



AGE
Concern

Style guide

Producing written material for Age Concern

Introduction

This is a house style guide for staff and freelancers who write for Age Concern.

Language is a powerful tool. If used effectively it's an incredible force for change, but if we don't communicate well, our organisation and the work we do will have less impact.

Age Concern inevitably publishes a huge variety of information every year. Different media – websites, newsletters, books, reports – and diverse groups of readers require different writing techniques, so it's important to vary our output to suit our audiences.

However, whether you're writing for the web, an e-bulletin or a factsheet, you will want to produce clear, high-quality copy as well as writing in a style which is consistent with other parts of Age Concern. Inaccuracies and inconsistencies – like using advisor and adviser in the same document – distract the reader from the content and can undermine the authority and expertise of our organisation.

This four-part guide is designed to ensure that our work is as accurate and consistent as possible. The first part provides general guidance on **writing for Age Concern**, including a checklist of things to think about before signing off your document and how to write about 'age'. The second part covers **style, grammar and punctuation**, explaining correct usage and guiding you towards the preferred house style where there is more than one option. The third section is a **spelling and capitalisation guide**, containing a list of commonly used words that you might need to check on. The fourth part offers a simple guide to **laying out documents in Word**.

These guidelines should be made available to anyone writing for Age Concern, so don't forget to send them out to all freelance writers, editors, copywriters and proofreaders. Feedback and suggestions for improvement are always welcome, so feel free to email richard.deeks@ace.org.uk with any comments.

Contents

Part 1 – Writing for Age Concern	4
Checklist	4
Age Concern in writing	5
Get your facts right	5
Who is your reader?	6
Purpose and key messages	6
Structure	7
Plain English	8
Headings and sub-headings	9
Accidental ‘isms’	9
Writing about age	10
Writing about disability	11
Corporate guidelines	11
Part 2 – Style, grammar and punctuation	12
Part 3 – Spelling and capitalisation guide	28
Part 4 – Laying out documents in Word	30

Further information

- For spellings refer to the latest edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (even when it contradicts other dictionaries)
- For grammar and punctuation please refer to the *New Hart’s Rules*.
- Copies of both are available from the publishing team.

If you have a query and can’t find an answer elsewhere you can contact Richard Deeks on 020 8765 7621 or email richard.deeks@ace.org.uk



Useful web addresses

- *Guardian* style guide: www.guardian.co.uk/styleguide
- *Economist* style guide: www.economist.com/research/StyleGuide
- RNIB: www.rnib.org.uk
- Plain English Campaign: www.plainenglish.co.uk

Part 1: Writing for Age Concern

1. Checklist

Here are a few things to think about before you send your document out:

- Have you clearly stated your purpose at the start?
- Are your key messages clear?
- Are the style and format suitable for your readership?
- Has someone else read it through for you?
- Is all the content directly relevant, or should you extract some for an appendix?
- Can any of the information be shown in a better way, perhaps as bullet points or boxed text?
- Have your facts been carefully checked?
- Does your table of contents match the actual contents?
- Have you cleared permission for all the material you've reproduced?
- Have you included a copyright line if appropriate?
- Have you included a disclaimer if necessary?
- Are references complete and accurate?
- Are acknowledgements complete?
- Have you cross-referenced other relevant information products such as factsheets and books?
- Are all the websites, forms or organisations you mention still current?

2. Age Concern in writing

Even though our written output is quite varied, it should always reflect the aims and aspirations of our organisation, as a part is often taken to represent the whole. The way we use words tells others a great deal about us: whether we write about older people in a positive way, whether we're consistent (in our message and our spelling), whether we provide solutions as well as highlight problems, whether we are a dynamic and interesting organisation.

All writers need to be aware of Age Concern's mission statement:

To promote the well-being of all older people and help make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience.

Freelancers should be clearly briefed on our principles, values and corporate priorities (these can be found on Acknowledge), as well as on the specific demands of a particular project.

It's better to refer to our organisation as Age Concern rather than Age Concern England, unless you're writing a document specifically for the latter. Remember that Age Concern is, not are. Use 'we' and 'us' rather than the third person, eg 'We would like to see a better quality of care' rather than 'Age Concern would like to see a better quality of care'.

3. Get your facts right

However carefully you read your work you're quite likely to miss something. It's always worth asking a colleague to read it through for you before you send it out. A fresh pair of eyes will spot the small mistakes you may have missed.

