**Journalism Style Guide**

**What is a style guide?**

The Australian language comprises words that are spelled in just one way – these you can find in a dictionary. Other words and phrases can be shown in a number of ways. For example, we could write *December 3, 2013* OR *03/12/13* OR *3rd December, 2013 OR Dec. 3, 2013.* Do we abbreviate the title *Mister* to *Mr* or *Mr.* with a full stop? Is it okay to write about someone as being a *spokeswoman* or should we write *spokesperson*? The decision on which way to write this is a question of style. Many organisations will have their own style guide and this is ours. Here, you will find the way that we suggest you express a word or phrase. Our goal is to achieve a consistent style and a high level of readability. The aim of a style guide is “to promote accuracy and consistency, and to strike a balance between brevity and clarity” (*Style* 2009, p. 5).

**How to use this style guide**

Items are listed in alphabetical order with some cross referencing. The exception is Punctuation marks which are grouped on the last pages of this document.

If you can’t find an answer here about how to spell a word use the **first entry** in the Macquarie Dictionary.

All examples are shown in *italics*, so only **use** italics for words that appear under the heading italics.

Use the *advanced find* function in Word to quickly locate what you are looking for.

**Abbreviations/contractions**

Spell out a word you are going to abbreviate, then add the abbreviation in brackets immediately afterwards – but only if it is used again in the text. After the initial spelled out entry only the abbreviated form is used. For example, *Students study business at the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) in Queensland. At USC there is an extensive library.*

Many abbreviations are so well known they can be used without adding the spelled out words. Australian readers will understand AIDS, ABC, ACT, ACTU, BHP, CSIRO, NAB, NSW, QLD, RAAF.

For example, use the abbreviation *US* for the United States of America and *UN* for the United Nations.

Contractions such as *Mr, Mrs, Dr, Cr,* do not need a full stop. These are words where the first letter and last letter are used (e.g. *M~~iste~~r* becomes *Mr, D~~octo~~r* becomes *Dr, S~~tree~~t* becomes *St*).

Abbreviated words, where the word is cut, need a full stop (e.g. *Corp. for Corporal, Prof. for Professor, Capt. for Captain*).

Always spell out *Mount, Point* and *Port.*

Avoid the Latin abbreviations *i.e., e.g.* and *etc.* in text. Spell them out in full (*that is, for example, so on*) and restrict use of Latin abbreviations to bracketed text. Note the use of full stops if the Latin abbreviation is used.

**Aborigine/Aboriginal**

Aborigine is the noun *(e.g. He was an Aborigine from Sydney);* Aboriginal is the adjective *(e.g. He enjoyed the Aboriginal dance).*

**Acronyms**

These are strings of initial letters (and sometimes other letters) that are spoken as words. Some have a capital first letter and some don’t, so check in a dictionary.

For example, Anzac (stands for *Australian and New Zealand Army Corps*), Qantas (stands for *Queensland And Northern Territories Aerial Services*). With some words the abbreviation would not be recognised as such by most readers (e.g. *scuba stands for self-contained underwater breathing apparatus)* so is left in all lower case.

**Active /passive voice**

The verb in a sentence is either active or passive. Active tense (voice) is preferred in most genres as it immediately tells the reader who/what is the subject of the sentence and is more direct than a passive construction.

For example:

Active voice: *The secretary (subject) wrote (verb) the minutes to the meeting this morning (object).*

Passive voice: *The minutes to the meeting (object) were written (verb) by the secretary (subject) this morning.*

Note how a passive construction is longer and the subject – the person doing something – is at the end of the sentence. The word ‘by’ is usually a good clue that the sentence may be in the passive voice.

Aim to construct a sentence with subject, verb, object rather than object, verb, subject.

Passive construction can omit the subject and still be a complete but less informative and satisfying sentence.

For example:

*Mistakes were made.* (passive voice)

*I made mistakes.* (active voice)

**Ages (also see numbers)**

If relevant to the story give the age; if not you may be introducing bias.

When giving an age after a name use a digit for all numbers, including 1 to 9. (e.g. *John, 6, likes school.*)

Spell out an age following the number rule (i.e. spell out one to nine) if a name is not used (e.g. *The boy, six, was happy*).

Write *Rachael, 40, …* rather than *40-year-old Rachael …* , *John, 6, …* rather than *six-year-old John … , my uncle, 50,* rather than *my 50-year-old uncle.* Note use of hyphens if you do write in the latter format.

Refer to people as children until they are 14, youths or teenagers until they are 17 and men/women for 18 and over. Use boy/girl/man/woman for individuals.

**Allies**

Capital first letter for Allies in references to World War I and II alliances.

**Americanisms**

Avoid American expressions if these are not commonly used in Australia.

Many Australian words will have double ‘ll’ where the American word has one (e.g. travelling/traveling), a ‘u’ where the American word does not (e.g. honour/honor), and an ‘s’ where the American word has a ‘z’ (e.g. criticise/criticize). Always check in an Australian dictionary unless the publication is for an American audience.

Do not change a spelling in a direct quote.

Do not change the official spelling of organisations, buildings, titles of books, movies, place names etc. (e.g. *The World Trade Center, Pearl Harbor, Men of Honor*).

