consider including an image on your web page. There are 2 image source options available to us: the departmental library and Getty.

Departmental library

URL: <https://infrastructure.imagegallery.me/>

The departmental library has a wide range of images (stills and footage) relating to our infrastructure, communications and regional program areas. You will need to sign up for a user log in.

Once logged in, enter your search terms in the search boxes on the home page, or scroll down and you'll find a selection of folders on key topics. Content in the library can be shared with anyone in the department and external stakeholders, including ministers' offices.

Contact [redacted] for help with the departmental library.

Getty

Our stock image provider is Getty. If you can't find any suitable images in the departmental library, search the [Getty library](#).

Once you've made your selections, email [redacted] with a link / image number(s) for purchase.

Please note there are some limitations associated with content obtained from Getty you need to be aware of:

- Images **can't** be stored for future uses that differ from the original project.
- Images **can't** be provided to anyone externally **including** ministerial offices, however imagery **can** be provided to freelancers (such as external graphic designers) completing a job for the department.
- Images **can't** be used in electronic templates, print runs over 500,000, or materials for sale.
- There are restrictions to content marked 'editorial only' so you should avoid using these images.

Use of royalty free stock image sites

We don't endorse the use of royalty free stock images for any purpose because we can't verify their source. If you can't find what you need in our library or Getty, contact our strategic communication or video teams.