https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/parts-sentences/phrases Phrases Phrases are groups of words that add meaning to a sentence. Write and punctuate them correctly to give people clear and useful information. Phrases are groups of words with a specific function A phrase is a group of words that makes sense on its own but doesn't contain a subject and a verb. Phrases can only add meaning to a sentence. They can't stand on their own. Types of phrases include: noun phrases adverbial phrases adjectival phrases. Noun phrases function as nouns A noun phrase is a group of words that works in a sentence as a noun. A noun phrase always includes a noun. It can also include determiners, adjectives, adverbs and other nouns. Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution Example Our well-prepared colleague entered the meeting room. [The phrase 'our well-prepared colleague' works as the noun in the sentence. This phrase contains the determiner 'our', the adjective 'well-prepared' and the noun 'colleague'.] She was well suited to life in an office. Possessive phrases A possessive phrase is a particular type of noun phrase. It shows that one noun in the phrase belongs to another noun in the phrase. Possessive phrases usually have an apostrophe. Non-possessive and generic phrases Non-possessive and generic phrases use plural nouns as adjectives. No apostrophes are needed. Adverbial phrases function as adverbs An adverbial phrase is a group of words that describes a verb, adjective or other adverb. Adverbial phrases can describe the manner of or reason for a verb's action. [The phrase 'life in an office' works as the noun in the sentence. This phrase contains the noun 'life', the preposition 'in', the determiner 'an' and the noun 'office'.] Example I thought it was someone else's problem. [The problem belongs to someone else.] This was one of the commander-in-chief's first orders to the troops. [The first orders belong to the commander-in-chief.] Example She signed the visitors book. [The book doesn't belong to the visitors. The word 'visitors' describes the type of book.] The Historic Shipwrecks Delegates Committee met once a year. [The committee is made up of delegates. The name of the committee relates to the Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976.] Example Grammar rules are quite frequently misunderstood. [The phrase 'quite frequently' modifies the adjective 'misunderstood'.] Best of all, we can tick this off the list. [The phrase 'best of all' modifies the main clause 'we can tick this off the list'.] Example Adverbial phrases can also describe time and place. These are known as 'prepositional phrases'. Prepositional phrases consist of: the preposition any adjectives or determiners that accompany it. Adjectival phrases function as adjectives An adjectival phrase is a group of words that works as an adjective. It modifies a pronoun, noun or noun phrase. Adjectival phrases that modify a pronoun, noun or noun phrase can also appear after the verb 'to be'. Adjectival phrases can start with a preposition. They are also known as prepositional phrases. We'll do this by the rules. [Adverbial phrase of manner] We came inside because of the rain. [Adverbial phrase of reason] Example I'll see you after knock-off time. [Adverbial phrase of time] The manual sat on the shelf. [Adverbial phrase of place] Example The staff showcased their work on the new project. [The phrase 'on the new project' describes the staff's work.] Example They are eager to hear good news. [The phrase 'eager to hear good news' describes the pronoun 'they'.] The developer was categorical about accessibility requirements. [The phrase 'categorical about accessibility requirements' describes the noun phrase 'the developer'.] Example The top line in the budget report showed a deficit. [The preposition 'in' starts the prepositional phrase 'in the budget report', which describes 'the top line'.] Release notes The digital edition has practical guidance on plain language. It relates grammatical concepts to the principles of plain language. The digital edition consolidates information from the sixth edition and highlights the basics about clauses. It takes a different approach to the sixth edition by breaking related topics into specific subject areas like 'phrases' and 'types of words'. The Content Guide did not have any in-depth information on grammatical concepts. About this page References Altenberg EP and Vago RM (2010) English grammar: understanding the basics, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019a) Course notes and exercises: English grammar for writers, editors and policymakers, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019b) Report writing, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. European Commission (2020) English style guide: a handbook for authors and translators in the European Commission, European Commission. Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edn, Lacuna, Westgate. Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Stilman A (2004) Grammatically correct, Writer's Digest Books, Ohio. Strunk W and White EB (2000) The elements of style, 4th edn, Longman, New York. Truss L (2003) Eats, shoots and leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation, Profile Books, London. Last updated This page was updated Thursday 22 December 2022. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation Punctuation Use punctuation correctly to help readability and comprehension. Don't overuse punctuation marks. The Style Manual follows the principles of minimal punctuation and capitalisation. Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution Punctuation and capitalisation Punctuation and capitalisation Punctuation and capitalisation have rules for correct use. Use minimal punctuation and capitalisation to make content more readable. Apostrophes Apostrophes show possession and contractions. Don't use them in descriptive phrases or to make nouns and shortened forms plural. Brackets and parentheses Brackets can help users scan text more easily. Only use brackets if you can remove the enclosed text and the meaning does not change. Colons Colons draw attention to the text that follows. Only add colons that are essential. Use them to introduce examples, contrasts, lists and block quotes. Commas Commas separate parts of a sentence so the meaning is clear. Sentence structure determines their correct use. Dashes Dashes show a relationship. Generally, en dashes for spans are less accessible for users than a phrase. Use spaced en dashes to set off non-essential information in sentences. Ellipses Ellipses show users that ideas or words are missing from a sentence or a quote. Don't use ellipses to change the intent of the original source. Exclamation marks Exclamation marks Exclamation marks show emphasis and convey emotion. Only use them in informal content. Forward slashes Forward slashes are useful in a small number of situations. Users are familiar with them in mathematical expressions, dates, web addresses and in some shortened forms. Full stops Full stops mark the end of sentences which aren't questions or exclamations.

Users need them to scan text and to recognise decimal values. Hyphens Hyphens connect words and prefixes so meaning is clear. Refer to your organisation's preferred dictionary when you are not sure if you need to use a hyphen for spelling. Question marks Users expect direct questions and requests to end with a question mark. Indirect questions, commands and rhetorical questions can take other punctuation. Quotation marks Quotation marks draw attention to words and reference certain kinds of titles. Write most direct speech in single quote marks. For long quotes, use block quotes without quotation marks. Semicolons Semicolons link sentences. They complicate sentences for users if overused. Do not use them at the end of bullet and numbered list items. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation/punctuation-and-capitalisation Punctuation and capitalisation Punctuation and capitalisation have rules for correct use. Use minimal punctuation and capitalisation to make content more readable. Use minimal punctuation to make meaning clear Minimal punctuation doesn't mean removing all punctuation marks from a sentence. It means Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution removing unnecessary punctuation. Only use punctuation that makes the sentence grammatically correct and the meaning clear. Too much punctuation makes text crowded and difficult to read. If a sentence has a lot of punctuation marks, it might be a sign that the sentence is too long or complex. Try to rewrite into shorter, clearer sentences. To use minimal punctuation: Don't add full stops to the ends of headings, page headers, footers or captions. Don't use a semicolon at the end of each item in a bullet list. 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. Don't use full stops between letters in an acronym or initialism. Don't use a full stop at the end of most abbreviations. Minimal punctuation helps users understand your content. Screen readers work best with minimal punctuation Some screen readers will announce punctuation marks. Some will change the modulation of the voice depending on the punctuation mark. By default, screen readers that people who are blind or have low vision use, do not usually announce punctuation. They may pause briefly when they encounter a comma, full stop, or semicolon. They may also change inflection when they encounter a question mark. Screen readers usually ignore most other punctuation unless verbosity is set high, or a person reads character by character. Watch out for misplaced punctuation: it can change meaning Use punctuation marks to: end sentences (full stops, exclamation marks and question marks) break up sentences and show the relationship between words and phrases (commas, colons, semicolons, dashes, forward slashes and ellipses) show possession and contractions (apostrophes) connect related words (hyphens and dashes). Use the correct spacing around punctuation marks Check the relevant topic in this manual for advice on how to treat each punctuation mark. There are different rules for putting spaces around punctuation marks. For example, some punctuation marks have no spaces around them. Some have a space on either side. Include a single space after a punctuation mark at the end of a sentence. Never use double spaces. Check each document for double and multiple spaces and delete them. Capitalise the first word in a sentence and in headings Capitalise the first word in a sentence. Use lower case for all other words, unless those words include proper nouns. This is called 'sentence case'. Use sentence case for: opening quoted speech within a sentence headings. Do not use all capitals for headings, unless the visual design for the content meets WCAG in all respects. Use sentence case with italics for titles of works mentioned in the content. This applies even when the reference is included in a heading within the content. Minimise capitals for common nouns and adjectives Proper nouns generally have an initial capital letter for each word in the noun. Common nouns and adjectives don't use initial capitals, with few exceptions. For example, adjectives often have capitals when they refer to a national, religious or linguistic group. Differences between proper and common names This manual contains guidance for names and terms by topic. Always check a dictionary if in doubt. Shortened forms Use shortened forms only when this choice supports plain English. Rules for capitalisation and punctuation differ from rules for terms spelt out in full. The rules depend on where the terms are in the sentence. The spelt-out form might not need initial capitals, even if an acronym or initialism has them. Use normal capitalisation practices for proper and common nouns. If in doubt, check a dictionary. If the shortened form represents a proper noun, start each word with a capital letter. If the shortened form represents a common noun, do not begin each word of the full form with a Example 'NSW' is written out as 'New South Wales'. capital letter. Only use capitals when the style is standardised or specified in regulations, for symbols of units of measurement. Follow the guidance on capitals for titles and government terms Follow conventions for using capitals for titles, honours and forms of address. Use capitals when an official title precedes the name of the office holder. This includes titles for executives specified in legislation. Unless advised in this manual, avoid using capitals in body text for a particular position or role within an organisation. This practice goes against readability and does not support clarity. You do not need to use capitals when the title is an organisational name given to an office holder. Deference for positions within an organisation might follow house style. Do not use house style outside of the organisational context. Detail any special use of capitals in a style sheet. Preferences for capitals when the terms 'traditional owner', 'elder' and 'custodian' are used as titles should come directly from the relevant First Nations community. Follow the rules of capitalisation for government terms, for example: government programs and agreements mentions of parliament references to states and territories. Legal material has its own conventions for capitalisation. Content that has a legislative focus might use complementary sources to the guidance on citing legal material in this manual. Legal documents often use initial capitals to show terms with a defined meaning (such as 'Department', 'Schedule', 'Vendor' and 'Recipient'). In these cases, use the form of the name as it is written in the legislation. Example 'EIS' is written out as 'environmental impact statement'. 'TB' is written out as 'tuberculosis'. Write this Chief Defence Scientist Tanya Monro presented the award ... Not this The Senior Policy Adviser offered their view ... Release notes The digital edition gives a brief overview of the main rules of punctuation. It gives the user the main points and provides links to detailed guidance in the manual. The sixth edition had comprehensive information about punctuation dealt with under 2 main sections: spelling and word punctuation and sentence punctuation. The Content Guide covered punctuation symbols as individual topics, but did not give an overview. The digital edition is consistent with the Content Guide, which used 'sentence case' and 'title case' as terms for capitalisation style. This is a departure from the sixth edition in terminology for capitalisation styles. The sixth edition used 'maximal