**Australian word/spelling American word/spelling**

car boot car trunk

catalogue catalog

cheque check

flats, units condominiums

footpath, pavement sidewalk

grey gray

labour labor

lift elevator

pharmacy, chemist drugstore

practice (noun) practice (verb)

practise (verb) practise (noun), but *practice* is often used for noun and verb

soft drink soda/soda pop

tyre tire

**Ampersand**

The ampersand symbol (&) should only be used if space is limited such as in a headline, table or figure. In most cases it is better to spell out the word ‘and’.

**Armed forces**

Use lower case for *army, navy* and *air force* unless part of a title (e.g. *Royal Australian Navy*).

**Asylum seekers**

It is not illegal to seek asylum, so do not write *illegal asylum seekers*. They can be referred to as *illegal immigrants* if they fail to respond to a removal notice or overstay their visa.

**At/about (see time)**

**Attribution**

Use *said* or *says* for the majority of attributions. Always used after the first sentence of a direct quote. This ensures consistency and clarity in relation to who is speaking.

However, repeat the attribution when changing from direct to indirect speech (and back again).

**Baby**

Write that someone has a *boy/girl/son/daughter/baby*. Avoid writing *baby girl/baby boy*.

**Bible (also see religion)**

Capital first letter for specific use but lower case when used adjectivally (e.g. *… biblical references …*).

Although italics are generally used for titles of books, do not use italics for the Bible or other religious texts.

**Blonde/blond**

*Blonde* is the feminine spelling; *blond* the masculine.

**Brand names (see Trade names)**

**Breeds**

Generally lower case first letter (e.g. *labrador, poodle, shih-tzu, german shepherd, irish setter, jersey cow*).

Exceptions:

Australian (e.g. *Australian cattle dog*) has a capital A.

Names derived from people use capital letters for that part of the name (e.g. *King Charles spaniel, Jack Russell terrier, St Bernard*).

Use a capital letter to avoid confusion in breeds such as *Large White* pig (to differentiate from other large, white pigs).

**Capitals (also see entries under breeds, coined names, direct speech, festivals and special days, geography, government, nationalities, religion, titles and positions, trade names)**

The fashion is for minimal use of capital letters.

Use capital first letter for:

* Proper names (e.g. *Australia, Barney*)
* Main words in a title of a book, film etc. (e.g. *The Silence of the Lambs*)
* First word in a sentence
* After a colon if what follows is a complete sentence
* References to specifics (e.g. *The café on Level 3. He will appear at the Supreme Court.*) but not for generic use (e.g. *There is a café on all levels. He will appear in court.*)
* To avoid confusion with the same word that has a different meaning (e.g. *Act/act, the Speaker/the speaker*)

**Century**

First letter is not capped. The number follows the general rule of spelling out for one to nine (e.g. *sixth, eighth century*). Thereafter a digit is used (e.g. *19th, 21st century*). Note that the *th* is not superscripted (e.g. not *20th*).

**Clichés**

A cliché is a lazy way of expressing something. It is a figure of speech whose effectiveness has been worn out through overuse and excessive familiarity. Try to say what you mean in a more literal way.

<http://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-cliches.html>

<http://www2.copydesk.org/hold/words/cliches.htm>

Some clichés to avoid:

armed to the teeth

beat a hasty retreat

cool as a cucumber

dig in their heels

fly in the ointment

given the green light

lock, stock and barrel

long arm of the law

matter of life and death

never a dull moment

nipped in the bud

order out of chaos

part and parcel

pool of blood

pretty kettle of fish

raining cats and dogs

rats in a trap

red rag to a bull

reins of government

rose to great heights

selling like hot cakes

sigh of relief

square peg in a round hole

steaming jungle

stick out like a sore thumb

storm of protest

taking the bull by the horns

this day and age

tongue in cheek

upset the applecart

vanish into thin air

whirlwind tour

**Coined names or titles**

Cap first letter in all words (e.g. *Iron Curtain, Star Wars, Gen Z, Baby Boomer, The Academy Awards (also known as The Oscars), Logie Award*).

**Collective nouns**

Usually take a singular verb and pronoun where a group is being referred to as a single entity. For example, *the herd of elephants is crossing the park, the committee is meeting on Wednesday, Australia is hoping to win*, *the jury is making their decision*. In these examples *herd, committee, Australia* and *jury* are the collective nouns with the verb *is.*

Words such as *everyone, none, no one, each* use a singular verb.

**Collided**

A vehicle cannot *collide* with a stationary object – it *hits* it.

**Contractions/Abbreviations (see abbreviations)**

**Currency**

In references to pre-decimal currency spell out pounds, shillings and pence. Convert foreign currencies to rounded Australian dollars. But leave as is in a direct quote.

(Go to: [XE Currency Converter - Live Rates - XE.com](http://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/))

If needed, note which country’s currency is being referred to: $A, $US, $NZ. For example, *$A670, $US670*.

Cents – spell out the word and the number of cents if there is a possibility of confusion but otherwise 1c, 3c, etc.

Dollars – $1, $1.25, $10, $10 to $9999, $10,000 to $999,999, $1 million, $999 million and $1 billion.

In headlines this can be abbreviated to $1m and $1b.

There is no space between the currency symbol and the number.

Use a comma from *10,000*.

**Dates and times (also see times)**

Write out a date in the following format: *Tuesday, April 6, 2013,* … (note placement of commas).

Note commas are not needed if simply referring to month and year (e.g. *In April 2013 he ate chips.*)or if referring to a date without ayear(e.g. *On April 26 he went to the zoo.*)

No apostrophe is used when referring to a decade (e.g. *1980s*) as this expression is simply a plural, referring to all of the years from 1980 to 1989. This can be referred to in an abbreviated form where an apostrophe is used to denote the missing numbers (e.g. *’80s*) or in a word (*the eighties*).