It's important that our information is as consistent as possible across Age Concern, in terms of content and message as well as grammar and punctuation. Don't forget to make the most of our in-house expertise and get your document read by colleagues. Most people are prepared to check facts and provide feedback, but you should give plenty of notice (at least a month) so they can factor it into their schedule.

In addition, writers should be aware of where their work sits in relation to other written products and, if appropriate, refer to them. For example, factsheets could refer to books that delve into an issue in more detail, and vice versa. If you're briefing a freelancer you should send them as much information as you can, perhaps by including a book catalogue and a list of factsheets. Inevitably we will duplicate our material from time to time, but it's better if we do this on purpose rather than by mistake!

4. Who is your reader?

It may seem obvious, but it's worth taking the time to think carefully about who will read your publication. If they are busy MPs, will they have time to read the whole report? If writing for carers, consider their needs and the issues that are likely to affect them. When writing for older readers check the font size and spacing, and ensure the document is user-friendly. If you're writing for advisers, your work must be up to date and sufficiently detailed and referenced. Sometimes you'll need to develop arguments logically as you go on; at other times – when writing news stories, for instance – you need to structure the information for maximum impact.

It's not just the content that needs thought, it's also the tone of voice: you should be aware of the sensitivities of your readers as well as their needs in terms of information. Again, colleagues in Age Concern will be able to offer helpful guidance on our policy position, and how to approach certain topics in the best way. There's also more information later in this guide.

Finally, don't forget that some of your readers may have sight problems. There is valuable information on producing clear, easy-to-read documents in the corporate guidelines www.acbrandguidelines.org.uk. You can also visit the RNIB website and consult their 'Clear print guidelines' at:



<http://www.rnib.org.uk>

5. Purpose and key messages

The purpose of your text, your intended readership and key messages should be obvious from the very beginning. This may mean explaining the document's purpose more than once – on the back, in the introduction, in some highlighted text. You can include summaries at the beginning or end of a chapter or section, and use checklists or boxed text to highlight your key messages outside the main flow of the text.

You'll need to balance the need to provide sufficient information with the danger of including too much. Hardly any publication will be a one-stop shop, so remember to signpost your reader to sources of further help and information when necessary.

6. Structure

A good structure is essential for maximum impact. Planning is the key: knowing what you're going to include, in what order, will make the writing process far easier and your document much clearer.

Other things to bear in mind are:

- Title, headings and sub-headings: are these appropriate and accurate?
- Introduction: is it concise and punchy?
- Presentation: have you broken up your text into logical and digestible pieces such as bullet lists, case studies, quotes, boxed text?
- Progression: does your argument/information move forward in the most logical and effective way?
- Supporting material: if it is not part of your argument, can it be separated as an appendix?
- Have you thought about sections at the end such as a glossary, list of useful organisations, references, index, and so on?



Appendices: if there is more than one, call it Appendix 1, 2, 3, etc.
If there is only one, call it Appendix.

Tables/figures: in a short report, or one with only a few tables or figures, number them Table 1, 2, 3, and so on, consecutively through the text. In a long report, number them consecutively within chapters – Figure 1.1, 1.2, and so on in chapter 1; Figure 2.1, 2.2, in chapter 2.

7. Plain English

Writing in plain English doesn't mean writing in a boring way, letting your grammar slip, writing amateurishly, patronising the reader or over-simplifying a complex message. Rather, it seeks the most effective way of communicating, relying on persuasive logic and clarity to make your point. It is faster, easier and friendlier. It's also particularly important in publications aimed at people whose first language is not English.

Almost anything – from leaflets to letters to legal documents – can be written in plain English. Here are some tips that may be useful:

 Don't use the passive when you can use the active, for example: Don't say Your case needs to be assessed by the local authority	 Do say The local authority will assess your case
Don't say You can contact us for further information	Do say Contact us for more information
Don't use jargon or technical words if there's an everyday equivalent	Do use contemporary vocabulary (but not slang)
Don't use a long word when a short one will do	Do cut out any extra words you don't need
Don't use unexplained abbreviations, except where they are the preferred descriptions of organisations like the BBC or the NHS	Do state your policies and messages clearly and confidently (so avoid saying 'Age Concern feels that...')
Don't use non-essential capital letters (see part two for more information)	Do use 'you' and 'we'
	Do give clear instructions: for example, 'Return the form in the pre-paid envelope'

We should always try to write well, bearing in mind that the more enjoyable the writing is, the more likely a reader is to remember the message.