capitalisation', not 'title case'. The sixth edition used 'minimal capitalisation' for 'sentence case', which refers to the style for publication titles and headings in the digital edition. The digital edition uses 'minimal capitalisation' to refer to a principle, rather than a capitalisation style. Minimal capitalisation is the principle of writing with the minimum amount of capitalisation required to make the context understood. It is paired with the principle or convention of minimal punctuation. Consistent with the sixth edition, an 'initial capital' means that the first letter of a word is capitalised. It is a descriptive phrase, not a capitalisation style. The Content Guide did not use this phrase. About this page References Australian House of Representatives (1965) Debates, HR18:5. Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019) Course notes and exercises: editing and proofreading for the workplace, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edn, Lacuna, Westgate. Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Selk A (2018) 'One space or two spaces after a full stop? Scientists have finally found the answer', Independent, accessed 5 March 2020. Stilman A (2004) Grammatically correct, Writer's Digest Books, Ohio. Stone A and Ford R (2017) 'Chasing after a century of punctuation', Procedia Computer Science, 118:15–21, doi:0.1016/j.procs.2017.11.144. Truss L (2003) Eats, shoots and leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation, Profile Books, London. Last updated This page was updated Friday 15 December 2023. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation/apostrophes Apostrophes Apostrophes show possession and contractions. Don't use them in descriptive phrases or to make nouns and shortened forms plural. Apostrophes show possession When the first of 2 consecutive nouns has an apostrophe, it means those nouns have a Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution relationship. If the first noun in a noun phrase has an apostrophe, it means the noun is related to the other words in the phrase. The type of relationship shown by the apostrophe differs, but all are known collectively as 'possessives' and sometimes as 'genitives'. On this page, 'possession' or 'possessive' means any relationship between nouns – or between words in a noun phrase – that is shown by an apostrophe. Follow the possession rules for different types of nouns To correctly show possession by using an apostrophe, first ask, 'Who or what is doing the possessing?' The apostrophe goes straight after the noun that is the answer. There are possession rules for using an apostrophe, according to the type of noun. Noun possession rules Noun type Rule Examples Singular noun Add an apostrophe and 's' the committee's report our department's plan the bus's passengers the kibbutz's energy needs Singular noun of 2 or more words, the last word being a plural ending in 's' Add an apostrophe only the Australian Bureau of Statistics' office a Department of Social Services' project the United States' representatives Plural nouns that end in letter 's' Add an apostrophe only both committees' reports the Joneses' submission the Sanchezes' security passes Example This is Ariah's desk. We enjoy Adelaide's music festivals. They are the minister's chief of staff. It was a winter's morning. Plural nouns that don't end in 's' Add an apostrophe and 's' our children's education the sheep's wool the gateaux's boxes Proper names ending in letter 's' Add an apostrophe and another 's', even if you don't pronounce that final 's' Burns's report James's profession Laos's population Louis's supervisor Jesus's disciples More than one noun: individual possession Add an apostrophe and 's' after each noun Smith's and Miller's offices More than one noun: joint possession Add an apostrophe and 's' after the last noun only Smith and Miller's report Julie and Karl's children Singular compound noun Add an apostrophe and 's' after the compound the attorney-general's speeches the owner-occupier's accountant Plural compound nouns ending in 's' Add an apostrophe after the compound all owner-occupiers' tax concessions Plural compound nouns that don't end in 's' Add an apostrophe and 's' after the compound the attorneys-general's meeting Noun type Rule Examples Descriptive phrases don't need an apostrophe Some nouns are descriptive rather than possessive. In a descriptive noun phrase, the first noun modifies the second noun by operating as a definitive adjective. Don't use an apostrophe for these nouns. The first noun is essential to the meaning of the second noun. For this reason, never separate the nouns in a descriptive phrase. Only add an apostrophe when showing possession. Example workers compensation [A type of insurance] visitors book [A type of book] drivers licence [A type of licence] Example In the last 2 examples, the distinction between descriptive and possessive is subtle. The Style Manual recognises 'workers compensation' in the first example as a descriptive phrase. Although not recommended style, we acknowledge that the house styles of some government agencies require an apostrophe when using the phrase in this way. Add an apostrophe and 's' to form possessive shortened forms There are 4 types of shortened forms: abbreviations, contractions, acronyms and initialisms. Only use shortened forms if users will understand them. Make sure they are appropriate for your content's context, purpose and tone. Add an apostrophe and 's' to show possession for shortened forms. Consider whether the possessive form is necessary or can be replaced by a descriptive phrase. They signed the visitors book. [Descriptive: a type of book] Her visitor's book was lying on the table. [Possessive: the book her visitor owns] She attended a directors meeting. [Descriptive: a type of meeting] The director's meetings don't have an agenda. [Possessive: the meetings of the director] You must hold a valid drivers licence to drive on Australian roads. [Descriptive: a type of licence] The officer asked to see the driver's licence. [Possessive: the licence owned by the driver] Each state and territory has its own regulator to administer workers compensation. [Descriptive: a type of compensation insurance] Under the award, our workers' compensation for working overtime is time off in lieu. [Possessive: a form of compensation to workers for doing overtime] Example Enjoy hassle-free travel with Tassie's new permit system! [Abbreviation] The fire destroyed some of ASIO's files. [Acronym] The provisions of the bill are based on the Cth's Act. [Contraction] The review approved ABS's work plan. [Initialism] Example ASIO files are stored securely. Qantas aircraft have an excellent safety record. Add 's' to make a plural shortened form – not apostrophe and 's' Add an 's' to form the plural of shortened forms such as acronyms and initialisms. Don't write an apostrophe before the 's'. The same rule applies when making nouns plural. Add an apostrophe to plural shortened forms to show possession. Don't use a possessive when defining a shortened form Define a shortened form the first time you use it (unless you're certain users will understand it without a definition). Follow the spelt-out term with its shortened form in parentheses. Avoid using a possessive apostrophe when you do this. It can be difficult to decide where to

put the apostrophe and the sentence is often harder to read. Use the shortened form rather than the full term if you mention the term again. We read several US data use agreements. Consultation with stakeholders is integral to ABS work plans. Write this MPs LGAs PCs Not this MP's LGA's PC's Example MPs' entitlements POWs' repatriation Write this The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has information about veteran support officers on its website. DVA supports … Use the Moneysmart savings goal calculator from the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC). ASIC created Moneysmart to … Not this Possessive pronouns don't need an apostrophe Don't add an apostrophe to possessive pronouns. Although the term 'possessive pronoun' is commonly used, it's more accurate to divide these pronouns into possessive pronouns and determiners (also called 'possessive determiners'). If a pronoun appears before the noun, it is a determiner. If a pronoun appears in place of the noun, it is a possessive pronoun. Don't use an apostrophe for either type of pronoun. Don't use an apostrophe for Australian place names Don't use an apostrophe for Australian place names involving possessives. Don't use an apostrophe for periods of time Noun phrases about plural time periods don't need apostrophes because they're usually descriptive, not possessive. In phrases such as '6 months retired' or '5 months pregnant', the time periods are clearly adjectival. They don't show possession. Other noun phrases aren't possessive because they are conversational shorthand for an 'of' phrase. For example, 'in 4 days time' is shorthand for 'in 4 days of time'. Find information about veteran support officers on the Department of Veterans' Affairs' (DVA's) website. DVA supports … Use the Australian Securities and Investments Commission's (ASIC's) Moneysmart savings goal calculator. ASIC created Moneysmart to … Example This is your office. That is theirs. ['your' is a determiner, 'theirs' is a possessive pronoun] The fault is ours. ['ours' is a possessive pronoun] Put the report in its place. ['its' is a determiner] It was my idea not yours! ['my' is a determiner, 'yours' is a possessive pronoun] Example Kings Cross Mrs Macquaries Chair Some styles use an apostrophe to stand for the word 'of' and don't use it for descriptive phrases. For many years, the Style Manual has recommended the simple rule of no apostrophe for either use. When the time reference is in the singular, use an apostrophe to show that the noun is singular. Apostrophes show contractions Apostrophes show that you have omitted letters in contractions. Don't confuse 'it's' (the contraction of 'it is' or 'it has') with 'its' (showing that 'it' owns something). If you can divide 'it's' into 'it is' or 'it has', then you need to use an apostrophe. 'Its' is a determiner and doesn't have an apostrophe. Don't use an apostrophe to make a noun plural No apostrophe is needed for the plural form of a noun. This type of error is known as the 'greengrocer's apostrophe'. Example 6 weeks time 3 months wages Example a day's work the year's cycle Example I haven't seen the report. It's a busy day at the office. Example It's time to give the committee its terms of reference. Correct the 2020s committee reports Plural words and phrases that are not usually nouns Don't use an apostrophe for nouns and noun phrases formed by pluralising (and sometimes hyphenating) words that aren't usually nouns. Two examples are 'whys and wherefores' and 'what-ifs'. The Style Manual follows the style for pluralising nouns – no apostrophe. We also prefer to use the minimal punctuation needed to make meaning clear. If you're unsure, check your preferred dictionary. Many popular phrases appear as entries. Single letter and digit plurals Use an apostrophe before the 's' for plurals of single letters and single-digit numbers. They are exceptions to the rule of not using an apostrophe for the plural form of a noun. The apostrophe ensures that letter plurals are easier to understand. Don't italicise these plurals or place them in quotation marks. newer 747s fresh avocados Incorrect the 2020's committee report's newer 747's fresh avocado's Write this The website included a list of dos and don'ts. No ifs, ands or buts about it! Ums and ahs littered every speech. They made their thank-yous then left. Not this The website included a list of do's and don't's. No if's, and's or but's about it! Um's and ah's littered every speech. They made their thank-you's then left. Apostrophes can stand in for sounds Apostrophes show sounds in words from other languages. This occurs when words in certain languages are 'transliterated', that is, when words in other languages are written using letters of the English alphabet. In our examples, the apostrophe is a transliteration of a letter with a diacritic mark that represents the sound of a glottal stop. If you're unsure whether an apostrophe is needed, consult your dictionary for the preferred spelling. Some official names have apostrophes An apostrophe can form part of the official name of an organisation (or entity). Use an apostrophe if the organisation does. To find the spelling an organisation prefers, check its correct name by using reliable sources. Example Binary code uses 0's and 1's. Dot your i's and cross your t's when you edit the report. This tongue twister has too many s's! Example She was reading the Qur'an. Ge'ez is an ancient language from Ethiopia. Example National Farmers' Federation Australian Workers Union Energy Ministers' Meeting Education Ministers Meeting Infrastructure and Transport Senior Officials' Committee Basin Officials Committee Release notes The digital edition consolidates information about apostrophes and provides more examples to help users understand correct usage. New guidance includes: shortened forms, determiners, plurals that are not usually nouns (noun coinage) and apostrophes that stand in for sounds. The sixth edition had information about apostrophes in several sections. The Content Guide had brief advice about using apostrophes. About this page Evidence Oxford University Press (2016) '4.2.2: Plurals', New Oxford style manual, Oxford University Press, Oxford. University of Chicago (2017) '7.14: Plurals of noun coinages', Chicago manual of style, 17th edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. References Australian Government (n.d.) Directory, directory.gov.au, accessed 5 September 2021. Cambridge University (2021) 'Pronouns: possessive (my, mine, your, yours, etc.)', Cambridge dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org, accessed 22 October 2021. Davies WM (n.d.) Apostrophes [PDF 192 KB], Helpsheet: Giblin Eunson Library, University of Melbourne website [cached resource], accessed 2 September 2021. Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019) Course notes and exercises: editing and proofreading for the workplace, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. Fogarty M (2019) 'Apostrophe catastrophe (part one)', Grammar Girl, Quick and Dirty Tips website, accessed 6 September 2021. Macquarie Dictionary (2021) 'Punctuation guide', Resources, macquariedictionary.com.au, accessed 6 September 2021. Merriam-Webster (2021) Why do we use apostrophes to show possession?, Merriam-Webster website, accessed 7 September 2021. Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edition, Lacuna, 2014. Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford Paperback Reference. Strunk W and White EB (2000) The elements of style, 4th edn, Longman, New York. University of Chicago (2017) '6.115: ''smart'' apostrophes', Chicago manual of style, 17th edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-

punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation-and-capitalisation/brackets-and-parentheses Brackets and parentheses Brackets can help users scan text more easily. Only use brackets if you can remove the enclosed text and the meaning does not change. Use brackets for text users can skip over Brackets can help you break up information. They enclose parts of the sentence that aren't Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution essential to the meaning. Sentences must be grammatically correct if you remove the text in brackets. The most commonly used brackets are: parentheses square brackets. Use brackets sparingly for: non-essential information shortened forms references insertions. Use brackets only where they make content clearer to people. For example, always use brackets in author–date citations. Too many brackets, or badly used brackets, can make a sentence more complex and difficult to understand. You can usually rewrite a sentence so the content in brackets can be its own sentence or can even be removed. Other types of brackets, such as curly brackets and slant brackets, are used in fields such as mathematics and linguistics. These are specialist uses, so don't use them in most content. Put extra information in parentheses Information in parentheses is less important than information that is between spaced en dashes or pairs of commas. Used well, parentheses can improve meaning and make content easy to scan. Definitions Parentheses enclose definitions. Shortened forms Parentheses introduce a shortened form after it has been spelt out in full. You can then use the shortened form through the rest of the page or publication. Example Medicare (Australia's universal health insurance scheme) guarantees all Australians access to a wide range of health and hospital services. Example The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) is responsible for research funding and health guidelines. Cross-references Parentheses enclose cross-references to other parts of the content. Citations Parentheses enclose citations in the author–date system of referencing. Extra detail Parentheses enclose extra detail. Clarification and asides Parentheses enclose text that doesn't have a grammatical relationship to the rest of the sentence. This type of text includes extra information, clarifications and asides. Avoid using square brackets in parentheses Reword the text to avoid square brackets inside of parentheses wherever possible. Don't use sets of parentheses inside each other. Instead, use square brackets if you must put Example Australia's population increased by 350,000 people last year (Table 1). Example China is Australia's largest trading partner (Smith 2019). Example Our 2 biggest exports are iron ore ($61.4 billion) and coal ($60.4 billion). The winning tenderer (which was a local company) signed the contract on Tuesday. Example The department was in a heritage-listed building. (The building was designed by award-winning architect Enrico Taglietti.) Whitlam's comments on the steps of Parliament House ('Well may we say ...') are still widely quoted. Example Australia's Parliament House opened on 9 May 1988. The architects were Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorp (New York). parenthetical information within parentheses. Use square brackets to show insertions in quotes Use square brackets in quoted material to show that you have: paraphrased the original content inserted text that was not in the original content. You can also use square brackets to clarify quoted material. Square brackets with an italicised 'sic' show that the error in the text is from the original writer. Follow normal punctuation rules for content in brackets Punctuation in brackets depends on what is inside the brackets. Punctuate content in brackets as you would if it were outside the brackets. Like this Australia's Parliament House (architects Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorp [New York]) opened on 9 May 1988. Not this Australia's Parliament House (architects Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorp (New York)) opened on 9 May 1988. Example He wrote in the report, 'The department's executive moved into new offices in Barton [Canberra] last year.' 'The High Court [in Canberra] is the highest court in the land,' she said. Example The manager reported, 'Smith was furious with Jackson because he [Smith] wanted all the credit.' Example Written late at night, the report began, 'The office was previously in Melberne [sic].' Example Whitlam's comments on the steps of Parliament House ('Well may we say ...') are still widely quoted. A comma follows a closing bracket only if you would have used a comma if there were no brackets. If the content inside the brackets is a full sentence, include the end punctuation inside the brackets. Don't use brackets to enclose a sentence within a sentence. Rewrite the text instead. Write brackets in the same type as the surrounding text Brackets should be in the same type (roman, italics, bold) as the text around the brackets. This is regardless of the type of the text inside the brackets. This is the same rule as for quotation marks. Correct The winning tenderer (a local company) signed the contract on Tuesday. Incorrect The winning tenderer (a local company), signed the contract on Tuesday. Example The department was in a heritage-listed building. (The building was designed by award-winning architect Enrico Taglietti.) Correct The winning tenderer signed the contract on Tuesday. They were a local company. The winning tenderer (a local company) signed the contract on Tuesday. Incorrect The winning tenderer (They were a local company.) signed the contract on Tuesday. Correct The most recent review of defence policy (2016 Defence white paper) set the direction for the next 10 years. [In this example, the parentheses are not in italics because the surrounding text is not in italics.] Incorrect The most recent review of defence policy (2016 Defence white paper) set the direction for the next 10 years. Release notes The digital edition consolidates information about brackets and parentheses from the sixth edition. It omits the information about angle brackets that was included in the sixth edition. Angle brackets were used to enclose URLs and this practice is no longer followed. Sources cited as evidence support this departure. The Content Guide did not include guidance on brackets or parentheses. About this page Evidence Oxford University Press (2016) '18.8.3 Resource locators', New Oxford style manual, Oxford University Press, Oxford. University of Chicago (2017) '6.8 Punctuation with URLs and email addresses', Chicago manual of style, 17th edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. References Btb Translation Bureau (n.d.) 'Punctuation', The Canadian style, Btb Translation Bureau website, accessed 4 May 2020. Content Design London (2019) 'Top findings', Content Design London readability guidelines, Content Design London website, accessed 30 March 2020. Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019) Course notes and exercises: Editing and proofreading for the workplace, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edition, Lacuna, 2014. Perlman M (2017) 'How to properly use [sic]', Columbia Journalism Review, viewed 19 December 2019, Perlman M (2017) 'Pardon my parentheticals', Columbia Journalism Review, viewed 19 December 2019, Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford Paperback Reference. Stilman S (2004)

Grammatically correct, Writer's Digest Books, 2004; revised and updated, 2010. Truss L (2003) Eats, shoots and leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation, Profile Books, London, 2003. U.S. Government Publishing Office (2016) '8: punctuation', Government Publishing Office style manual, U.S. Government Publishing Office, accessed 13 May 2020. Last updated This page was updated Tuesday 19 October 2021. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation/colons Colons Colons draw attention to the text that follows. Only add colons that are essential. Use them to introduce examples, contrasts, lists and block quotes. Limit colon use Use a colon only if you are sure it is needed. Incorrect use creates confusion for users. Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution Introduce examples and contrasts with colons Use a colon to: introduce a word, phrase or clause that provides more detail introduce a question give an example summarise or contrast with what comes before it. A sentence fragment can come before the colon if the fragment can stand alone or if it's introducing a bulleted list. Start lists with a colon Use a colon to introduce a list of words, phrases or clauses. Don't include a colon when the list flows on as part of a full sentence. This is a common error. Example Use correct spelling: check a dictionary if you need to. Our work is about answering this simple question: how? We'll have to use a stronger tool: sanctions. This is the guiding principle for our workplace: collaboration. The committee found there was only one possible explanation: fraud. Example Warning: strong winds forecast for Sydney today. Example Pick any 2 of the 3: low price, high speed, high quality. The position has these requirements: strong communication skills and experience across content management platforms. We need to: check Appendix A of the report ask Mary about the final chapter of her book rewrite our introduction. Correct Include the colon to restructure content into bulleted lists. Use lower case following a colon in most cases Start the word after the colon with a lower case letter unless: the word that follows the colon is a proper noun the text after the colon is a question that is a complete sentence. After a colon, capitalise the first word of questions that are complete sentences. This makes it clear that the question mark applies only to the text after the colon. Pick any 2 of low price, high speed and high quality. The requirements for the position are strong communication skills and experience across content management platforms. Incorrect Pick any 2 of: low price, high speed and high quality. The requirements for the position are: strong communication skills and experience across content management platforms. Example The requirements for the position are: strong communication skills experience across content management platforms. Correct We had to write 66 reports: it took months. The commander was confident: Special Air Service Regiment had enough ammunition. Incorrect We had to write many reports: It took months. The commander was confident: special air service regiment had enough ammunition. Like this The election was fought on a simple question: Which party had the best economic credentials? Not this If the colon introduces a series of sentences or questions, use a lead-in and colon to introduce them in a bulleted or numbered list. Start subtitles of books and articles with a colon Use a colon before the subtitle of a book or article. Follow the colon with a lower case letter, unless it's a proper noun. Do this when writing about a book or article and also when referencing one. Introduce block quotes with colons Use a colon to introduce a block quote. Block quotes should also be coded with the HTML