Change any American date (where the month goes before the day) to the Australian style. (e.g. the American *8/12/13* would be 1*2/8/13* in the Australian style where we mean *August 12, 2013*).

There is no need to write *in the morning* if ‘am’ is used or *in the afternoon* if ‘pm’ is used.

There is no such thing as 12pm (and its use can mislead). Use *noon or midday* for the middle of the day and *midnight* for the middle of the night.

**Decimals**

As a rule express fractions as decimals (e.g. *2.5 per cent rather than 2½ per cent*). When using a figure below 1 per cent, use a nought before it (e.g. *0.2 per cent*). An exception is the *.05 blood-alcohol limit for drivers.*

**Different**

Something is *different from* something else rather than *different to*.

**Direct speech (also see quotation marks and indirect speech)**

Words enclosed in quotation marks must be exactly what the person said or exactly what is written in any quote you are copying from another source. You cannot create speech!

If you wish to leave a word(s) out you must indicate you have done so with an ellipsis (see ellipsis in punctuation section).

If you wish to add an extra word(s) you must indicate you have done so with square brackets (see brackets in the punctuation section).

The first letter of the first word of a piece of quoted speech is capitalised.

For example, *The spokesman said, “We firmly believe in our new education policy.”*

Double quotes are the standard style with single quote marks used for a quote within a quote.

An alternative style is to use a colon instead of a comma after the attribution.

For example, *The spokesman said: “We firmly believe in our new education policy.”*

Use one style consistently within a document. A copy-editor would be guided by the writer’s preference as both styles are correct.

Note the placement of punctuation marks if the attribution is at the end:

*“We firmly believe in our new education policy,” the spokesman said.*

When the quote is interrupted with an attribution and if no proper noun or name is involved, the first word of the second fragment appears in lower case.

For example, *“We firmly believe,” the minister said, “in our new education policy.”*

If only a partial quote is used, use capital letters or lower case as you would if the words were not in quote marks.

For example, *The minister said he “firmly believed” in the new education policy.*

**Disability**

Use appropriate language for people with a disability. Do not say someone is confined to a wheelchair – say they are *a wheelchair user* or *use a wheelchair*. The wheelchair allows them to be mobile and gives them some degree of freedom, not restriction.

**Down syndrome** (not Down’s syndrome).

**Famous/infamous**

Infamous means of ill repute, wicked, having an extremely bad reputation. For example, Hitler is *famous* but he is also *infamous*. Elvis Presley is just *famous*.

**Fanboys**

These are conjunctions that join two complete sentences and they need a comma before them.

Fanboys is a mnemonic for these conjunctions: **f**or, **a**nd, **n**or, **b**ut, **o**r, **y**et, **s**o.

**Father’s Day**

Note the placement of the apostrophe and use of capital letters.

**Festival and special days**

Cap first letter for special days, weeks and years. For example, *Anzac Day, Asthma Week, Australia Day, Christmas Day, Easter Sunday, Good Friday, International Year of the Disabled, New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, Passover, Valentine’s Day.*

**Fewer than/less than**

Use *fewer than* if the objects can be counted (e.g. *there were fewer cars on the road today*).

Use *less than* if the objects cannot be counted (e.g. *there was less traffic on the road today*).

**Fractions**

Spell out terms such as *half a day, half full, three-quarters of an hour*.

**Funeral**

Never write *the funeral of the late* – it’s a tautology! The same goes for *the widow of the late* – she wouldn’t be a widow if her husband were still alive. (Note: widow= female, widower= male). There is no need to write *funeral service* as this is redundant – a funeral IS a service so just write *funeral*.

**Gender (see sexism)**

**Geography**

For place names, common nouns are capped when part of the name e.g. *the Brisbane River.* Use lower case for any subsequent mention (e.g. *the river)*. Exceptions are *the* *Reef* (Qld), *the Tower* (London) and *the Channel* (English).

Street names use a capital letter for the ‘t’ (e.g. *The Corso*).

*The Rocks* (Sydney) needs caps to make it differ from *the rocks*.

Compass points are lower case (e.g. *north, south, east and west)* and for adjectival use of these words (e.g. *southern France, northern Queensland*).

Halfway points (e.g. *northeast, southwest*) are lower case and do not need a hyphen.

Country and city names change, so you need to be aware of the correct name. For example, *Bombay* is now known as *Mumbai*, *Ceylon* as *Sri Lanka* and *Peking* as *Beijing*.

In 1914 the name of the Russian city *Saint Petersburg* was changed to *Petrograd***,** in 1924 to *Leningrad*, and in 1991 it reverted to *Saint Petersburg*.

**Government**

Use capital first letter for:

* political ministers when giving their title in conjunction with their portfolio or whose title is their portfolio (e.g. *the Foreign Secretary Joe Smith, the Premier, the Treasurer, the Prime Minister, the Mayor*).
* *Federal Government, State Government, Federal Opposition, State Opposition* when referring to the specific bodies but lower case first letter for general or plural references.
* *Federal Parliament, State Parliament* for specific use but lower case first letter for non-specific use.
* *Governor-General* and *Governor*.
* *Acts* and *Bills* when used in a political sense.
* all political parties and factions (e.g. *Australian Labor Party, Labor, Liberal Party, Liberals, National Party, Nationals*).
* Public service if being specific (e.g. *Victorian Public Service*) but lower case for generic use (e.g. *he works in the public service, he is a public servant*).
* Lower case for adjectives (e.g. *ministerial, parliamentary*).
* Lower case for *mayor, prime minister, president, treasurer* when used as a descriptive status term (e.g. *a minister said, a former president told, John is standing for mayor of Brisbane*).

