

# General Writing Style for Hands-on Labs

Please use the following guidelines to write hands-on labs.

## Address your audience directly

- Use second person (*you*) in most cases.

## Write simply

- Use the **simple present tense** for most writing, especially in lab guides.

Say this...	Not this...
In this lab, you create a Bigtable instance...	In this lab, you will create a Bigtable instance...
When you finish the lab...	When you have finished the lab...
Your developers use Cloud Storage...	Your developers are using Cloud Storage...

- Use a **light, casual tone** and avoid excessive formality.

Say this...	Not this...
If the server isn't working...	In the event that the server fails to operate...
You can choose the CPU platform.	You can choose your desired CPU platform if you'd like.
Before you close the lab...	Prior to closing the lab...

- Do use **contractions**, such as *isn't*, *don't*, and *can't*, to convey a casual tone.
  - **Exception: Do not use contractions in quizzes.**
- Use line breaks to break up long pieces of text. Paragraphs are then easy to read and digest.

## Example

## Task 1. Configure service accounts and role assignments

In this task, you create two service accounts (one for Linux VMs and one for Windows VMs) and assign them only the roles required to write log entries and metrics data into Cloud Monitoring.

It's a best practice to create service accounts for your VMs, and to assign those accounts the minimal set of roles required for the VMs to perform their jobs.

### Write clearly and concisely

- **Have a clear point:** Every paragraph and sentence should serve a purpose.
- **Use short sentences:** Write primarily in short, simple sentences. Long sentences decrease reading comprehension, especially when the content is challenging.
- **Provide the right amount of information:** Provide enough information for the audience to complete a task or understand a concept, and then direct them to reference materials for more information.
- **Use consistent terminology:** Don't use different terms for the same object, and don't use the same term for different objects.

### Write for a global audience

A significant percentage of our learners speak English as a second language but take courses and read course materials in English. Avoid slang, figures of speech, and phrases that might be difficult to quickly understand or translate. When you write for a global audience, you also write more clearly for native English speakers and help the Localization team translate your content more easily. Many of the terms in the following lists are also included in [Cloud LE Term Substitutions](https://cloud.google.com/learn/terms/substitutions) ([go/cloudle-term-substitutions](https://cloud.google.com/learn/terms/substitutions)).

### Avoid idioms and figures of speech

These phrases can be difficult to understand or translate because the meaning is figurative, not literal. Avoid phrases like this:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Keep in mind (remember or think about)            | • On the other hand (although, however, in contrast) |
| • No way around this (can't avoid)                  | • In the long run (eventually)                       |
| • Keep an eye out for (avoid, be careful, look for) | • On top of that (additionally)                      |
|   | • In the end (as a result)                           |

Many common idioms are *phrasal verbs*, which consist of a verb and an adverb or preposition. You can usually replace them with a single word or a clearer phrase. Here are a few examples:

- Add up to (equal, result in)
- Break down (divide, analyze, stop working)
- Find out (realize, discover)
- Go back to (return to)
- Go over (review)
- Look for (want) “Your customer **is looking for** wants a cheaper solution.”
- Look to (want to or plan to) “Your manager **is looking** wants to expand the team.”
- Show up (appear)
- Take out (remove)
- Come up with (develop)

## Rewrite verb phrases

Many verb phrases use a common verb like *make*, *have*, or *take* plus a noun or adjective. These phrases can often be replaced with a single verb. For example, “have an argument” can be replaced by “argue.” Here are some other examples:

- Make clear (clarify)
- Make better (improve)
- Make bigger (enlarge)
- Make a selection (select)
- Have/take a look at (look at)

## Use articles in sentences and headings

To maintain a natural and friendly tone, use articles (*a*, *an*, *the*) in your writing. Sentences without articles sound mechanical.

Use articles even in headings.

Say this...	Not this...
Add a persistent disk to an instance	Add persistent disk to instance

## Use relative pronouns

Although relative pronouns (including *that*, *who* and *which*) are often grammatically optional, use them to increase clarity.

Say this...	Not this...
Select the billing account that you want the project costs charged to.	Select the billing account you want the project costs charged to.

## Other writing tips




### It is or There are


Avoid beginning a sentence with “It is” or “There are” unless it is the simplest construction. These sentences are often wordier than necessary.

Say this...	Not this...
You need to perform several security tasks.	There are several security tasks you need to perform.
An additional configuration step is required.	There is an additional configuration step required.
Errors can be difficult to debug. -or- Debugging errors can be difficult.	It can be difficult to debug errors.
Your file might contain an error.	It is likely that your file contains an error.