> element. Write mathematical ratios with a colon Use a colon to give a mathematical ratio. Don't put a space after the colon. The election was fought on a simple question: which party had the best economic credentials? Example They answered the question: They wrote 23 reports. Each report took 11 days to write. Example Teaching in Australia: a deep dive into the education system Stanovich KE (1986) 'Matthew effects in reading: some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy', Reading Research Quarterly, 21(4):360–407. Example For example, Manthorpe (2019) stated: Short sentences are easier to read because they limit the scope of an idea. But most readers like the variety and rhythm of a mixture of sentence lengths. For most readers, aim for an average sentence length of 15 words per sentence. Example Release notes The digital edition consolidates information about colons that appeared in different parts of the sixth edition. The digital edition excludes advice about colons in multi-level lists as it does not recommend using them in the digital environment. The digital edition recommends using a colon for a precise reference to time. The use of a colon as the separator reflects a shift in contemporary Australian usage. Sources cited as evidence on that topic support this change. The Content Guide had advice about colons in relation to lists only. About this page References American Psychological Association (2020) 'Mechanics of style', Publication manual of the American Psychological Association,7th edn, American Psychological Association, Washington DC. Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019) Course notes and exercises: Editing and proofreading for the workplace, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. European Commission (2020) '2: Punctuation', English style guide: a handbook for authors and translators in the European Commission, European Commission. Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edition, Lacuna, 2014. Oxford University Press (2016) 'Punctuation', New Oxford style manual, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford Paperback Reference. Stilman S (2004) Grammatically correct, Writer's Digest Books, 2004; revised and updated, 2010. University of Chicago (2017) 'Punctuation', Chicago manual of style, 17th edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. The government proposes a 50:50 split. The cost-benefit ratio will be 7.5:1. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation/commas Commas Commas separate parts of a sentence so the meaning is clear. Sentence structure determines their correct use. Separate introductory words, phrases and clauses with a comma Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution A comma separates introductory words, phrases and

clauses from the main clause of the sentence. Many introductory phrases can be moved to the end of sentences without changing the meaning. In these cases, you don't need a comma before the phrase. This simpler structure can be easier to read. Place a comma after adverbs and other introductory words Use a comma after introductory words, such as greetings and adverbs, or when addressing someone. Using an introductory word gives it emphasis. You don't need a comma after an introductory word if the sentence is very short. This minimises punctuation in very short sentences. Use a comma after phrases and clauses that change the whole sentence Use commas after adverbial phrases and adverbial clauses. Adverbs – such as 'first' and 'during' – modify verbs, adjectives and other adverbs. Conditional clauses are adverbial clauses (for example, beginning with 'if', 'unless' or 'until'). They should also have a comma after them if they start the sentence. Example During the meeting, we discussed Item 9. We discussed Item 9 during the meeting. Example Yes, they went to the estimates hearing. [Affirmative emphasis] Goodnight, and good luck. [Greeting] Actually, that's an interesting point. [Adverb] Excuse me, should I come with you? [Addressing someone] Example Today I went to work. Example During the meeting, we discussed item 9. [Adverbial phrase] Although they were shaking and sweating, the firefighters were relieved to feel the first drops of a downpour. [Adverbial clause] Example Unless the consultation starts early, it will not finish on time. [A conditional adverbial clause] Avoid beginning a sentence with a string of numbers and dates Use a comma after an introductory phrase that ends with a numeral and is immediately followed by another numeral. It doesn't matter how short the sentence is. Avoid this type of sentence structure because the string of numbers can be confusing. Mark out non-essential information within a sentence Commas isolate information in a sentence when it isn't essential to: meaning grammatical structure. Within a sentence, use a pair of commas to separate non-essential or supplementary information. Always check for the second comma where there should be a pair. Generally, if you can take out part of the sentence and it is still grammatically correct, it should be between a pair of commas. Check carefully. Using comma pairs can completely change the meaning of a sentence. Elements that function as supplementary information include: non-essential clauses nouns that define the same thing question tags. Set off non-essential clauses Write this There were 16.5 million people enrolled to vote in Australian elections on 18 April 2019. [This structure avoids stringing a number together with a date.] Not this On 18 April 2019, 16.5 million people were enrolled to vote in Australian elections. [This is grammatically correct but less readable.] Example The committee, said the secretary, was incompetent. [The committee was incompetent.] The committee said the secretary was incompetent. [The secretary was incompetent.] Use commas around clauses that add information but aren't essential to the meaning of the sentence. Don't use commas if the clause is essential for meaning. If you can remove the clause and your sentence means the same thing, it's non-essential and should go between commas. Non-essential clauses are also called 'non-restrictive' or 'non-defining' clauses. Each of these examples separates a grammatical subject from its verb. This is a problem when the subject is overburdened with non-essential information. Check if you can rephrase the information to make it easier to follow. It is easier for people to read shorter sentences. Place commas around nouns that define the same thing they follow Example Non-essential The business report, which the manager had edited, explained the agency's strategy. [The main message is 'The business report explained the agency's strategy'. The clause 'which the manager had edited' gives more information, adding to the meaning. It doesn't change the meaning.] Introduced pests, such as varroa mite, threaten Australian honey production. [All introduced pests threaten honey production. The varroa mite is just an example.] Essential The report that the manager had edited explained the agency's strategy. [The clause 'that the manager had edited' is essential to the meaning because there is no other information in the sentence to identify what report is being referred to.] Introduced pests from South Asia threaten Australian honey production. [Only pests from South Asia threaten honey production. Other introduced pests don't affect honey production.] Write this The report was tabled last week. It is about demographic changes in rural areas in Western Australia. Not this The report, detailing demographic changes in rural areas in Western Australia, was tabled last week. Use a pair of commas when you have 2 noun phrases next to each other that define the same thing. You should be able to take out the noun phrase between the comma pair and still have a grammatically correct sentence. The sentence loses detail without the second noun phrase (Mx Lesley May), but it is still a full sentence. Separate questions tagged onto a sentence Questions can be tagged onto the end of sentences. Use a comma before a question that is part of the sentence. Use commas with the phrase 'for example' Generally, use a comma before and after the phrase 'for example' in a sentence. If 'for example' begins a sentence, it is an introductory phrase. Follow it with a comma. Correct The strike took place in Whyalla, South Australia, in June 2014. [The noun phrase 'South Australia' is between 2 commas because it is non-essential information. 'South Australia' adds to the meaning but doesn't change the meaning.] Incorrect The strike took place in Whyalla, South Australia in June 2014. Example My colleague, Mx Lesley May, will exercise my proxy vote. My colleague will exercise my proxy vote. Example They're not here, are they? We'll be reporting back, won't we? Example Some colours, for example, are difficult for people with colour blindness to distinguish. Example For example, some colours are difficult for people with colour blindness to distinguish. If you're introducing a bullet list after 'for example', use a colon. Don't use commas with Latin shortened forms If you use Latin shortened forms, such as 'e.g.' and 'i.e.', don't follow them with a comma. Place commas between principal clauses joined together with a conjunction Use commas to connect 2 or more principal clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction ('and', 'or', 'but', 'so'). If they have different subjects, use a comma before the coordinating conjunction. Do not use this rule to create a sentence of more than 25 words. Shorter sentences are easier to read. If 2 clauses share the same subject, you don't need to repeat the subject or insert a comma before the conjunction. Example Some colours are difficult for people with colour blindness to distinguish, for