**Historic/historical**

Historic means history-making; historical is when the sentence refers to something in history.

(e.g. *He wrote a historical story about historic events in Korea*.)

**Historical names**

Cap first letter when they refer to a specific person, age or thing (e.g. *the Crusades, The Eureka Stockade, the Holocaust, the French Revolution, the Bundaberg Gold Rush*) but lower case if generic use (e.g. *the gold rush, the recession*).

**Honorifics (also see legal profession)**

Use Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms for all except sportsmen/sportswomen, actors, authors, artists, musicians, convicted criminals, journalists and the long dead (e.g. *Churchill, Einstein*).

Try to find out whether a woman prefers to be addressed as *Mrs, Miss or Ms*. If you can’t find out their preference use *Ms*.

At first mention omit the honorific in preference for a job title or description (e.g. *Prime Minister Tony Abbott, Redcliffe resident Linda Best*). Thereafter, use the honorific (e.g. *Mr Abbott, Mrs Best*).

Knights (male = Sir/female = Dame) are referred to by their first name rather than surname (*e.g. Sir Paul rather than Sir McCartney, Dame Enid rather than Dame Lyons.)*

Honorifics are not used in feature stories, comment pieces and descriptive writing. Introduce the person with their full name and thereafter use their first name.

**Hung/hang**

Use hung for a picture or meat; hang for people (e.g. *He was hanged in 1876*).

**Indirect speech/paraphrasing**

Sometimes a direct quote is poorly expressed, unclear, contains details that are not relevant or is too long. These can be changed to indirect speech, which is the writer’s interpretation of the quote. The quotation marks must be removed as soon as you decide to change any of the words as these no longer reflect exactly what was said.

The tense of the attribution (says/said) determines the tense of the verbs used in the indirect speech.

Direct speech: *He said, “I love classes.” “I like to go the beach,” she says.*

Indirect speech: *He* ***said*** *he* ***loved*** *classes. She* ***says*** *she* ***likes*** *to go to the beach.*

**Italics (also see television)**

Used for name of newspapers, magazines, books, plays, films, TV and radio programs (but not the stations), poems, songs, works of art, musical works.

Do not use italics for types of vehicles such as space shuttle, ship, trains, but do use for the special names of vehicles (e.g. *Columbia, Titanic*). All the key words in the title use a capital letter (e.g. *Lord of the Rings*).

Do not use italics for religious works such as the Bible and the Koran or for reference books such as the Macquarie Dictionary.

**It’s /Its**

*It’s* is a contraction of it is or it has. These are the **only** meanings of *it’s*.

*Its* is a personal pronoun so, just like the other personal pronouns (*hers, his, ours, theirs and yours*), there is NO apostrophe.

For example, *The cat sat on its mat. Its* is used here instead of *her* mat.

For example, *It’s a cold day (It is a cold day) and it’s been wet too (and it has been wet too).*

**Legal profession – honorifics (see titles, positions)**

Write the title Judge, first name, surname *(e.g. Judge John Smith)* and thereafter *Judge Smith.* Use *his/her honour* occasionally if the text seems repetitive.

For other titles in the legal profession, give their title at first mention (e.g. *Defence Lawyer John Bloggs said ...., Barrister John Bloggs said ..., Magistrate Jill Blob said …*) and thereafter use Mr/Mrs/Ms as appropriate.

Use capital first letter for their title when followed by their name (e.g. *Prosecutor Ian Brand …*).

Use lower case first letter for general use when name does not follow (e.g*. the lawyer, the barrister*)

There is no comma between the name and the title QC or SC, where applicable.

**Literally**

Use sparingly – it means in fact or actually. For example, don’t write of someone that he “literally blew up” unless he swallowed a stick of dynamite. It would be better to write “he lost his temper” or similar.

**Loath/loathe**

Loath means *unwilling* (e.g. *He was loath to get out of bed*). Loathe means to hate (e.g. *He loathed grocery shopping on Saturday*).

**Measurements**

Use a metric word except for nautical miles and knots. Do not change colloquialisms that use imperial terms (e.g. *a ten-gallon, hat, like a ton of bricks*).

Do not add a full stop to an abbreviated measurement (except to indicate the end of a sentence).

Do not add an ‘s’ to indicate a plural. For example, 1km, 6km, 6.5km is the correct style. Do not convert a measure if used in speech; leave as it was spoken/written. (e.g. *In 1862, John wrote, “ I had to walk six miles to school.”*) If you really want to show the conversion you could do so by showing the metric measurement in editorial brackets: *In 1862, John wrote, “ I had to walk six miles [9.6km]to school.”*

There is no space between the number and the abbreviation. (See example in previous line.)

Style: Temperature: Kelvin=K, Celsius=C, (e.g. *25C*). Convert all Fahrenheit and Kelvin to Celsius. [www.metric-conversions.org/temperature/fahrenheit-to-celsius.htm](http://www.metric-conversions.org/temperature/fahrenheit-to-celsius.htm)

Area: hectare=ha, square metre= sq m, square centimetre=sq cm

Length: metre=m, millimetre-mm, centimetre=cm, kilometre=km

Speed: kilometres an hour=km/h, knot= knot

Volume (fluids): millilitre=ml, cubic centimetres=cc, litre=l

**Midnight**

Use *midnight* rather than *12am* or 12*pm* to reduce the chance of a misunderstanding.

