

## Keeping up appearances – some basics of style

Whatever style decisions you make, be consistent. Style decisions are easier to remember if they are based on logic.

Element	Style decisions
Capitals	<p>Use minimal capitalisation.</p> <p>Use initial capitals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>proper nouns and full formal titles of people and organisations Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade King Charles III President Biden</li> <li>geographic terms (e.g. country and city names)</li> <li>scientific terms in some fields (e.g. genus names, soil types).</li> </ul> <p>Don't use initial capitals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>informal names or plurals the department kings and queens of England</li> <li>professions obstetrician electrician</li> <li>expressions whose shortened forms consist of capitals genetically modified organism (GMO) chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).</li> </ul>
Hyphens	<p>Use minimal hyphenation.</p> <p>Prefixes: set solid wherever possible:</p> <p>antenatal postmortem nongovernment subspecies semipermanent coordinate</p> <p>Exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'self' words self-evident self-reported</li> <li>words starting with a capital anti-Australian</li> <li>unfamiliar or awkward double vowels anti-inflammatory</li> <li>where meaning could be confused re-cover versus recover</li> <li>shortened forms non-CNS anti-myc</li> </ul> <p>Suffixes: set solid wherever possible:</p> <p>fourfold worldwide airborne</p>
Hyphenation rules	<p>For many compound adjectives, a hyphen is required when the compound is used immediately before the noun it modifies but not when used after the noun:</p> <p>the long-term estimates but estimates for the long term</p> <p>high-risk enterprises but enterprises that are high risk</p> <p>Do not hyphenate compound verbs, but set the compound solid when used as a noun or an adjective:</p> <p>we will back up the system but the backup will run this afternoon</p> <p>the water will run off to the south but the runoff water is polluted</p> <p>For further hyphenation rules, see our quick guide 'Compound adjectives – to hyphenate or not to hyphenate'.</p>

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En and em dashes	<p>En dash (Ctrl+- on numeric keypad; or Alt+0150 on numeric keypad) indicates conjunction. Use for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>number ranges 12–15 km (also see ‘Numbers’ on the next page)</li> <li>linked terms that are of equal ‘weight’ Neuman–Keul test Australia–Japan relations public–private partnership</li> <li>minus sign –20 °C</li> </ul> <p>Either an en dash or an em dash (Ctrl+Alt+- on numeric keypad; or Alt+0151 on numeric keypad) can be used to set off information in text. The most common forms are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spaced en dash Two main rivers – the Darling and Murrumbidgee – were surveyed</li> <li>unspaced em dash Two main rivers—the Darling and Murrumbidgee—were surveyed</li> </ul> <p>The spaced en dash is increasingly recommended, because it causes fewer problems when text is viewed on screen.</p>
Spelling	<p>Where the dictionary gives alternatives, the first given is the one used most commonly: focused, focussed</p> <p>Australian Government departments commonly use the <i>Macquarie dictionary</i>.</p> <p>International journals in English generally use either American or British spelling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merriam-Webster (American) – <a href="http://www.merriam-webster.com">www.merriam-webster.com</a></li> <li>Oxford English (British) – <a href="http://www.oed.com">www.oed.com</a>.</li> </ul>
Abbreviations, initialisms and acronyms	<p>General rule: define at first use in the abstract (or summary) and main part of the document; for longer publications, define at first use in each chapter.</p> <p>Generally require no punctuation: Australian Bureau of Statistics – ABS</p> <p>Exceptions include abbreviated genus names: <i>S. aureus</i></p> <p>Use shortened forms only if the term is used more than a few times.</p>
i.e. and e.g.	<p>Only use in parentheses and in tables. Spell out in running text: (i.e. mice) but that is, mice (e.g. mice) but for example, mice</p> <p>Do not use a comma after: (e.g. mice) not (e.g., mice)</p> <p>Use a nonbreaking space between the <i>e.g.</i> or <i>i.e.</i> and the following text so that they stay together and don’t split over a line.</p>

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<p><b>Numbers</b></p>	<p>Use numerals rather than words in all cases, especially if writing for the web, except for 'one' when it is acting as an indefinite article:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">There is one main reason we do this</p> <p>Alternatively, write out one to nine, and use numerals for 10 or higher.</p> <p>Use commas in numbers with more than 3 digits: 2,000</p> <p>Use numerals for quantities expressed with units or as percentages:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">8 km 200 g 4 days 5%</p> <p>Always spell out numbers at the start of a sentence or recast the sentence:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Forty-three businesses were invited to participate</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">We invited 43 businesses to participate</p> <p>Indicating ranges:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">between 1999 and 2004 from 12 to 18 months</p> <p>not</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">between 1999–2004 from 12–18 months</p>
<p><b>Units</b></p>	<p>In technical publications, there is generally no need to define units at first use.</p> <p>In publications for a general audience, define at first use.</p> <p>Always use numerals for abbreviated units:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">5 mm or 5 millimetres not five millimetres not five mm</p> <p>Spell out units at the start of a sentence or recast the sentence:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Ten millilitres of the sample was ... A sample of 10 mL was ... [The unit is treated as singular whether or not it is abbreviated]</p> <p>Place a nonbreaking space between the number and the unit:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">10 mm not 10mm</p>
<p><b>Bullet point lists</b></p>	<p>If the bullet points follow on from the lead-in sentence, use lower case for the first word of each point and punctuate only with a stop at the end of the list.</p> <p>If the bullet points are whole sentences, change the lead-in sentence to a whole sentence (ended with a colon), and start each point with a capital letter and end each with a full stop.</p>