example: red green orange brown blue purple. Correct Exports of rare earths (e.g. lithium, europium) have soared. Incorrect Exports of rare earths (e.g., lithium and europium) have soared. Example The Senate debated the Bill at length, but the party whips eventually called for a vote. ['But' is the coordinating conjunction. 'The Senate' and 'the party whips' are each the subjects of a principal clause.] Example The exception to this rule is when you have joined more than 2 principal clauses with the same subject. Don't use commas to 'splice' sentences Don't use a comma to link 2 stand-alone sentences unless you use a coordinating conjunction. This kind of error is called a 'comma splice'. Punctuate sentence lists and strings of adjectives Separate items in lists of nouns or adjectives with commas Use commas between items in a sentence list. Avoid using a comma before the last item in the list. This rule applies to sentence lists and sentence fragments in bullet lists. Do not punctuate the end of a list item with a comma if it is in a bullet list. Restrict the use of the Oxford comma The company closed its Perth office and sacked the chief financial officer. ['The company' closed an office and sacked an executive officer. 'The company' is the subject of both clauses, joined using 'and'.] Example The company closed its Perth office, sacked the chief financial officer, and opened a branch in Singapore. [The verbs 'closed', 'sacked' and 'opened' each complement the same subject: 'the company'. Each complement completes a principal clause.] Correct The report was finished last week, but the minister has not approved its release. Incorrect The report was finished last week, the minister has not approved its release. Example The delegation visited Brisbane, Canberra and Adelaide. The consultation involved businesses, sole traders and not-for-profits. The applicant was willing to learn, eager to work and well prepared. If the last item combines 2 words or phrases with the word 'and', use a comma before that final item. This use of the comma is known as the 'Oxford comma' or 'serial comma'. The Oxford comma can prevent ambiguity in complex sentence lists. For example, use the Oxford comma before the last item if you're using a defining phrase applicable only to that final item. A defining phrase is essential to the meaning of the sentence. The following examples show how the Oxford comma can affect meaning, using the defining phrase 'for stockfeed'. Separate adjectives of the same type When writing strings of adjectives, use a set order – evaluative, descriptive, then definitive. Use commas in strings of adjectives of the same type (for example, a string of descriptive adjectives). Don't use commas in strings of adjectives of different types. Use commas in numbers with 4 or more digits Numbers with 4 or more digits (starting from 1,000) need a comma. Use commas for numerals in text and in tables. Example The industries most affected are retail trade, wholesale trade, and accommodation and food services. ['Accommodation and food services' is listed as a single industry category. It is set off in the list with an Oxford comma.] Example The analysis outlined demand for barley, wheat and hay for stockfeed. [All crops are for stockfeed.] The analysis outlined demand for barley, wheat, and hay for stockfeed. [Only the hay is for stockfeed.] Example This is an ethical, profitable, efficient organisation. [Descriptive adjectives] They were a happy, caring, devoted workforce. [Evaluative adjectives] Example My new black felt-tip pen splattered ink everywhere. We found some used French tennis balls left over from a training day. You need to use a combination of words and numerals for large rounded numbers over a million. Large rounded numbers are punctuated with a decimal point. Don't use a space between the digits, because screen readers can read them as separate numbers. When you are using numbers of 1,000 or more, use commas to separate the numerals into groups of 3 (working right to left). Commas are not used to the right of a decimal point. Don't use commas in postcodes or dates. Show direct speech or quoted material using commas Example The total cost of refurbishment was nearly $367,000. This budget year will see a surplus of $7.1 billion, equal to 0.4 per cent of GDP. Correct The agency handles around 6,500 complaints each year. Incorrect The agency handles around 6 500 complaints each year. [This can be read as the number 6 followed by the number 500.] Example 1,000 17,275 505,607,400 Example 808.12345 1,279.0044 Example The year was 2020. The office was in postcode area 6500. Introduce directly quoted speech with a comma. Use the comma in combination with quotation marks. If an attribution comes after a quotation, use a comma at the end of the quotation and before the quotation mark. If the quotation is broken into 2 parts, the second part should follow a full stop rather than a comma. If the quotation ends the sentence, end it with the original punctuation of the quotation. Release notes The digital edition consolidates information from the sixth edition. It departs from advice in the sixth edition about the position of commas and quotation marks in sentences interrupted by expressions like 'she said'. The sixth edition recommended the comma be outside the quotation mark. The digital edition recommends the comma be inside the quotation mark. The digital edition recommends using a comma in numbers with 4 or more digits. This recommendation is based on accessibility advice. The sixth edition recommended using a thin space in numbers with 5 or more digits and no space in numbers with 4 digits. The Content Guide had brief information about using a comma in sentences and with numbers. It had basic information on using quotation marks. It advised against using Oxford commas. Example She said, 'It's time to start work.' The Prime Minister said, 'I'm calling a half-Senate election.' Example 'It's time to start work,' she said. 'I'm calling a half-Senate election for Saturday 15 August,' the Prime Minister said. Example 'It's time to start work,' she said. 'We have a lot to do.' 'I'm calling a half-Senate election,' the Prime Minister said. 'It will be held on Saturday 15 August.' Example She said, 'It's time to start work.' She asked, 'Is it time to start work?' About this page Evidence Oxford University Press (2016) '9.2 Layout of quoted text', New Oxford style manual, Oxford University Press, Oxford. University of Chicago (2017) '6.40 Commas with quotations', Chicago manual of style, 17th edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. References Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019) Course notes and exercises: editing and proofreading for the workplace, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edn, Lacuna, Westgate. Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Stilman S (2004) Grammatically correct,

Writer's Digest Books, Ohio. Truss L (2003) Eats, shoots and leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation, Profile Books, London, 2003. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation/dashes Dashes Dashes show a relationship. Generally, en dashes for spans are less accessible for users than a phrase. Use spaced en dashes to set off non-essential information in sentences. Use the correct symbols for en dash and minus sign En dashes are half the width of the font height. Use them as a type of punctuation. Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution Don't use an en dash instead of a minus sign. Screen readers will read dashes as dashes, not as the minus sign. In Unicode, the en dash is U+2013. To make sure screen readers read the minus sign, use the mathematical symbol for minus. In Unicode, this is U+2212. Don't confuse the dash or the minus symbol for a hyphen. Use a phrase instead of an en dash for most spans of numbers En dashes show a span when used with numerals, such as in a financial year, a range of values or span of time. En dashes sometimes appear in a span of words, such as in a span of days of the week. Avoid using an en dash in most content. Dashes can affect readability unless a user changes their screen reader's default settings (punctuation verbosity settings). Screen readers generally won't read out dashes by default. This can affect people's ability to quickly understand spans. That is why, in general content, it's better to use phrases for most spans of numbers. You can use en dashes in technical content, particularly if it contains a lot of spans. Spans in general content Avoid using en dashes for spans in body text and headings. Instead, use the phrases: 'from' paired with 'to' – for example, 'from 57 to 65 years' 'between' paired with 'and' – for example, 'between Monday and Friday'. Never mix 'from' or 'between' with an en dash. Correct She worked from 10 to 28 January. All seminars run from 10:30 am to 11:30 am. Annual rainfall between 2017 and 2019 was lower than the long-term average. The help desk operates between 9 am and 4 pm daily. Incorrect She worked from 10–28 January. All seminars run from 10:30–11:30 am. Annual rainfall between 2017–2019 was lower than the long-term average. Follow exceptions to the general rule There are exceptions to the rule of using phrases for spans in general content. The exceptions are for particular date spans and time spans. Use an en dash for date spans in: financial years calendar years the titles of publications and programs citations containing a title that has an en dash terms of office lifespans (birth and death) when there is limited space. Date spans in titles and headings should follow the general rule, except when: the heading contains a title that has an en dash using words would push the character count over 70 characters (including spaces). Only use an en dash for time spans when you have limited space. Date spans in titles and headings should follow the general rule, except when: phrases would push the character count over 70 characters (including spaces) the dash is part of an existing heading or title that you are citing as a reference. Use an en dash for financial years For financial years, use 4 digits for the first number and only 2 digits for the second. Join them with an unspaced en dash. This will not create any issue for users who rely on screen readers. Use the phrases 'financial year' and 'financial years' at first mention, unless the context makes the meaning clear. For financial years that cross centuries, use 4 digits on either side of the en dash. Example The 2019–20 budget [The financial year starting in July 2019 and finishing in June 2020] The department recently published a list of gifts received by officials during the 2022–23 financial year. A list of gifts received during 2023–24 will be published in September 2024. Example The 1999–2000 budget [The financial year starting in July 1999 and finishing in June 2000] Use an en dash for calendar years For calendar years, use 4 digits for the first number and either 4 or 2 digits for the second number. Join them with an unspaced en dash. Use the phrases 'calendar year' and 'calendar years' at first mention, unless the context makes the meaning clear. Use an en dash for date spans in titles of publications and programs Date spans often appear in the titles of government publications and programs. When you create a title, use 4 digits for the first year and 2 digits for the second year. If you cross the century, always use 4 digits for both years. Use 4 digits on both sides of the span for these titles if that is your organisation's house style. When you refer to an existing title, follow the style that was originally used for year spans. Reproduce titles with dashes when you cite them as a reference. Use an en dash for terms of office A person's term of office usually appears in parentheses after the person's name. Always use 4 The department recently published a list of gifts received by officials during the 1999–2000 financial year. A list of gifts received during 2001–02 will be published in September 2002. Example We provide indicative statistics at the halfway point of each 4-yearly reporting cycle. The following indicative statistics cover the 2023–24 calendar years. You can find indicative statistics for 2021–22 on our website. Example The diversity strategy 2020–25 The Lake Eyre basin plan 1999–2004 The state government has opened the 2023–24 Skilled Migration Visa Nomination Program. They found the statistics in The year book of international trade 1922–23. 'Headway' is my favourite poem from the collection titled Tryptych: selected poems 1956–1962. The Milk for school children scheme 1951–74 provided free milk to Australian primary schools. You can find more about milestones in our Wellbeing Action Plan 2005–2008. Example Department of Business Measures (DBM), 'Business statistics 1990–91', Australian Business Series 5, DBM, Australian Government, 1991. [Footnote or endnote] 1 digits for both dates, joined by an unspaced en dash. Use an en dash for a person's lifespan Dates of birth and death usually appear in parentheses after the person's name. Always use 4 digits for both dates, joined by an unspaced en dash. Use an en dash for date spans when space is limited Follow the general rule and use words for date spans unless you have limited space. This could be in display text, tables, lists or in social media posts. Use the following style for en dashes in spans of days and months: The en dash is spaced when the day and month appear on both sides of the span. The en dash is unspaced when the month appears only at the end of the span. Restrict the use of