**Mother’s Day**

Note the placement of the apostrophe and use of capital letters.

**Mum/Dad**

Only use a capital letter if this noun (mum/dad) is being used as a proper noun.

For example, *I am going to see Mum* (replacing the proper noun *Mary*).

Use lower case if the noun is being used as a common noun.

For example, *He loved his mum and his cat*.

The same rule applies to other family names such as *sis, bro, aunt, uncle*.

**Nationalities**

Use a capital first letter for people’s nationalities and languages. For example, *Australians speak English; the French speak French.*

**Nautical**

Refer to all ships, yachts and boats as *it* not *she*.

Use the definite article (*the*) with the names of ships (e.g. *The African Queen*). Only use a capital T if the ‘the’ is part of the ship’s name.

Do not use *the* if HMAS is used. Do not italicise abbreviations, such as HMAS, in front of a name. Do not use *the* in front of a yacht’s name.

**Noon**

Use *noon* or *midday* rather than *12pm* to reduce the chance of a misunderstanding.

**Numbers (also see ages)**

Write out one to nine and thereafter use digits. (e.g. *one, six, 11, 22*).

Use a hyphen for all numbers above *twenty-one* when spelled out.

Use a comma for figures above *10,000.*

Note: Spell out any number at the beginning of a sentence (e.g. *Twenty-six soldiers…)*

Exceptions:

Use a number for:

* dates (e.g. *April 1*)
* an age if it follows a person’s name (e.g. *John Smith, 6, was happy*). Spell out following the number rule (i.e. spell out one to nine) if a name is not used (e.g. *The boy, six, was happy*).
* figures containing decimals (e.g. *65.5kg*)
* for abbreviated measures (e.g. *6km, 4cc*). But follow number rule (i.e. spell out one to nine) for million (e.g. *six million, not 6 million, not 6,000,000*)
* percentages (e.g. *6 per cent*)
* times of day (e.g. *11.30am*)
* times of sporting events (e.g. 2*:43:09 for two hours, 43 minutes and 9 seconds*)

**Over/more**

Use *more* rather than *over* with numbers (e.g. *He was more than two hours late*). The exception is ages (e.g. *She was over 18*).

**Paraphrasing (see indirect speech)**

**Per cent**

Use two words for *per cent;* one for *percentage*. It is acceptable to use the symbol *%* in headings or in tables if short of space.

**Phone numbers**

Break up land line numbers into 2, 4, 4 (e.g. *07 1234 5678*).

Break up mobile numbers into 4, 3, 3 (e.g. *0411 123 456*).

**Plain language**

Use simple words to express ideas in a clear and concise way.

**DON’T WRITE WRITE**

a percentage of, a portion of some

a small percentage of a few

accordingly so

arrived on the scene arrived

assistance aid

at the moment, this point in time now

behind schedule late

beverage drink

called a halt stopped

draw a conclusion conclude

filled to capacity full

following, subsequently after

for the purpose of for

give consideration to consider

in consequence of because

in order to, with the aim of to

in short supply scarce

in view of the fact, in consequence of because

inquire ask

made an approach to approached

medical practitioner doctor

peruse read

placed under arrest arrested

purchase buy

remuneration pay

reside, dwell live

residence, dwelling home

retail outlets shops

submitted a resignation resigned

terminate end

terminated, dismissed sacked

to date so far

undertake an inspection inspect

was suffering from had

**Planets**

Use lower case letters for *sun* and *moon*. Cap *Earth* if referring to the planet to avoid confusion with earth that means soil.

**Quotes (see direct speech, quotation marks)**

**Race**

Only refer to someone’s race if it is relevant to the text. If you would not use Australian or Caucasian then the addition of the person’s race or colour is probably not relevant.

Take care not to seem patronising. For example, *The Aboriginal boy was excelling at school*. Is it relevant that he is Aboriginal or is the writer implying that despite the fact he is Aboriginal the boy is bright?

Capitalise first letter (e.g. *Aborigine, Caucasian*).

**Redundancies (see tautologies)**

**Religion (also see Bible)**

Use a capital first letter for recognised religions (e.g. *Christianity/Christian, Islam/Muslim, Buddhism/Buddhist*) but lower case for religious attitudes or kinds of religion (e.g. *deism, agnostic, atheism/atheist)*.

Cap first letter for religious texts (e.g. *the Bible, the Koran*) but do not italicise the name. Capital first letter for the *Pope* and use roman numerals to show which person (e.g. *Pope* [*Benedict XVI*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Benedict_XVI)).

Lower case for *heaven, hell, paradise* and *purgatory*.

Cap first letter for *Satan* and the *Devil*. Lower case for adjectival use (e.g. *satanic* and *devilish*).

**Roman numerals**

Some of the common uses of roman numerals include use in clock faces, chapter numbering and numbered lists. Roman numerals are sometimes used for the dating of movies and television programs.

This system is based on seven letters: I for 1, V for 5, X for 10, L for 50, C for 100, D for 500 and M for 1000. A repeated letter repeats the value (e.g. *VIII is eight*). When a letter follows one of great value the two are added. When the letter precedes one of greater value it is subtracted from the larger one (e.g. *IV is used for four rather than IIII*). 2013 would be expressed as MMXIII, 2014 would be MMXIV.