### Either A or B; Both A and B

When you formulate a sentence with one of these "A/B" constructions, make sure that the two elements of the sentence (A and B) are parallel. For example, if part A begins with a verb, part B must also. One way to test this is to imagine the two elements as a bulleted list.

Original sentence	List version	Does it work?
A subnet can <i>either</i> be private or public.	A subnet can either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be private (or)</li><li>• Public</li></ul>	
A subnet can be <i>either</i> private or public.	A subnet can be either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Private (or)</li><li>• Public</li></ul>	
The durability of your volume depends <i>both</i> on the size of your volume and the percentage of changed data.	The durability of your volume depends both: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On the size of your volume (and)</li><li>• The percentage of changed data</li></ul>	

The durability of your volume depends on <i>both</i> the size of your volume and the percentage of changed data.	The durability of your volume depends on both: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The size of your volume (and)</li> <li>• The percentage of changed data</li> </ul>	
--	--	---

## Not only/just A but also B

**Avoid this construction:** it is difficult to localize, the beginning negative can be confusing, and a sentence with “and” or “also” is almost always simpler.

Say this...	Not this...
The software has been architected to be highly available, redundant, and secure.	The software has been architected to be not only highly available and redundant, but also secure.

## The more A, the more B

This construction (“The more, the merrier”) is grammatically odd and difficult to localize. You can usually rewrite it more clearly (although not with fewer words).

Say this...	Not this...
Save money when you use more services.	Use more, save more.

## Product and service names

When you begin a project, always check [this copy](#) of the official list of Google Cloud product and service names.

## Glossary

Use this copy of the [Cloud LE Term Substitutions](#) ([go/cloudle-term-substitutions](https://cloud.google.com/terms-and-conditions/cloud-le-term-substitutions)) for a list of non-technical words and symbols that appear frequently in technical writing (plus a few technical terms that frequently cause problems).

# Capitalization

This section describes the basic types of capitalization (or *case*). For information about which type to use, such as in slide headings or lab guides, see those specific topics.

## Title case

Capitalize all the words in a title except:

- Articles (*a, an, and the*)
- Coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, for, or, and nor*)
- *to* as part of an infinitive (*to Run*)
- *as*
- Prepositions that are shorter than five letters (*in, on, with, etc.*)

Exceptions:

- Capitalize the first and last words of the title, regardless of the part of speech.
- Capitalize prepositions that are used as adverbs (modifying a verb).

### Examples

- *Signing Up for a Class*
- *Signing In to Google*
- Don't capitalize the first word after a hyphen if the first element is a prefix, such as *anti, re, or pre*.

### Examples

- Anti-theft
- Pre-existing

## Sentence case

Capitalize the first word and proper nouns in a sentence.

## Hybrid case

Use sentence case, but also capitalize the first word after a colon, semicolon, or dash.

### Example

Best practices: Plan for failure

## Lists (unordered/bulleted)

A *bulleted list* is a useful way to present related facts and statistics, such as the attributes of a service.

**Student notes and lab guides:** A list is appropriate in student notes and lab guides when you want to deliver information quickly, because it is easily scannable.

**Slides:** A simple bulleted list is not visually interesting and may lead to an excessive amount of text. For slides, consider representing a list as a grid with images.

## Lists must be parallel

All the items in a list must be *parallel*. This means that they are grammatically uniform (all nouns or all verb phrases, for example). The items should also have the same relationship to the introductory text or heading.

### Example: Non-parallel list (do not use)

The advantages of this service include:

- Speed
- Reliability
- You can access this service from anywhere.

The first two items in this list are nouns, but the third item is a complete sentence.

**Rule:** If you can't rewrite your list to be parallel, don't use a list.

## Punctuation for lists

- For an introductory phrase or sentence that introduces the list (*not* a heading), use an ending colon.
- If the items in a list are complete sentences, use ending punctuation with each item.
- If each item in a list completes the introductory phrase, use ending punctuation.  
**Exception:** If the items are short ("grocery list" style), do not use ending punctuation.
- If each item is a fragment, do not use ending punctuation.

## Capitalization for lists

Capitalize the first word of every list item, even if it's not the beginning of a sentence.