en dashes for date spans in headings Only use en dashes for date spans in headings when: your heading includes a title that contains en dashes using words pushes the character count above 70 characters (including spaces). In all other cases, write date spans in headings with words. Use the phrases ‘from … to’ and Like this Australia’s prime minister at the start of the Depression was James Scullin (1929–1932). Not this Australia’s prime minister at the start of the Depression was James Scullin (1929–32). Write this Caroline Chisholm (1808–1877) Not this Caroline Chisholm (1808–77) Example ‘between … and’. Only use an en dash for time spans when space is limited Follow the general rule and use words for time spans unless you only have limited space. This could be in display text, tables, lists or in social media posts. The spacing of the en dash depends on the position of elements in the span. Use a spaced en dash when: ‘am’ or ‘pm’ appears on both sides of the span the time is in the 24-hour clock format. Use an unspaced en dash when: the ‘am’ or ‘pm’ appears only at the end of the span ‘noon’, ‘midday’ or ‘midnight’ appears in the span. Use an en dash for spans in technical content In technical content where there are many numbers, you can use en dashes for number, date and page spans. Don’t combine en dashes with ‘from’ or ‘to’ in the spans. Don’t use spaces either side of these en dashes if they include a numeral on each side. Example Publication of the International engagement strategy 2023–26 [Heading in a document. The heading contains a publication title.] Background to the Strategic plan 2021–23 [Heading contains a publication title] Human trafficking and slavery in Australia from 2015 to 2019 [Heading with ‘from … to’; 60 characters with spaces] Overview of human trafficking and slavery in Australia 2015–2019 [Heading with en dash; 64 characters with spaces, but 71 characters if had used ‘from … to’] Example Free events this month Good work design in practice Monday 4 April 1.30–2.30 pm Our changing demographics: policy implications Thursday 18 April 11:15 am – 12 midday #OurAPS #apsacademy #AustralianGovernment Example Join nouns with en dashes to show equal relationships Use en dashes between 2 nouns that both retain their original meaning. These are called ‘coordinate nouns’. When describing something, coordinate nouns can function as adjectives. If you used a hyphen instead, you create a compound noun. These cannot stand in for coordinate nouns. If one part of a coordinate noun is made up of more than one word, use a space either side of the en dash. Otherwise, do not include spaces around en dashes for coordinate nouns. Rewrite to avoid joining prefixes with an en dash A hyphen normally attaches a prefix to an adjectival phrase. An en dash is correct in some cases, not a hyphen. If the phrase is not hyphenated, such as in a proper adjectival phrase, you can use an en dash between the prefix and the first word. The capitalisation of the proper adjectival phrase and the en dash show that the prefix applies to all the words. There were 25–30 head of cattle in quarantine in June and 50–60 in July. [Number span] Air quality declined during the 2003–2006 reporting period. [Date span] This same result was reported in Smith and Jones (2020:5–15). [Page span] Example The Murray–Darling Basin [The Murray River and the Darling River combine to form the basin river system.] A Sydney–Melbourne flight [Sydney and Melbourne combine to form a single travel route.] Example student-teacher [A compound noun, meaning a teacher who is also a student, uses a hyphen.] student–teacher ratio [A coordinate noun, describing the ratio of students to teachers, uses an en dash.] Example Australia – New Zealand relations [The relationship is between Australia and New Zealand, not ‘Australia’ and ‘New’.] Example In these cases, if you can, reword the phrase so that it doesn’t include the prefix. Space en dashes in sentences to set off non-essential information Spaced en dashes create a pause in a sentence to add extra meaning, similar to commas and brackets. Use them rarely to use them effectively – for example, to draw attention to a new and important detail for your main idea. As a rule, don’t make your sentences complex or long. En dashes inside a sentence Spaced en dashes draw attention because they aren’t as common as other punctuation marks. They help some people scan content by showing that information is non-essential or parenthetical. Spaced en dashes can separate a clarification, an interruption, a correction, a short list or a summary from the rest of the text. Always space punctuating en dashes with a single space on either side of the dash. Spaces allow automatic line breaks in front of or after the dash. Often, you need a pair of en dashes. If the parenthetical information is at the beginning or end of the sentence, you can use one dash. Make sure the rest of the sentence makes sense. If you remove the content between the en dashes, the rest of the sentence must be a complete sentence. pre–Cold War policies Example policies from before the Cold War Example Three rivers – the Murray, Darling and Murrumbidgee – were discussed in the report. Example There was no time to plan – a shortcoming that would later cost millions. Example The allies – the USA, Australia and New Zealand – signed the pact in 1951. In a sentence with one en dash, one side of the dash must be a complete sentence. Em dashes Em dashes are the same width as the font height. Various style guides treat dashes differently. Some styles use unspaced em dashes instead of spaced en dashes. Both dashes are grammatically correct and can be used to show: additional, amplifying and parenthetical material an abrupt change. Never use both types of dashes for the same purpose. Spaced en dashes are Australian government style and should be used in digital content. Follow this style convention unless a different style reference applies. For example, you might submit a journal article and need to follow the publisher's style, which uses unspaced em dashes. Follow one style: apply it throughout. In Unicode, the em dash is U+2014. If you are using em dashes in your content, don’t space them. The spaced em dash creates too great a gap in text. This is a typographical concern and interrupts reading flow. An unspaced em dash won’t automatically break over a line. This will mean you need to force a line break on either side of the dash. It can either end or begin a line of text. Use 2 em dashes for some quoted speech and deliberate omissions in text To show a sudden interruption in quotations and reported speech, use 2 em dashes in a row. The 2 em dashes follow a space. Ellipses cannot be used for this purpose, as they show the writer has deliberately left out quoted speech. Read related guidance on ellipses. The allies signed the pact in 1951. Like this Solar, wind, hydro and tidal power – all are viable options for renewable energy. [‘All are viable options for renewable

energy' is a complete sentence.] Not this Solar, wind, hydro and tidal power – are viable options for renewable energy. [The en dash is not correct here. Neither side of the en dash is a complete sentence.] Two em dashes also show when a name or other information is omitted in body text in general content. This can be useful when something needs to be withheld for privacy or other legal reasons, for example. Use a space if the em dashes replace a whole word, but don't include a space between the dashes and part of the word. Release notes The digital edition revises guidance about use of dashes. It recommends using a spaced en dash (as well as commas, colons and brackets) to show additional, amplifying and parenthetical material. The en dash also signifies an abrupt change. The sixth edition recommended an unspaced em dash for these purposes. The shift from em dash to en dash reflects contemporary writing practice and the new focus on digital content. The en dash is spaced so screen readers don't mistake an unspaced en for a hyphen. The digital edition also recommends using words instead of an en rule to link spans of numbers in some cases. Expert advice has informed this change. The change reflects accessibility considerations and style for numbers in contemporary digital content. The digital edition has been updated to ensure consistency with the 2024 updates to 'Dates and time'. The sixth edition recommends a full span of dates for terms of office, consistent with the treatment of dates of birth and death. Although the sixth edition included examples of spans of years, it did not mention terms of office explicitly. The sixth edition included information about using en dashes in formatting. This is less relevant in a digital environment. The digital edition departs from the Content Guide, which recommended a spaced em rule. The Content Guide recommended not using an en dash. About this page Example 'Any more questions before ——' [The double em dashes show an interruption in a quotation.] Example The deed, signed by ——, was legally binding. S—— signed the deed in 2017. Evidence Btb Translation Bureau (n.d.) 'En dash', Writing tips, Btb Translation Bureau website. Butcher J, Drake C and Leach M (2006) '6.12.1: en rules', Butcher's copy-editing: the Cambridge handbook for editors, copy-editors and proofreaders, 4th edn, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Centre for Information Design Research (2016) 'Number sequences', The GOV.UK content principles: conventions and research, report prepared by University of Reading, UK Government, accessed 23 January 2020. Content Design London (2020) 'Hyphens and dashes', Content Design London readability guidelines, Content Design London website. European Commission (2020) '2.16: dashes', English style guide: a handbook for authors and translators in the European Commission, European Commission. European Commission (2020) '3.31: ranges', English style guide: a handbook for authors and translators in the European Commission, European Commission European Commission (2020) '6.21: time spans', English style guide: a handbook for authors and translators in the European Commission, European Commission. Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) '7.6: Dash', Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edn, Lacuna, Westgate. Oxford University Press (2016) '4.11.1: en rule', New Oxford style manual, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Oxford University Press (2016) '11.1.4: number ranges', New Oxford style manual, Oxford University Press, Oxford. University of Chicago (2017) '6.83: en dash as em dash', Chicago manual of style, 17th edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago. References Bohman P (20 January 2014) 'Why don't screen readers always read what's on the screen? Part 1: punctuation and typographic symbols', deque Blog, accessed 21 January 2020. Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019) Course notes and exercises: English grammar for writers, editors and policymakers, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. Microsoft Corporation (2019) Keyboard shortcuts in Word: insert international characters, Microsoft website, accessed 1 December 2019. Owen M (2018) How to type accented letters in macOS three different ways, appleinsider website, accessed 4 December 2019. Oxford University Press (2016) 'Punctuation', New Oxford style manual, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Stilman A (2004) Grammatically correct, Writer's Digest Books, Ohio. Truss L (2003) Eats, shoots and leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation, Profile Books, London. Watson L (8 February 2017) 'How to create content that works well with screen readers', Accessibility in Government Blog, accessed 7 January 2020. WebAIM (2017) Designing for screen reader compatibility, WebAIM website, accessed 23 January 2020. The Unicode Consortium (2019) Unicode, Unicode website, accessed 2 December 2019. Last updated This page was updated Friday 21 June 2024. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation-and-capitalisation/ellipses Ellipses Ellipses show users that ideas or words are missing from a sentence or a quote. Don't use ellipses to change the intent of the original source. Show missing words or ideas with ellipses The ellipsis (plural 'ellipses') is a character of exactly 3 dots. Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution Use the ellipsis: if you omit words in quoted text to mark an unfinished phrase, clause or sentence. If there is an ellipsis in the original text you're quoting, add the phrase 'ellipsis in original' in square brackets after the quote. Use the same font as the surrounding text. Don't use a full stop, comma or semicolon after an ellipsis. You can use a question mark or exclamation mark after an ellipsis if necessary. If a paragraph or more is omitted from a block quotation, you can place the ellipsis on a line of its own. Do not use a string of full stops Use the symbol for the ellipsis. Don't use a string of full stops. Insert it using: the unicode character U+2026 the HTML code … Example The report is well written, but it needs a thorough review … There is an obvious need for more work. Whitlam's speech on the steps of Parliament House ('Well may we say …') is still widely quoted. Example The minister wrote, 'The policy settings were … comprehensive' [ellipsis in original]. Example The review clarified that the Army might have to fight on home ground … To be properly equipped, the Army needs a new troop carrier. Example I've written hundreds of