Visit www.plainenglish.co.uk for more information and tips.

8. Headings and sub-headings

Meaningful headings and sub-headings are very useful. They help readers to navigate the text and locate the section they need; they can also help you, early on, with the structure.

Try not to number your headings and sub-headings – 1.1, 1.2, 1.3.1 and so on – unless it's essential to the format of your document (for example when writing a legal document). A clear heading is much more friendly and informative.

9. Accidental 'isms'

'No man is an island' – you can't change this to 'No man or woman is an island' without coming across as absurd, so try to avoid phrases like these, however handy they are.

He/she/they: try to avoid using 'he or she' throughout a document by opting for the plural, for example: 'Older drivers may find that it is hard for them to get motor insurance' rather than 'An older driver may find that it is harder for him/her to get motor insurance'.

Chairman: this is fine unless another organisation uses another form, in which case you should go with the form they prefer.

10. Writing about age

We want to project positive images of age and ageing. Older people are a diverse group encompassing wide interests. People over 50 in paid work account for nearly a quarter of our total national output (over £200 billion annually). Their work as carers is worth around £19 billion a year. As volunteers, they contribute work worth about £5 billion per year.

Our work at Age Concern may often focus on the physical, financial and social hardships of ageing, and on the challenges facing an ageing society, so it's really important that we don't use words that increase the negative impact of our message. A careless use of words and phrases can reinforce the kinds of stereotype and prejudice we are working to overcome. Wherever possible, try to present solutions as well as highlight problems.

Some hints:



Don't use the following: **the elderly; old people; the old; grannies**; or anything flippant or disparaging



Do use the term **older people**

Don't say **the over fifties**

Do say **people over fifty**

Don't portray old age as a time of dependency and limitation

Do use words such as **support** rather than **help**

Don't describe older people in our society as a 'burden'

Do emphasise an individual's personality and story rather than their age

Don't turn older people into victims or sufferers



11. Writing about disability

People are often unsure what words to use when speaking or writing about people with disabilities. This is understandable, for the accepted terminology often changes, and different groups and individuals prefer different words.

One rule of thumb is not to define people in terms of their conditions. It's not the **disabled, a diabetic, arthritis sufferers** or **dementia patients**. Instead put the person first: **people with arthritis, those with dementia** or **a person with diabetes**.

Be sensitive to the fact that some people who have developed disabilities over a period of time may not think of themselves as 'disabled'. You should also avoid being sentimental, or speaking of people with disabilities as **sufferers** or **victims**.

Here are some other do's and don'ts:

 Don't use cripple, invalid, handicapped	 Do use disabled person
Don't use mentally handicapped, person with a mental age of..., retarded	Do use person with a learning difficulty
Don't use wheelchair bound	Do use wheelchair user
Don't say normal in contrast to someone who has a disability	

12. Corporate guidelines

Our corporate guidelines cover the use of fonts (typefaces), colours and logo, and other aspects of our organisation's corporate identity. See www.acbrandguidelines.org.uk for more information on these.

Part 2: Style, grammar and punctuation

Abbreviations

See also **acronyms**

When to use them

Abbreviations are useful, but only if your reader understands them. It's often a good idea to spell out words the first time you use them followed by the abbreviation in brackets afterwards. From then on you can just use the abbreviation. For example:

The Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) can help you improve your bike-riding skills. Contact the CTC to arrange lessons.

You do not need to do this where the abbreviation is more widely used than the full version – for example, **NHS**, **VAT** or **BBC**.

Don't assume that because something is familiar to you, it will be familiar to your reader.

Presentation

If the full name is in bold, for example in a list of addresses, the abbreviation should appear in regular, for example:

- **Age Concern England** (ACE)

But always avoid abbreviating Age Concern England to ACE, especially when writing for an external audience.

Don't use abbreviations such as **dept.** for **department** or **tel.** for **telephone**.

Don't use full stops in abbreviations and contractions such as:

- eg, ie, etc
- ed, p, pp, ch
- kg, mm, am, pm, mph
- Dr, Mrs
- G Lishman, M Mitchell
- VAT, ACE, UK

Punctuation

Eg, ie, and etc should be preceded with a comma, ie like this. If they come at the end of a sentence they should be followed with a colon, eg:

Do try to write them out in full whenever you can:

- ie – use **that is** or **in other words**
- eg – use **for example**
- etc – use **and others, and so on**

Acronyms

See also **abbreviations**

An acronym is an abbreviation that is pronounced as a word, usually written with a capital letter to begin with. For example, **Acas** is the most commonly used term for the **Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service**.