Do not change to arabic numerals (1,2, 3 etc.) in places such as *World War II*, *Superman III*.

Use a capital letter ‘i’ to create a Roman numeral.

Interestingly, zero is the only number that cannot be represented by Roman numerals.

**Saint**

Abbreviate to St (no full stop).

It is *St John Ambulance* (not St John’s Ambulance).

**Seasons**

All lower case letters – *spring, summer, autumn* and *winter*.

**Sexism/gender**

Avoid words that imply males are the norm and females the exception. So use words such as *spokesman/spokeswoman/policeman/policewoman/chairman/chairwoman* rather than non-gender words such as *spokesperson, police officer* and *chair/chairperson*.

Avoid feminine form of *poet, author, editor, manager* and *sculptor* – these words apply to women and men.

Use *actor/actress, waiter/waitress.*

**Spelling**

If a word is not mentioned in this style guide, refer to the Macquarie Australian Dictionary. The first option is the preferred spelling.

Do not amend the spelling of a word in a quotation (direct speech). If you need to indicate an error that is in the original piece, use [*sic*] after the error (italicised and in square brackets as shown here). This Latin word means ‘thus’ and tells the reader that this is not a typing error by the current writer.

**Tautologies**

Also known as redundancies and pleonasms, these refer to the needless repetition of words. For example, *HIV virus* (the V stands for *virus)*, *PIN number* (the N stands for *number*). Here are more examples with the redundancy underlined:

4am in the morning

attach together

circular in shape

close proximity

collaborate together

complete monopoly

completely empty

doctor by occupation

doctorate degree

eliminate altogether

few in number

follow after

free gift

general public

hour of noon

in the city of Brisbane

invited guest

joined together

just recently

last of all

link together

mutual co-operation

new beginning

new record

original source

overtake a slower vehicle

past history

pay off the debt

period of time

pre book in advance

recalled back

red coloured

repeat again

separate apart

small in size

smile on his face

strangled to death

total extinction

total stranger

true fact

unite together

widow of the late

**Television**

Refer to *Channel 7, Channel 9, Channel 10, ABC-TV* and *SBS*. In subsequent references use *Seven, Nine, Ten, ABC* and *SBS*.

Program titles are italicised with the key words using an initial capital letter (e.g. *Packed to the Rafters*)

**Temperature**

Use figures (e.g. 6C, *25C*)

No space between the number and the letter C.

Temperatures are not hot or cold, refer to them as *high* or *low*.

Convert Fahrenheit to Celsius [www.metric-conversions.org/temperature/fahrenheit-to-celsius.htm](http://www.metric-conversions.org/temperature/fahrenheit-to-celsius.htm)

**That**

This word can often be omitted. There is no difference between the meaning of *She hoped that they would go to the shops* and *She hoped they would go to the shops.*

**Than/then**

*Than* is used when comparing things (e.g. *Steve is bigger than Billy*).

*Then* is used when talking about time (e.g. *I’ll go to the shops and then I’ll have a coffee*).

**That/which**

Use *that* for a restrictive clause and *which* for a non-restrictive clause. If the clause can be removed and the sentence still makes sense you need *which*. The word *which* is preceded by a comma.

For example:

*The picture of the farm that my aunt gave me is hanging in my bedroom.*

*The picture of the farm, which my aunt gave me, is hanging in my bedroom.*

The first sentence describes the picture given by my aunt rather than one, for instance, that I bought.

In the second sentence, the fact that the picture was given by my aunt is an aside and not integral to the meaning of the sentence.

**Third world**

Use the term *developing countries* rather than *third world*.

**Time**

Use am and pm without a space between them and the preceding number, without a space between the two letters and without any full stops. (e.g. *7am, 8pm*).

Use *noon,* *midday* or *midnight* rather than 12pm or 12am.

In a direct quote leave a time as it was spoken. For example, *He said, “I hope to be home by two-thirty this afternoon.”* (Not *He said,* *“I hope to be home by 2.30pm.”*)

Spell out the word *minutes* or *hours* in sentences such as *He took two hours to wash the car. He planned to leave in 24 hours.*

Use the word ‘at’ if you are citing an exact time and the word ‘about’ if it is an approximate time. It is incorrect to write *at about* before a time as the two words conflict.

**Titles, positions (see legal)**

Use capital first letter for:

* royalty(e.g. *the Queen, the Prince of Wales*)
* part of a proper name (e.g. *Princess Alexandra Hospital*)
* ranks when preceding a name (e.g. *Admiral Nelson*) but lower case when name does not follow (e.g. *the admiral*)
* titles of people in the legal profession (e.g. *Magistrate Smith, Judge Drummond*) but lower case for generic use or when name does not follow (e.g. *the magistrate, the judge*)
* Use lower case letters for job titles in both the private and public sector (e.g*. chairman, managing director, executive secretary, chief executive officer*).

**Trade names**

Use a capital letter for a registered trade name (e.g. *Doona, Kleenex, Aspro, Nike, Coca-Cola, Coke*).

Try to find a substitute word (e.g. *quilt, tissues, aspirin*) to avoid using a trade name.

**Unique**

Means *one of a kind*, so unless you are certain something is truly a one-off it is safer to write *unusual, rare*.

**Women/men**

Use the word *women* rather than *ladies* or *females*; *men* rather than *gentlemen* or *males*.