reports: annual reports, white papers …! Example The review clarified that the Army might have to fight on home ground. … During exercises, ADF personnel were tasked with tracking down enemy troops from the mythical nation of Musoria. in many software applications, Alt+Ctrl+. or Option;. Add spaces around ellipses Use a single space before and after each ellipsis. The exception to this rule is if the quote ends in an exclamation mark or question mark. Include the final punctuation mark after the ellipsis. Don't include a space between the punctuation and the ellipsis. Don't change the original intent of quoted material Use ellipses sparingly. Overusing ellipses can lead to a suspicion that you are misquoting. Don't leave out important details or change the original intent of the quoted material. Correct The evaluation concluded, 'The report is well written, but it needs … more work.' Incorrect The evaluation concluded, 'The report is well written, but it needs…more work.' Correct The evaluation concluded, 'The report is well written, but …' Incorrect The evaluation concluded, 'The report is well written, but…' Example He asked, 'What does the Army do during exercises …?' Write this The report is well written, but it needs rewriting now circumstances have changed … There is now an obvious need for more work. Not this The report … needs rewriting … obvious need for more work. [This version omits a key piece of information: the reason for the work.] Release notes The digital edition expands on advice from the Content Guide. The sixth edition had advice on using ellipsis points to show indecision and incompleteness. This is not included in the digital edition as it's not relevant to government writing. The Content Guide had basic advice on using ellipsis points. About this page References Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019) Course notes and exercises: Editing and proofreading for the workplace, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. Microsoft Corporation (2019) Keyboard shortcuts in Word: insert international characters, Microsoft website, accessed 1 December 2019 Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edition, Lacuna, 2014. Owen M (2018) How to type accented letters in macOS three different ways, appleinsider website, accessed 4 December 2019. Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford Paperback Reference. Stilman S (2004) Grammatically correct, Writer's Digest Books, 2004; revised and updated, 2010. Truss L (2003) Eats, shoots and leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation, Profile Books, London, 2003. The Unicode Consortium (2019) Unicode, Unicode website, accessed 2 December 2019. Last updated This page was updated Tuesday 19 October 2021. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation-and-capitalisation/exclamation-marks Exclamation marks Exclamation marks show emphasis and convey emotion. Only use them in informal content. Don't use exclamation marks in general Exclamation marks aren't part of government voice. Don't use exclamation marks in formal content, such as government reports or briefings. Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution In general use, exclamation marks can emphasise: statements emotions greetings commands rhetorical questions. Use them sparingly in less formal content such as promotional material and social media posts. Be aware that exclamation marks can create a sense of panic or stress. Exclamation marks often appear 'as themselves' in instructions to users of government services. Write one exclamation mark: don't overuse them Don't use exclamation marks too often. Exclamation marks can lose their emphasis if you use too many. At the end of each sentence you want to emphasise, use only one exclamation mark. Example That can't be true! Stand at ease! Like this Congratulations to our 2020 Australia Day Award recipients! Happy international mother language day! #ourAPS believes in the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD) for a sustainable and harmonious Australian society. Not this A state of emergency has been declared for all areas of the ACT! Example Your password can have any of the following characters: ! @ # $ % ^ & * Write this Were you born overseas or have a parent who was? Nearly half of Australians do! Not this Were you born overseas or have a parent who was? Nearly half of Australians do!!! Some people use multiple exclamation marks in social media. This is not suitable for government content. Release notes The digital edition has the same advice as the sixth edition about exclamation marks. The only addition is a reminder to use only one exclamation mark instead of several. The sixth edition had a brief section of exclamation marks in the chapter on sentence punctuation. The Content Guide recommended against the use of exclamation marks for government content. About this page References Australian Government (n.d.) Help, myGov, accessed 27 February 2020. Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (12 February 2020) 'What do these two places have in common? They're both …' [Facebook post], Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, accessed 16 May 2020. Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019) Course notes and exercises: Editing and proofreading for the workplace, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edition, Lacuna, 2014. Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford Paperback Reference. Stilman S (2004) Grammatically correct, Writer's Digest Books, 2004; revised and updated, 2010. The Australian Public Service (20 February 2020) 'Happy international mother language day! #ourAPS believes in the importance of…' [Facebook post], The Australian Public Service, accessed 27 February 2020. Truss L (2003) Eats, shoots and leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation, Profile Books, London, 2003. Last updated This page was updated Tuesday 19 October 2021. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation/forward-slashes Forward slashes Forward slashes are useful in a small number of situations. Users are familiar with them in mathematical expressions, dates, web addresses and in some shortened forms. Limit the forward slash to specific uses The forward slash is also known as the 'solidus' or just the 'slash'. Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks

Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution Use forward slashes: in some shortened forms in mathematical expressions to present lines of poetry in body text instead of ‘per’, ‘an’ or ‘a’ when abbreviating units of measurement in web addresses in dates if you can’t write them out – for example, in tables in some place names. Don’t add spaces around most forward slashes There is no need to include a space on either side of a forward slash. The exceptions are for: official dual place names lines of poetry in body text – use forward slashes with spaces around them to show the line breaks. Print considerations As far as possible, avoid using forward slashes either side of a line break. If you must, include the slash before the line break so that the reader anticipates it as they read the next line. Write shortened units of measurement with a forward slash Don’t use forward slashes when spelling out units of measurement. Example c/- [for ‘care of’ in postal addresses] n/a [for ‘not applicable’] (x + y)/(a + b) http://www.abc.net.au/foreign 04/12/2020 Example truwana / Cape Barren Island [Official dual place name] Use an en dash for financial years, not a slash Don’t use a forward slash as a replacement for an en dash in financial years. Write ‘or’ instead of a slash for alternatives When showing alternatives, use ‘or’ instead of a forward slash. This is easier for people to understand. Do not use ‘and/or’ in text. It could mean either ‘and’ or ‘or’, which confuses many users. Rewrite the sentence to make the meaning clear. Don’t join words with a slash Don’t use a forward slash between words that retain their separate identities. Instead, either use an en dash or reword the sentence. Forward slashes can make it look like you mean to show an alternative. Correct 60 km/h 60 kilometres per hour Incorrect 60 kilometres/hour Correct 2019–20 Incorrect 2019/20 Write this a yes or no question Not this a yes/no question Write this Release notes The digital edition consolidates information about when and how to use the forward slash. The sixth edition included information about the forward slash in the section on sentence punctuation. It was also mentioned in the section on numbers. The Content Guide did not have guidance on the forward slash. About this page References Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019) Course notes and exercises: Editing and proofreading for the workplace, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edn, Lacuna, Westgate. Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Stilman S (2004) Grammatically correct, Writer’s Digest Books, Ohio. Truss L (2003) Eats, shoots and leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation, Profile Books, London, 2003. Last updated This page was updated Wednesday 24 July 2024. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation-and-capitalisation/full-stops Full stops Full stops mark the end of sentences which aren't questions or exclamations. Users need them to scan text and to recognise decimal values. Complete a sentence with a full stop Full stops mark the end of a sentence that is not a question or an exclamation. Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution Following the same rule, use full stops at the end of the last item in a list that’s made up of sentence fragments. Use the final full stop because this type of list is a sentence presented as points to make it easier to read. Use full stops with some numbers and shortened forms Also use full stops: as the decimal point in numbers and currency – for example, ‘$3.55’ in numbering subsections and paragraphs in a document – for example, ‘Section 7.3’ in some Latin shortened forms and shortened forms used in referencing. Don’t use full stops with contractions or most abbreviations. Don’t end web or email addresses with full stops Do not use a full stop after a web or email address if it’s part of a sentence fragment or on a line by itself. Write full stops in email and web addresses when you use the full form rather than link text (for example, ‘dfat.gov.au’ instead of linking ‘the DFAT website’). Ensure link text doesn’t include a full stop Use full stops at the end of sentences with link text, but don’t include the full stop in the link itself. Example The committee met yesterday. It discussed: office space working hours managers’ salaries. Example Website: department.gov.au Email: example@department.gov.au Correct The People team manages the add a new employee form. Incorrect Write headings, measurements and captions without full stops Don’t use full stops in: headings stand-alone lists (stand-alone lists have a heading without a colon) page headers or footers. Full stops do not go after: symbols or units of measurement (unless the symbol or unit is also at the end of a sentence) captions and titles. Don’t add a full stop after hashtags, emojis or handles Use correct punctuation in government social media. You don’t need a full stop if your post ends in: a web address (URL) a tag or handle a hashtag an emoji a sentence fragment. Punctuate text messages (SMS) correctly In government text messages, use correct punctuation and grammar to avoid ambiguity. Correct writing shows people that the text is authoritative and trustworthy. Include a full stop at the end of a text message if it finishes with a sentence. Don’t include a full stop if the message ends with a fragment or sign off. Release notes The digital edition consolidates information on full stops with a focus on online content. It The People team manages the add a new employee form. Example Warning: there is a high probability of hail in your area. Please take appropriate precautions and stay safe. Time sent: 4:30 pm AEST removes the requirement to use full stops with abbreviations. Evidence from Australian corpora supports this change. It is consistent with guidance to use minimal punctuation. The sixth edition mentions full stops in several sections including punctuation, abbreviations, numbers and citations. The Content Guide had brief information about the full stop in several sections. It advised against using a full stop after an email address or bare URL to end a sentence. The digital edition advises to omit a full stop when the email address or bare URL is a fragment or on a line by itself (such as in an email signature block). About this page References Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019) Course notes and exercises: Editing and proofreading for the workplace, Centre for Continuing