Some acronyms won't need to be written out in full, though they can be glossed, for example **the arbitration service Acas**.

Usually, though, you should follow the acronym with the full name in brackets on first use, for example **Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs)**.

Ampersands (&)

Use only when the ampersand is part of a company name, for example Hinton **&** Wilde.

An before H

If a word starts with a **silent h** then use **an**, for example **an heir, an honest woman** (but **a hotel**).

Before an abbreviation use whatever sounds most natural, for example **an NHS report**.

Apostrophes

There are two types of apostrophe: contraction and possessive. However most people also invent a third type – the 'plural' apostrophe – which is altogether wrong. Please try to avoid using imaginary plural apostrophes!

Do use:

- 1980s **not** 1980's
- MPs **not** MP's
- He was in his 60s **not** He was in his 60's
- CDs **not** CD's

Contraction

The most common problem people have is the difference between it's and its. Hopefully this is a simple explanation:

It's is a contraction of **it is**. If you can substitute **it is** then use an apostrophe.

Its, although possessive, does **not have** an apostrophe.

Do use **it's** if you can substitute **it is** and the sentence still makes sense!
For example:

- The cat played with its ball.
- It's time for dinner.

Do not use apostrophes with standard contractions such as **flu, phone**.

Possessive

This apostrophe is used when something belongs to someone else. **Women's rights** are the **rights of women**; an **MP's salary** is the **salary of an MP**.

When a word already ends in 's' a second 's' should not be added after the apostrophe. For example:

- Mrs Jones' pension book
- Jesus' disciples

Do note that some organisations have done away with their apostrophes even though technically they ought to have them. For example the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and Gas Consumers Council. If in doubt, check the website.

Brackets (parentheses)

See also **ellipsis**

In final text use (round) brackets, called parentheses. You can use square brackets within round brackets (if you think it's [absolutely] necessary).

You can use square brackets within draft text to indicate a query or [material to come later] a temporary comment or note.

Use square brackets in final text to show you've added something to a quotation, for example 'No man [or woman] is an island'. This is also the case if you've substituted an ellipsis for some text you don't want, for example 'The chairman [...] suggested that they break for lunch.'

Punctuation

(If the words inside the parentheses form a complete sentence, the full stop goes inside, like this.) If you are simply adding a word or phrase in brackets, the full stop goes afterwards (like this).

Bullet points

Bullet points are really useful: they highlight text, and are easy to read. You can also use numbers or letters, depending on what is most helpful to your reader.

As far as possible, the items in a list of bullet points should be of a similar length. If each bullet is quite long then perhaps your material isn't suitable for bullets.

Be consistent in style and also in grammar, so if one bullet is in the form of a question they should all be; if you go for complete sentences then use them throughout, and so on.

There are four main styles of bullet.

1. Where a list follows a colon:
 - **do not** use capital letters
 - **do not** punctuate every line
 - **do** use a full stop right at the end.
2. Where the list is for display purposes. Keep it:
 - short
 - unpunctuated
3. Where the items in your list are short and follow on from the introductory sentence, you should:
 - use lower case for the initial letter of each item;
 - use a semi-colon at the end of each item;
 - use a full stop right at the end.
4. When the items are complete, independent sentences:
 - The initial letter of each item takes a capital.
 - Each item ends with a full stop.

Capital letters

See also **titles** and **headings** and *Part 3: Spelling and capitalisation guide*

Don't use lots of capitals. Using Lots of Capitals Makes Text Look Cluttered and Old-fashioned; it Slows the Reader and Interrupts the Flow of a Sentence.

Do keep them to a minimum in **headlines** and **headings** too – it's easier to read. See below:

- Age Concern launches its Hungry to be Heard campaign
- Age Concern Launches Its Hungry To Be Heard Campaign

Do use capitals for:

- Brand names, eg **Twinings**, **Imperial Leather**
- Organisations' names, eg **Department for Work and Pensions**, **Environment Agency**
- Political or geographical regions, eg **Northern Ireland** (as opposed to the north of England or south London)
- Benefits, eg **Attendance Allowance** or **Statutory Sick Pay**

Don't capitalise for job titles, except for government posts like Foreign Secretary, Prime Minister.

Don't capitalise government and parliament, but it is acceptable to use a small cap for government.

Collective nouns

Companies, committees and organisations are collective nouns. In this way, a large group becomes a singular entity, and takes a singular verb. For example:

- Age Concern **is** campaigning on . . .
- The government **thinks** that . . .