**Word classes**

Nouns – common (e.g. *dog, school, teacher*)

proper (e.g. *Brisbane, John*)

collective (e.g. *team, jury, herd, committee*)

abstract (e.g. *beauty, anger*)

Pronouns – take the place of a proper noun (e.g. *she, he, her, their*)

Adjectives – add to the noun (e.g. *fat, happy, old*)

Verbs – action words (e.g. *run, wait, enjoy, said/saying/says*). This is the part of speech that tells us the tense (also see active/passive voice)

Adverbs – add to the verb. Often end in -ly (e.g. *quickly, sadly*)

Conjunctions – join clauses and other words (e.g. *and, or, but, because, so*)

Prepositions – indicate relationship between nouns/ pronouns and other words (e.g. *under, beside, against, from, by, on, to, in*)

Articles – there are only three articles:

Definite article – *the*

Indefinite articles – *a or an*

Exclamations – often just one word (e.g*. Help, Stop, No*) and are followed with an exclamation mark (!)

**Punctuation marks**

**Apostrophe**

Contraction – used to indicate a missing letter or number (e.g. *can’t for cannot, she’ll for she will, ’98 for 1998*)

Possessive – indicates something is owned/belongs to/is possessed by someone or something else. The placement of the apostrophe indicates whether the word doing the possessing is singular or plural.

For example, *the boy’s books* (singular possessive so just one boy); *the* *boys’ books* (plural possessive so more than one boy).

Many words ending in *-s* need another *s* as well as the apostrophe to form the possessive (e.g. *princess becomes princess’s hat*) but this depends on how the word is said. If you pronounce a second *-s* then add one (e.g. *James’s hat*), but if not leave it off (e.g. *Anders’ hat,* *kids’ park*).

**Brackets**

1) round (also known as parentheses). Generally used to enclose material that is not essential to the meaning. Used to enclose definitions, clarification or asides.

2) square (editorial brackets). Used to indicate the writer has added some words to a direct quote, usually for clarity.

For example, *John said,* *“I just think it [the meeting] went on too long.”*

**Colon**

Used to introduce a word, phrase, sentence or list. The first word after the colon is capped if what follows is a complete sentence.

For example, *The play needed three actors: a hero, a heroine and a narrator.* (Words after the colon are not a sentence so do not begin with a capital letter.)

*The play needed three actors: There were roles for a hero, a heroine and a narrator.* (Words after the colon are a sentence so begin with a capital letter.)

A colon is not needed if an introductory word (e.g. *including, following*) is used.

**Comma**

Used to break up items in a list (e.g. *The cat liked milk, fish, biscuits and cream.*). Note that a comma is not needed if the word ‘and’ is used unless the sense is likely to be unclear.

Used in a quote before the closing quote marks where the attribution concludes the sentence.

For example, *“I love school,” she said.*

Usually used after introductory words such as *for example, therefore, in conclusion.*

Commas cannot be used to join two sentences – this error is known as a comma splice. Construct as two sentences, or use a FANBOY conjunction and a comma, or a semi-colon if appropriate.

**Comma pair**

Use a pair of commas if you are adding a phrase that is not vital for the meaning of the sentence.

For example:

*The experiments that were conducted in May gave positive results.*

*The experiments, conducted in May, gave positive results.*

In the first sentence the information that the experiments were conducted in May is important to the meaning the writer wishes to convey. In the second sentence the month is just an extra piece of information and not an integral part of the sentence.

A comma pair should not be used if the words in the clause are essential to the meaning.

For example, *The writer Thomas Hardy was very popular with the students*. The name of the author is crucial to the sentence, so commas are not used.

**Ellipsis**

Three dots are used to indicate missing words in a direct quote. It is okay to remove words from a quote (for clarity) as long as this is indicated with an ellipsis. The remaining sentence still needs to make sense.

For example, the original quote: *“I was sick, like really bad, very sick, and felt really tired,” he said.*

Amended quote: *“I was sick … and felt really tired,” he said.*

Always use three dots and add a space either side of these.

Review the punctuation from the original sentence as some may no longer be needed. In the example above the comma from the original sentence is no longer needed with the inclusion of the ellipsis.

If the ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence there is no need for a fourth (full stop) dot.

Used at the end of a sentence in which something is left hanging (e.g. *The burglar stole into the house and Mary heard the door creak …*)

Plural term is ellipses.

**En dash (also see hyphen)**

Longer than a hyphen, an en dash (–) is used *between* words whereas a hyphen (-) is used *within* a word.

Two en dashes are often used to highlight the words placed within the dashes.

For example, *He was hungry – really hungry – so dashed home for lunch with his mother-in-law.*

Use for numerical spans (e.g. *3 – 6, 1998 – 2013*).

The en dash usually has a space on either side whereas there are no spaces either side of a hyphen. On a PC you can produce an en dash with Alt+0150 (using numeric keypad). Otherwise go to insert, symbols.

**Full stop**

Concludes a sentence. Used for some abbreviations (see entry under abbreviations).

Use a full stop after initials.For example, *J.K. Rowling* not *JK Rowling.* (No space after the full stop.)

There should just be one space after a full stop before the next sentence begins.

**Hyphen (also see en dash)**

Check in the Macquarie Dictionary to see if words are hyphenated as these rules change over time.

Used if two or more adjectives need to be joined (compounded) before a noun. (e.g. *a red-haired woman*). A missing hyphen in this sentence would mean a woman who was red and hairy!

If the adjective comes after the noun a hyphen is not needed (e.g. *the woman had red hair*).