- Fully managed
- Highly reliable

## Lists in sentences (embedded lists)

This section refers to ordinary sentences that contain lists. These are often called *embedded* lists. Lists in sentences must also be *parallel*; that is, they must be grammatically uniform.

### Example

"Cloud SQL offers high performance, scalability, and convenience."

In this example, all three nouns complete the phrase “Google Cloud SQL offers.” You could format this as a bulleted list:

Google Cloud SQL offers:

- High performance
- Scalability
- Convenience

## Representative (incomplete) lists

A list might be *representative* (doesn't include all possible items). When you introduce a list with a word or phrase to indicate this (*for example, such as, including*), don't finish it with a word or phrase that has the same function (*etc., and others*).

## Punctuation

Punctuation is too complex a topic for this style guide to fully cover; however, a few common guidelines are included here.

### Period

In American English, periods go before (inside) closing quotation marks.

**Example:** “A place for everything, and everything someplace.”

### Comma

In American English, commas go before (inside) closing quotation marks.

Commas serve a grammatical function in a sentence; they do not necessarily indicate where you would take a breath when speaking.

- **In a series**

Use commas to separate three or more items in a series.

**Example:** “Storage options include Cloud Storage, Cloud Bigtable, and Datastore.”

**Note:** The comma before the *and* is called a *serial* or *Oxford* comma.

- **In a compound sentence**

Use a comma to separate independent clauses in a compound sentence (a sentence with two subject/predicate clauses). In this example, the two subjects are underlined:

“Cloud Storage is a scalable object/blob store, and Cloud Bigtable is a NoSQL wide-column database.”

- **In a simple sentence**

- Do *not* use a comma in a simple sentence (one subject) to separate the subject from the predicate. In this example, the comma is wrong:

“Storage choices, should match your requirements.”

- Do *not* use a comma in a simple sentence (one subject) with a compound predicate. In this example, the single subject is underlined:



“Cloud Storage is a scalable object/blob store and can be used for storing and streaming multimedia.”

**Exception:** When the subject is an implied "you," as in an imperative sentence, use a comma between the clauses.

**Example:** “Type your username and password, and then click Submit.”

### Semicolon

- Use a semicolon to separate items in a series if any of the items already contain commas.

**Example:** “The physical security measures include security guards; locations in nondescript, undisclosed facilities; data center access only for an approved, specific need; and continuous monitoring, logging, and auditing of physical access controls.”

- Use a semicolon to separate two complete clauses without a conjunction.

**Example:** “Cloud Storage is a scalable object/blob store; Cloud Bigtable is a NoSQL wide-column database.”

### Colon

- Use a colon to separate the numbered element of a heading from the text.

**Example**

Section 1: Introduction

- Use a colon to introduce a definition or explanation for a term.

**Example**

**Cat:** A small, domesticated carnivore.

### Hyphen

- Hyphens are generally used to connect the parts of a compound word, especially a compound adjective before the noun it modifies, such as "low-cost solution" or "data-intensive task."

**Exception** Do not use a hyphen when the first word of a compound adjective ends in /y, such as "fully managed solution" or "regularly accessed data."

- Do not use a hyphen in place of a dash; use an en dash or an em dash instead.
- Do not use a hyphen to separate the elements of a heading; use a colon or en dash instead.

**Examples**

- Google Cloud core benefits: Cost
- Section 1: Cost savings – Pay for what you use

### En dash

- Use an en dash, not a hyphen, to separate the two elements of a letter or number range, such as "p. 15–25."

**Notes**

- Do not insert a space before or after the en dash when you use it to indicate a range of numbers with the same descriptor (e.g., “5–10 lbs.”). But *do* insert both spaces if different descriptors are used (e.g., “2 MB – 1 GB”).

- If you introduce a range with a word such as *from*, also use a word (*to* or *through*) within the range.

**Example:** "I was in school from 2010 through 2013."

- Use an en dash in a multi-part heading to separate phrases, especially when you have already used a colon. In general, use a colon to separate a numbered element from the rest of the heading, and then use an en dash.

**Example**

Section 1: Working with buckets – Timesaving tips

**Note:** Do not insert a space before and after the en dash when you use it to separate elements of a heading.

**Em dash**

Use an em dash to set off a nonessential phrase or clause within a sentence.

**Example** "Type your credentials—your username and password—in the appropriate boxes."

**Note:** Do not insert a space before or after the em dash.

**Slash** (forward slash)

Do not insert a space before or after a slash.

Based on the [Google Developer Documentation Style Guide](#).