Commas

Do use commas to avoid confusion, break up lists and add natural pauses in sentences. Try not to use them too much though, as it can slow your reader down and complicate a sentence unnecessarily.

Lists

Don't put a comma before the final 'and' – for example **he devoured fish, chips, bacon, egg and tea.**

Only put a comma before the final 'and' in the list when it clarifies the meaning. For example **he devoured fish and chips, strawberries and cream, and tea.**

Oxford comma

When people put a comma before the 'and' this is called an Oxford comma. It goes like this: **he devoured fish, chips, bacon, egg, and tea.** We don't use it.

Contact details (names and addresses)

Standing alone

Contact details are best written out with a new line for each part, and without any commas at all.

Age Concern England
Astral House
1268 London Road
London SW16 4ER

If you don't have the space, put the address on one line. Do use commas, **except** between the town and postcode:

- Astral House, 1268 London Road, London SW16 4ER

Within text

If you're including contact details within copy then you need to write it as simply as possible, using the minimum of punctuation. Here's an example:

- For more information, contact Age Concern England by telephone (020 8765 7200) or fax (020 8765 7211) or visit their website (www.ageconcern.org.uk).

Don't write 'Email' or 'Website'. Also try not to have the web address at the end of the sentence, because a full stop after a web address might be confusing. You can avoid this by putting the web address in brackets (see www.styleguide.com).

Telephone and fax numbers

Don't abbreviate **telephone** to **tel**.

Do include the full national dialling code.

Don't use hyphens or brackets.

Do use a space between the code and the main number and try to observe the following:

- 8 digit phone numbers – code + four, four groups of four 020 8683 9323
- 7 digit phone numbers – code + three four 0161 732 7200
- 6 digit phone numbers (including mobiles) – code + one (ie don't divide) 07832 375660

If it's a number that is more memorable written in a certain way then adhere to that style, for example Age Concern's information line: 0800 00 99 66 or learndirect: 0800 100 900.

Please note that the London prefix is 020, **not** 0207 or 0208. For example, the number for Age Concern England is 020 8765 7200.

Cross-references

Used when referring readers to other parts of the text, for example **see page 42**. Don't overuse – you can summarise information rather than keep referring the reader back and forth.

Cross-references can appear either in brackets or as part of a sentence, for example, **for more information see the summary in chapter ten (pages 13–44)**.

Do write page and chapter in full rather than abbreviating.

Dashes

The dash (–) is different from a hyphen (-). See also **hyphens**.

The dash (which is technically called an **em** rule) can be used as a substitute for brackets, commas or semi-colons. Used in this way, it should appear longer than a hyphen and with a space on either side¹. For example:

- The boy next door – the one with brown hair – came over for tea.
- She went on a Saga holiday – these are popular with older travellers.

A closed up dash (with no space on either side) is called an **en** rule and is used to denote a span – for example of page numbers, dates or distances – or to show a relationship between two separate ideas/bodies:

- pages 65–77
- 1994–99
- 275–377 Euston Road
- East–West relations
- The London–Brighton route

Do avoid using this format if you're referring to an age group; use people aged 50 to 64 rather than people 50–64.

¹ Word processing packages automatically insert the long em rule if you type your dash with a space on either side. The moment you type the first letter after the space, your dash gets longer.

Dates

See also **times**

The day comes first, then the date in figures, then the month and the year.

Do use the following styles:

- 9 October
- 9 October 2006
- Monday 9 October 2006
- October 2006

Do spell centuries out in full:

- In the twenty-first century

With time-spans:

- **Do** shorten the second figure, 1996–98
- **Do** write 2000/01 for the academic or financial year
- **Don't** use between 2000-06 **do** use between 2000 and 2006
- **Don't** say the 90s **do** say the 1990s or the nineties

Degree qualifications

Do use a comma to separate a person's name from their academic qualifications.

Don't use full stops:

- B Smith, BA
- C Cruthers, MSc, PhD

Diagonal

Also known as **oblique** or **solidus**. Should be closed-up with no space either side.

Do use it to indicate alternatives: yes/no, male/female. Also used for the financial or academic year: 2006/07.

Don't replace 'and' and 'or' with an oblique: **health or nutrition, not health/nutrition.**

Ellipsis

This is formed of three dots together with single spaces on either side of them. For example: 'he went ... somewhere, I forget where'.