For example, *the five-year-old boy* uses hyphens, but where the adjectival phrase follows the noun they are not used: *the boy is five years old*.

Do not use a hyphen between an adverb ending in -ly and an adjective (e.g. *quickly moving vehicle*).

Use a hyphen for clarity with prefixes. For example, *re-sign* so that it is clearly not *resign*, *re-sent* so that is not read as *resent*.

There is no space either side of a hyphen.

**Question mark**

Used after a direct question instead of a full stop.

For example, *John asked, “How long will you be gone?”*

Used to indicate uncertainty. For example, *The show starts at 7pm (?)*

**Quotation marks (also see direct speech)**

Used to indicate a direct quote.

Double quotes are the standard style with single quote marks used for a quote within a quote.

Use a consistent style of straight (") or curly (“) quote marks.

If you were not there to hear exactly what was said you must use indirect speech.

**Semi-colon**

Used to link two sentences with similar subject matter.

For example, *The cat was fat; the dog was thin.*

Used where a series of commas are already used.

For example, *Some people write with a word processor, typewriter or a computer****;*** *but others, for different reasons, choose to write with a pen or pencil.*

This style guide is based on:

News Limited *Style* (fourth edition) edited by Chris McLeod and Kim Lockwood and published by News Custom Publishing.

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**RADIO SCRIPTING QUICK**

**REFERENCE GUIDE**

**• Conversational**

Listen to your script as you write it, read it out loud - does it sound like you're talking or reading?

**• Active voice**

Sentence order is: person/subject then verb/action. Think of it as: who did what? For example: Queensland Police will launch a new campaign to target speeding.

**• Present tense where possible**

Words to use: is... are... have... will... has been.... (Beware of words ending in '-ed'.)

• Contract (apostrophes)

If you can merge two words using an apostrophe, do it! For example: he's, haven't, Packer's.

**• Says (not said)**

Unless the quote is historical (ie: said last month/year and is being brought up again because it's relevant in a new story) always use 'says'.

**• Shorten and simplify**

Word economy is a key aspect of radio journalism – don't be fooled, it's quite a skill! Take out all extraneous words, never use a complicated word when a simple one will do, don't use word play, unnecessary adjectives or adverbs. Avoid jargon.

• Phonetics

Write any tricky words phonetically in brackets. For example:

Bleijie (blay) or Navratilova (nav-ratta-LOW-vah).

**• Simplify numbers**

Write out single digits (ie: one, two... ten), use numerics for double and triple digits (ie: 11, 12...100, 150), round up or down if possible (ie: 19, 215 = nearly 20 thousand), simplify big numbers (ie: 1,800 = one-thousand-800), generally write out 'thousand' and 'million' as they are easier to read that way.

**• A.B.C – Be accurate, brief and clear.**

Structure:

**• 2-4 paragraphs**

Sentences should be around 20 words or less. One sentence per paragraph.

**• Lead - details/background - conclusion/throw**

The first paragraph is a quick summary. The middle paragraph/s is/are there to flesh out the details, context and/or background (this section answers the remaining 5Ws and H). The final paragraph either throws to a grab or concludes the story (often it will be an ongoing issue and this is where you tell listeners what the next step in the process or story is).

**• One angle per story**

Different versions for different bulletins.

**• Throwing to grabs/actuality**

Attribute the quote before it is played and lead into it by paraphrasing a quote from the interview. For example:

Councillor Fred Smith says noise and lights are the most humane way to move the bats on.

[Grab: 12 secs: The Institute of Animals studied the non-lethal dispersal program in Townplace and found it to be safe.]

**TELEVISION SCRIPTING QUICK**

**REFERENCE GUIDE**

**• Remember your pictures**

Think about your vision BEFORE you begin writing. Write to your pictures.

**• Script layout**

Scripts are divided in half with vision instructions on the left and all audio on the right.

**• Conversational**

Listen to your script as you write it, read it out loud - does it sound like you're talking or reading? Write the way we speak.

**• Active voice**

Sentence order is: person/subject then verb/action. Think of it as: who did what? For example: Queensland Police will launch a new campaign to target speeding.

**• Present tense where possible**

Words to use: is... are... have... will... has been.... (Beware of words ending in '-ed'.)

**• Says (not said)**

Unless the quote is historical (ie: said last month/year and is being brought up again because it's relevant in a new story) **always use 'says'**.

• **Use Contractions** (apostrophes)

If you can merge two words using an apostrophe, do it! For example: he's, we’ve, haven't, Packer's.

**• Shorten and simplify**

Word economy is a key aspect of broadcast journalism – don't be fooled, it's quite a skill! Take out all extraneous words, never use a complicated word when a simple one will do, don't use word play, unnecessary adjectives or adverbs. Avoid jargon.   
Write simply and conversationally.

**• One sentence per paragraph**

Keep your sentences simple and short (remember you have to read them out). Usually don’t have more than two or three sentences between some audio clip (sound up or grab).

• **Phonetics**

Write any tricky words phonetically in brackets. For example:

Bleijie (blay) or Navratilova (nav-ratta-LOW-vah).

**• Simplify numbers**

Write out single digits (ie: one, two... ten), use numerics for double and triple digits (ie: 11, 12...100, 150), round up or down wherever possible (ie: 19, 215 = nearly 20 thousand), simplify big numbers (ie: 1,800 = one-thousand-800), generally write out 'thousand' and 'million' as they are easier to read that way.