Education, Australian National University, Canberra. Crystal D (11 June 2016) ‘On the reported death of the full-stop / period’, DCblog, accessed 20 December 2019. Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (15 March 2020) ‘A slice of paradise. When visiting islands and cays, tread …’ [Facebook post], Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, accessed 16 May 2020. Gunraj DN, Drumm-Hewitt AM, Dashow EM, Upadhyay SSN and Klin C (2016) ‘Texting insincerely: the role of the period in text messaging’, Computers in Human Behavior, 55(B):1067– 1075, doi:10.1016/j.chb.2015.11.003. Houghton KJ, Upadhyay SSN and Klin C (2018) ‘Punctuation in text messages may convey abruptness. Period’, Computers in Human Behavior, 80(C):112–121, doi:10.1016/j.chb.2017.10.044. Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edn, Lacuna, Westgate. Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Stilman A (2004) Grammatically correct, Writer’s Digest Books, Ohio. Stone A and Ford R (2017) ‘Chasing after a century of punctuation’, Procedia Computer Science, 118:15–21, doi:0.1016/j.procs.2017.11.144. Truss L (2003) Eats, shoots and leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation, Profile Books, London. Wright EM (2019) Pragmatic functionality of punctuation on Twitter [master’s thesis], University of Kentucky, accessed 21 December 2020. Last updated This page was updated Tuesday 19 October 2021. https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/grammar-punctuation-and-conventions/punctuation/hyphens Hyphens Hyphens connect words and prefixes so meaning is clear. Refer to your organisation’s preferred dictionary when you are not sure if you need to use a hyphen for spelling. Follow hyphenation rules in the dictionary your organisation uses Brackets and parentheses Colons Commas Dashes Ellipses Exclamation marks Forward slashes Full stops Hyphens Question marks Quotation marks Semicolons Spelling Shortened words and phrases Numbers and measurements Italics Names and terms Titles, honours, forms of address Content types Structuring content Referencing and attribution Hyphens clarify meaning by connecting words and parts of words into a single unit of meaning. Use hyphens to avoid ambiguity. There are few firm rules about using hyphens, and dictionaries do not always agree. Use the dictionary your organisation recommends and follow its hyphenation practices. Follow the accepted naming conventions for compass points, names of people and names of places. Print considerations Don’t break short words over a line, especially: words of fewer than 6 letters one-syllable words 2-syllable words. Break words between syllables so that the hyphen: is between 2 components of a compound word (for example, ‘data-base’) is between the base word and the suffix or prefix (for example, ‘neat-ness’) comes before a consonant (for example, write ‘fic-tion’ not ‘fict-ion’) unless this is misleading (for example, write ‘draw-ings’ not ‘dra-wings’). Don’t include extra hyphens if you need to break up URLs or email addresses. People could read them as part of the address. Use the part of the word before the hyphen to suggest the rest of the word. Consider the vowels and consonants when breaking words over a line. Write certain prefixes with a hyphen Hyphens are useful in some sets of words formed with prefixes such as: ‘anti-’ ‘auto-’ ‘counter-’ ‘extra-’ ‘intra-’ ‘re-’ ‘sub-’. Example ‘a little used office’, but ‘a little-used office’ ‘a unionised workforce’, but ‘an un-ionised particle’ They’re especially useful for: doubled-up vowels clarifying new words that could be confused with existing ones. A hyphen is used in some words with prefixes to distinguish them from words that would otherwise look the same. Sometimes a prefix such as ‘non-’, ‘pre-’ or ‘anti-’ acts on more than one word. If the phrase is already hyphenated, use a second hyphen to link the prefix to all words in the phrase. Doubled-up vowels Use a hyphen when the last letter of a single-syllable prefix is a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel. This practice is less important if a word is well known. Check a dictionary if you are unsure. Example ‘re-cover‘ [cover again], but ‘recover‘ [retrieve or regain] ‘re-creation‘ [create anew], but ‘recreation‘ [leisure-related activity] ‘re-signed‘ [signed again], but ‘resigned‘ [stepped down or acquiescent] Example non-English-speaking countries an anti-harm-minimisation stance Write this de-emphasise pre-eminent re-enter Not this deemphasise preeminent reenter Write this coordinate cooperate Double letters Hyphens link a prefix or suffix to a word to avoid a double letter or prevent a misunderstanding. Capital letters Hyphens link a prefix to a word that starts with a capital letter. Vowel combinations Don’t use hyphens if the 2 words end and start with different vowels. The combined word doesn’t place the same vowel together. Use a hyphen, however, if the prefix is attached to a single-syllable word beginning with a vowel. This punctuation means the vowels aren’t read as one sound. Two-syllable prefixes ending in a vowel other than ‘o’ and followed by another vowel are often hyphenated. If the base word begins with a consonant, the term is usually written as one word. Not this co-ordinate co-operate Example ‘multi-item’, but ‘multilateral’ ‘re-sign’ [sign again], but ‘resign’ [leave a job] Example un-Australian activities pro-European Example prearrange reallocate triennial Example de-ice Example Two-syllable prefixes ending in ‘o’ are often attached without a hyphen, regardless of what the base word starts with. Consonants Two-syllable prefixes ending in a consonant are rarely followed by a hyphen. ‘Co-’ and ‘ex-’ prefixes Regardless of whether the rest of the word starts with a vowel: Many words with the prefix ‘co-’, meaning ‘joint’, have hyphens after the ‘co’. All words formed with ‘ex-’, meaning ‘former’, are hyphenated. Follow the spelling in your preferred dictionary. Numbers and italics with prefixes Use a hyphen if a prefix is followed by a number or an expression that’s in italics. anti-aircraft, antisocial semi-official, semicircular Example macroeconomics, macrobiotic monoamine, monocultural radioactive, radiotherapy retroactive, retrograde Example hyperlink, hyperrealism interactive, interrelated Example co-author, co-worker ex-councillor, ex-president Example post-1960 the PNG Government’s anti-raskol measures Write most suffixes without hyphens Suffixes are normally attached directly to the base word without any hyphen. The commonest suffixes include: -able -ate -ation -fold -ful -ise -ish -ly -ment -ness -y. A hyphen precedes ‘-fold’ when that suffix is used with a numeral, but not a spelled out number. Always use a hyphen with the suffix ‘-odd’, whether it’s with a word or numeral. Hyphenate some but not all compound words A compound word consists of 2 or more words that carry a new meaning when

used together. Hyphens link elements of compound words as a phrase, but usually only when they are used before a noun as adjectives. Don’t use hyphens when the phrase is after the noun in the sentence structure. Example readable colourful costly Example 300-fold threefold Example There were 150-odd competitors. Don’t confuse hyphens with dashes. Compound nouns Compound nouns make up the largest group of compound words. They can be made up of: a verb and an adverb a verb and a noun a noun and a noun an adjective and a noun. Most compound nouns don’t need hyphens because people already understand what the words mean together. Verb and adverb combinations Use a hyphen in compound nouns made up of a verb plus an adverb. This shows that the adverb is part of the compound rather than modifying other elements of the sentence. For adverb–verb combinations, you don’t need a hyphen. Verb and noun combinations Only a few compound nouns made up of a verb and a noun need hyphens. The following table has some examples, but use a dictionary if you are not sure. Example ‘the up-to-date accounts’, but ‘the accounts are up to date’ ‘small-business owners’, but ‘owners of small businesses’ ‘an 11-year-old child, but ‘a child who is 11 years old’ Example a shake-out some make-up the go-ahead for the project Example bypass downpour uproar input Hyphenation rules for compound nouns made up of a verb and noun Verb and noun combination Hyphenation Example Verb with no suffix and noun (in either order) one word, no hyphen stingray, roadblock Verb ending in ‘-ing’ or ‘-ed’ and noun 2 words, no hyphen flying doctor, shredded paper Single-syllable noun and verb ending in ‘-ing’ or ‘-ed’ one word, no hyphen stocktaking, bookmarked Multi-syllable noun and verb ending in ‘-ing’ or ‘-ed’ Use a hyphen or use 2 separate words (check a dictionary) profit-taking, potato growing * The endings ‘-ing’ or ‘-ed’ show when the verb happened. Verbs with these endings are called ‘inflected verbs’. In this example, the verb ‘fly’ becomes ‘flying’, ‘shred’ becomes ‘shredded’. Noun-plus-noun combinations Use of hyphens in noun-plus-noun compounds varies, even from dictionary to dictionary. These types usually have hyphens: expressions in which each element has equal status, which describe one thing expressions in which the elements rhyme noun compounds involving prepositional phrases. Adjective plus noun combination Compound nouns consisting of an adjective followed by a noun are usually written as 2 words. Compound adjectives Compound adjectives need hyphens if they are made up of either: * Example owner-driver, city-state hocus-pocus editor-at-large, mother-in-law Example red tape free will 2 adjectives a noun and an adjective. It doesn’t matter whether the compound adjective comes before or after the noun it’s describing. Hyphenate adjectival compounds made up of adverbial phrases when they come before the nouns, but not after. Don’t hyphenate adverbial phrases when they play an adverbial role. Never use a hyphen for a compound modified by words such as ‘very’, ‘particularly’, ‘least’ or ‘most’. Sometimes, you might need to use a hyphen for clarification. Set phrases Compound adjectives that are set phrases consisting of a noun plus a noun or an adjective plus a Example bitter-sweet, icy-cold, red-hot [Two adjectives] accident-prone, colour-blind, disease-free [Noun plus adjective] Example It was a dusk-to-dawn curfew. [The curfew lasted from dusk to dawn.] Example a newly discovered plant species a happily married couple Example a very well known diplomat a better known a particularly diligent team member the most advanced students Example The parents lobbied for more experienced staff. [Parents were asking for more staff who were also experienced.] The parents lobbied for more-experienced staff. [Parents were asking for staff who were more experienced to replace the less experienced staff.] noun are not usually hyphenated. If the phrase is further modified, use a hyphen to prevent ambiguity. Adjectives with verbs Compound adjectives with present or past participles usually have a hyphen. Some of these well- established compounds are single words. They will be listed in a dictionary. Hyphenate compound adjectives consisting of a participle or an adjective. Don’t hyphenate a compound adjective made up of an adverb–verb combination if the adverb ends in ‘-ly’. Example a tax office ruling the stock exchange report an equal opportunity employer Example a retrospective tax-office ruling the Tokyo stock-exchange report a renowned equal-opportunity employer Example a government-owned facility a heart-rending image airborne everlasting widespread Example a well-known book a fast-flowing river Example an elegantly executed manoeuvre a finely honed argument Numbers and fractions Use hyphens for compound adjectives involving numerals, spelt-out numbers and ordinal numbers. If you need to write out numbers as words rather than numerals, use hyphens to link numbers from 21 to 99. Hyphens link parts of a fraction. Capitals, italics and quotation marks Compound adjectives containing capital letters, italics or quotation marks are not usually hyphenated. Compound verbs Hyphenate compound verbs made up of an adjective plus a noun or a noun plus a verb. Example a 4-part series a 21-gun salute a third-storey office Example twenty-one two hundred and thirty-four ninety-nine Example ‘one-half’, but ‘a half’ ‘one-quarter’, but ‘a quarter’ Example a High Court decision an in situ inspection a ‘do or die’ attitude Example to cold-shoulder Don’t hyphenate compound verbs made up of an adverb plus a verb. Write them as one word. Compound adverbs Write compound adverbs as one word. Repeat words instead of using a hanging hyphen Hanging (or floating) hyphens connect 2 words to a base word or a number that they share. This can be difficult to follow, so it's clearer to repeat the words. Don’t hyphenate ‘-ing’ and ‘-ed’ verbs or most ‘-ly’ adverbs Don’t use a hyphen in most compounds consisting of an adverb ending in ‘-ly’ and a participle (a part of a verb ending in ‘-ing’ or ‘-ed’). to gift-wrap Example to bypass to overreact to undergo Example barefoot downstream overboard Example 3- or 4-part harmony pre- or post-1945 full- and part-time positions Example full-time and part-time positions The only exceptions are 2 formations using the adverb ‘fully’: ‘fully-fashioned’ ‘fully-fledged’. Release notes The digital edition consolidates information in the Content Guide and the sixth edition. It provides examples of correct and incorrect use. The sixth edition had information about hyphens, concentrated in the ‘spelling and word punctuation’ section. The Content Guide had brief information about hyphens, including in relation to spelling for particular terms. About this page References American Psychological Association (2020) ‘Mechanics of style’, Publication manual of the American Psychological

Association, 7th edn, American Psychological Association, Washington DC. Dixon JC and Bolitho B (2005–2019) Course notes and exercises: editing and proofreading for the workplace, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra. European Commission (2020) English style guide: a handbook for authors and translators in the European Commission, European Commission. Murphy EM with Cadman H (2014) Effective writing: plain English at work, 2nd edn, Lacuna, Westgate. Correct a fully loaded truck his rapidly declining health a partly read book Incorrect a fully-loaded truck his rapidly-declining health a partly-read book Oxford University Press (2016) 'Punctuation', New Oxford style manual, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Seely J (2001) Oxford everyday grammar, Oxford University Press, Oxford. Stilman A (2004) Grammatically correct, Writer's Digest Books, Ohio. Truss L (2003) Eats, shoots and leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation, Profile Books, London. University of Chicago (2017) 'Punctuation', Chicago manual of style, 17th edn, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.