Often used to show words have been omitted from quoted material. For example 'he talked for a long time about all the issues surrounding pension reform [...] and then sat down to great applause'. If used at the end of a sentence the dots follow straight on with no space...

Emphasis

Do use italics, bold or underlining for emphasis.

Do not mix different formats for emphasis in the same document:

He was **very** annoyed because she was so late, and then she went and spilt water *all over* his laptop.

Footnotes and endnotes

A footnote is at the bottom of a page and an endnote is at the end of a document.

If a statement needs clarification or supporting material which would interrupt the flow of the text you can include it as a footnote or endnote. Indicate both with superscript².

However it's best not to use them in the majority of cases.

Foreign words

See also **spellings**

American

Don't use American spellings (such as **center** for **centre** and **theater** for **theatre**).

Do use English word endings. These end in **-ise** like **organise** and **harmonise**. The **-ize** ending is American.

Foreign words and phrases

Some foreign words are used so frequently that they have been taken into the English language. For example, **café**, **joie de vivre**, **ciao** and **bona fide** are all in the English dictionary.

² Like so.

Others that are less well-known should be written in italics and kept in their original form, retaining special features like accents (eg *mésalliance*).

In most cases it's best to avoid using foreign words when an English one will do, for example:

- **don't** say per annum **do** say a year
- **don't** say inter alia **do** say among others
- **don't** say raison d'être **do** say purpose

Headings and sub-headings

See also **titles** and **capitals**

The first word of a heading starts with a capital letter. All other words should be in lower case, except for proper names or titles which always take an initial capital.

- **Don't** use a full stop at the end of a heading
- **Do** avoid parentheses and dashes
- **Do** keep headings short and to the point

Headings in books and reports

There are many levels of headings. Your headings need to follow a clear hierarchy. For example:

Part title, chapter title, A heading (main heading within a chapter), B heading (sub-headings within the A heading), and so on.

Remember Headings don't need to stand above the text. You can use them at the beginning of the line with a space between them and the first sentence. It's up to you – you can use lots of imagination to lay out a document in the best possible way. As long as it looks logical and reads well, you'll have done the job.

He/she

Don't repeatedly use 'he/she' in your text: **if a resident does not wish to speak, respect his or her wishes.**

Do use a plural pronoun: **if a resident does not wish to speak, respect their wishes.**

Do make the whole sentence plural: **if residents do not wish to speak, respect their wishes.**

Hyphens

See also **dashes**

Keep to a minimum and avoid adding them to conjunctions that don't need them, such as **microeconomics**, **newborn**. Consult the Concise Oxford English Dictionary if you're in doubt.

Can be important in sentences to clarify meaning: a **hot-dog salesman** is selling sausages; a **hot dog-salesman** is selling puppies on a sunny day.

Do use a hyphen

With compound adjectives (two words that together describe a noun) that precede the noun. For example:

- A well-known writer
- A self-contained flat

When two or more hyphenated words are sharing the same element, both words should retain their hyphens. For example:

- Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artists

Don't use a hyphen

When the adjective comes after the verb. For example:

- He is very well known at Age Concern

Or when the first part of the compound is clearly an adverb (ending in -ly). For example:

- A beautifully furnished room

Italics

See also **titles** and **foreign words** and **emphasis**

Do use italics for the following:

- book titles, for example *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens
- factsheets, for example *Finding help at home*
- journals, magazines and newspapers, for example *Smash Hits*, *National Geographic* and *The Times*
- films, for example *Pulp Fiction*
- foreign words, for example 'the food was *délicieux!*'
- emphasis, for example 'I most certainly do *not* agree...'

Do not use italics for the following:

- chapter titles
- articles in periodicals
- quotations
- poems

Don't use italics as a style, as in this example. *It's not a very legible way to present text.*

Measurements

See also **abbreviations**

Do use metric units of measurement (mm, kg, cm, km) in their abbreviated form except where imperial measurements (such as miles) are more usual.

Don't put a space between the unit and the quantity, **it's** 2mm **not** 2 mm.

Don't use capitals.

Don't use full stops, it's 16cm not 16 c.m.

Don't add an 's' to show a plural.

Do use a figure rather than a word, it's 5mm not five mm.

Newspapers

See **italics** and **titles**

Newspapers are always written in italics. You include the article – 'the' – only for *The Times* and *The Economist*. The others do not italicise the article, for example *I read it in the Daily Telegraph*.

Numbers

See also **dates**, **times** and **measurements**

Do write out numbers **one** to **ten** in full.

Then write numerically from eleven: so **11**, **12**, **13** onwards.

Do write **first** to **tenth** in full.

Then write **11th**, **12th**, **13th** onwards.

Do use the figure with a measurement (abbreviated) or percentage, for example **2mm** or **5%**.

Do use a comma above 999. A thousand would be **1,000**.

Do write **million** or **billion** in full when you can, and always when referring to people.

Don't mix figures and numbers; it's either **nine apples and twenty pears** or **9 apples and 20 pears**, not **nine apples and 20 pears**.

Do write the number in full if it starts the sentence (though you might prefer to avoid starting the sentence with a number as it can look odd).

Do write out centuries in full, for example **sixteenth century** or **twenty-first century**.

Do write out fractions, for example **one-third**.

Don't mix percentages and fractions in the same sentence, for example '**a quarter of all men and 33% of women...**'

Hyphenating

Numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine take a hyphen, for example **twenty-three**, **sixty-two**.

However you don't hyphenate the hundred or thousand, for example **one hundred and twenty-one**.

Parentheses

See **brackets**

Quotations

Do 'use single quotation marks', said the style guide.

You can also use single quotation marks to express incredulity, for example:

■ five banks offer this so-called 'low-interest loan' to older customers

Don't use double quotation marks except for quotes within quotes, for example:

Keith said 'My holiday was not as "relaxing" as the brochure claimed'.

Do not put quotes into italics.

For quoted material that is two or more paragraphs long, a single quotation mark should open each new paragraph, but you put a closing quote mark only at the end of the final paragraph.

References/bibliographies

Different types of writing will require different reference styles. Your department will probably have its own guidelines based on the needs of the readership, in which case refer to these, but here are some basic rules:

If your text has only a few references you can write them out in full, in brackets, in the body of your text.

If there are more than about six, use the numbered reference system, giving them consecutive numbers in superscript³ and either putting them as footnotes or endnotes. Endnotes can be at the end of a section or chapter, or at the end of the whole work.

References/bibliographies should be alphabetical by author and should be consistent in order/style/punctuation.

The ideal order follows

1. Author's name if there is one (first initial then surname)
2. Title and sub-title
 - For books: initial capital then lower case; colon before subtitle, subtitle takes initial capital and then lower case. All in italics.
 - For journal articles and book chapters: the article/chapter with initial capital then lower case; colon before subtitle, subtitle takes initial capital and lower case; in single quote marks. Follow with the name of the journal or book in italics.
 - For factsheets, leaflets and information sheets: initial capital then lower case; colon before subtitle, subtitle takes initial capital and then lower case. All in italics.

Then, for factsheets, leaflets and information sheets

3. The organisation that produced them
4. The date of publication

For books and journals

5. Publisher
6. The volume and/or issue number (for journals/periodicals)
7. Place of publication
8. Date of publication (for journals/periodicals)
9. Year of publication
10. Chapter and/or page numbers (both only if necessary)

For example:

E Aldridge, *How to be a silver surfer: A beginner's guide to the internet*, Age Concern (2006), chapter 5, pages 35–44.

S Constantine, T Woodall, 'Top 20 wardrobe malfunctions', *What not to wear*, Orion (2005).

² Like so.

Spaces

As with all other punctuation marks, there should be **one** space – **not two** – between a full stop and the beginning of the next word.

Spelling

English, not American. See **foreign words**, and also the **spelling and capitalisation** guide at the end of this document. Otherwise refer to the latest edition of the Concise Oxford Dictionary.

Times

See also **dates**

Use **am** and **pm** without full points or spaces, for example:

- 8am, 10.45–11am, 10am–6pm, the office closes at 5.30pm

In text, indicate the time in words, for example **six o'clock**.

Titles

See also **headings** and **newspapers**

Use an initial capital for the first word of the title and an initial capital for the first word of the subtitle, but the rest lower case (except where capitals are required, see **capitals**). For example:

- *Your rights: A guide to money benefits for older people*, Sally West
- *Older home owners: Financial help with repairs and adaptations (factsheet 13)*
- *Public involvement and the Commission for Equality and Human Rights*, Clare Collins

URLs (website addresses)

Lower case unless capitals are specified.

Omit the http://

Don't specify 'Website' when it's obvious.

Who/whom

When you are unsure of whether to use who/whom in a sentence, you should follow this rule:

If you can rephrase the sentence replacing who/whom with he, she or they then use who

If you can rephrase the sentence replacing who/whom with him, her or them then use whom

For instance:

Janet was told off for hitting John whom she despised (Janet was told off for hitting John; she despised him)

Janet hit John, who she thought was an idiot (Janet hit John; she thought he was an idiot)

Part 3: Spelling and capitalisation guide

acknowledgement	county court
Act of parliament/the Education Act 1980, section 23	Department of Health
adviser (not advisor)	dependant (used as a noun; she had five dependants)
affect (verb: meaning make a difference to, as in <i>the changes will affect everyone</i> ; also a noun in psychology and psychiatry); see also <i>effect</i>	dependent (used as an adjective; he was dependent on his wife)
African-Caribbean (not Afro-Caribbean)	director general
ageing, ageist and ageism	disabled person or people (never the disabled)
all right (not alright)	district/local health authorities (in general, but Plymouth District Health Authority)
among (not amongst)	dropdown menu
anti-ageing	e-business/e-commerce
analyse	effect (used both as a noun meaning a result (<i>a knock-on effect</i>) and as a verb meaning bring about a result, as in <i>she effected a cost-cutting exercise</i>); see also <i>affect</i>
anybody	email
any more (not anymore)	euro (for currency)
anywhere	enquire/enquiry (not inquire/inquiry)
authoritative (not authoritative)	European Commission (EC)
autumn	European parliament
biased	factsheet (no capital)
Bill (parliamentary)	fewer (to refer to quantifiable amounts, eg people, companies); see also <i>less</i>
bisexual	focused
boroughs (in general, but Wandsworth Borough Council)	forever
broadband	freephone
CD-ROM (small caps)	fulfilment and fulfil but fulfilling
citizens advice bureau(x) (but Westminster Citizens Advice Bureau)	government
code of practice (for instance, the banking code of practice)	granddaughter and granddad (no hyphen)
computer disk (not disc)	great-granddaughter and great-great-granddaughter
Commission for Equality and Human Rights	grand-niece and grand-nephew
cooperate	grandparent
coordinate	grassroots (one word)
councils (in general, but Devon County Council)	green paper
councillors (in general, but Councillor Stevenson)	Heyday

High Court	online
high street	onto (but <i>she went on to say . . .</i>)
high-flying	organise (not organize)
highlight	outpatient
home-grown	parliament
home-made	patient's charter
homeowner	per cent
hospital trust (in general, but Clapham Hospital Trust)	percentage
House of Commons	policy-maker
housing association (in general, but Clapham Housing Association)	practice (noun, best practice)
HTML (not html)	practise (verb, practise the ukulele)
information sheet (no capitals)	Prime Minister's office
instalments	printout
internet	private member's Bill
judgement (but a judge's judgment)	program (computer)
less (to refer to uncountable things like time, freedom) see also <i>fewer</i>	programme (TV, radio, measure/activities with long-term aim)
licence (a permit, eg TV licence)	sae (not SAE)
license (authorise)	Second World War (not World War II)
local education authority (in general, but South Yorkshire Education Authority)	siphon (not syphon)
local authority	spring
long-term care	stopgap
managing director	summer
marketplace	taskforce
a means test (but a means-tested benefit)	taxpayer
minority ethnic elder	think-tank
multimillion	transsexual
nationwide	under way (not underway)
net (abbreviation of internet)	until
nobody	URL (not url)
none (is singular, eg <i>none of the businesses we approached is prepared to comment</i>)	USA
no one	usability
offence	website
OK (not okay)	well-being
ombudsmen (but Insurance Ombudsman Bureau)	while (not whilst)
ongoing	white paper
one-sided	widespread
	winter
	workplace
	web and website and webpage
	world wide web
	x-ray
	24-hour

Part 4: Laying out documents in Word

The following general rules apply.

1. Minimum 11 point for headings and body copy.
2. Use Helvetica Light for body copy.
3. Use Helvetica Medium for headings and don't underline them.
4. Don't bold headings or other copy – use Helvetica Medium for emphasis.
5. Run headings in upper and lower – not caps.
6. Use a single space after a full point. Not like this.
7. All copy should be left aligned, not justified.
8. All page numbering should be set in Helvetica Light.
9. Report dates should read 10 December 2007, not 10th December 2007.
10. Bullets should be set as a hanging indent. See example below:
 - Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Sed commodo tempus odio. Maecenas at ante. Suspendisse interdum leo in felis. In vel erat at lectus pretium pellentesque.