Global Affairs Canada

Style guide

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Introduction

This style guide is aimed at all departmental employees who write material that Global Affairs Canada will publish or put online. It briefly covers elements of style and usage, such as spelling and abbreviations, from the specific point of view of departmental requirements and conventions. It is not intended to be comprehensive and it does not deal with grammar issues. For detailed information on English style and usage, please refer to the publications and websites listed in **Section 12, "Resource list."**

The purpose of this guide is to establish consistent standards for publications. However, it must be acknowledged that no guideline will cover every situation. Context is everything.

This guide will be expanded and updated as needed. We welcome your suggestions.

The English and French editors can be reached by email at **Editing.revision@international.gc.ca**.

Please note that the English and **French style guide**s are not equivalent.

Effective writing: keep it simple!

Generations of English teachers and authors of books on how to write effectively have told us to omit unnecessary words and avoid jargon. Yet readers are drowning in unneeded words and superfluous abbreviations. They are often bored and confused by what they read. The challenge: a lack of plain language.

Effective writing is not cluttered: it is clear and concise. It cannot be misunderstood. It does not use 2 words when 1 will do.

Use simple sentence construction. Sentences should not be longer than 3 lines; paragraphs should deal with just 1 topic. One trick is to say each sentence aloud to yourself. This will reveal possible ambiguities or weak constructions. If you can say it easily, the reader will be able to grasp your meaning easily.

The purpose of your document is to convey information to a target audience. Decide what audience you want to reach. The appropriate style will depend on the nature of that audience. For example, if your document will be read only within the department or the government, you can probably get away with using some technical terms and abbreviations. But if your document is for the general public, you will have to make more of an effort to use plain language (see **Section 9, "Plain language"**).

Reminder: All federal government publications must be produced in both official languages.

1 Departmental style conventions

1.1 Department name

Applied title

In accordance with the Treasury Board's **Federal Identity Program registry of applied titles**, the department's applied title must be used in all communications with the public.

Applied title: Global Affairs Canada (French: Affaires mondiales Canada)

Abbreviation

Write out the department's applied title (Global Affairs Canada) upon first mention. If the title is used again in the text, establish the abbreviation in parentheses with the first mention, for example, "Global Affairs Canada (GAC) today issued the following statement," then use the abbreviation "GAC" or "the department" for subsequent references.

Legal title

A legal title is the one used in enabling legislation, orders-in-council, diplomatic notes and other legal documents, such as treaties, leases or contracts.

Legal title: Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (French: ministère des Affaires étrangères, du Commerce et du Développement)

For more information on applied and legal titles, consult the **Federal Identity Program registry of applied titles**.

Departmental streams

In external communications, avoid referring to the department's 3 streams (Foreign Affairs, Development and International Trade) as separate entities. Internally, it is acceptable to make an informal reference to, for example, the "International Trade section" or "those responsible for foreign affairs." However, keep such usage to a minimum to reduce the chance of spillover into the public domain.

Department name over time

Over the years, the department's name has changed several times. When referring to the department in the past, use the name it had at that particular time:

Until June 27, 1989
Department of External Affairs (French: ministère des Affaires extérieures)

From June 28, 1989, to May 12, 1995
External Affairs and International Trade Canada (Affaires extérieures et Commerce extérieur Canada)

From May 13, 1995, to December 11, 2003
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Commerce international)

From December 12, 2003, to February 5, 2006
Legal title: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Commerce international)

Applied titles: Foreign Affairs Canada (Affaires étrangères Canada)
International Trade Canada (Commerce international Canada)

From February 6, 2006, to June 26, 2013
Legal title: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Commerce international)

Applied title: Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (Affaires étrangères et Commerce international Canada)

From June 27, 2013, to November 3, 2015
Legal title: Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (ministère des Affaires étrangères, du Commerce et du Développement)

Applied title: Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (Affaires étrangères, Commerce et Développement Canada)

Note: The 2013 name change reflects the department's amalgamation with the Canadian International Development Agency (abbreviation: CIDA).

Since November 4, 2015*
Legal title: Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (ministère des Affaires étrangères, du Commerce et du Développement)

Applied title: Global Affairs Canada (Affaires mondiales Canada)

*The department put the new applied title into practice on November 5; regulatory confirmation followed on December 7.

1.2 Departmental ministers, parliamentary secretaries and deputy ministers

For Global Affairs Canada ministers and parliamentary secretaries, consult **Organizational structure: Global Affairs Canada**. For deputy ministers, consult **Our deputy ministers**.

1.3 Missions, departmental units and staff

Mission names

Do not replace "Canada" with the adjective "Canadian" in the official name of a mission. For example, use "the Embassy of Canada to Poland" and "the High Commission of Canada in Australia," **not** "the Canadian Embassy to Poland" and "the Canadian High Commission in Australia."

The adjective "Canadian" may be used in subsequent references within a text.

Example:

The Embassy of Canada to France represents Canadian interests in France within the economic, commercial and cultural sectors. The Canadian embassy also offers the full range of consular services.

Exception: "Canadian Trade Office in [city]." ("Canadian" is part of the official name.)

Example:

Canadian Trade Office in Kolkata

High commissions and high commissioners: precede the country name with the preposition "in" (not "to").

Example:

Canada's High Commission in New Zealand; Canada's High Commissioner in Cameroon

Note: Use the common name of the country as listed in the department's publication Countries, Official Names, Inhabitants and Capitals, and Notes on Other Geopolitical Entities.

Types of Canadian offices abroad

Type of office	Location, services	Example	Erroneous usage
Embassy	Located in the capital city of another country. Provides a full range of services. Note: A "chancery" is the physical office	the Embassy of Canada to Norway	the Canadian Embassy in Norway; the Embassy of Canada to

Type of office	Location, services	Example	Erroneous usage
	that houses a diplomatic mission; "embassy" may refer to either the physical office or to the mission itself. Beware of creating reader confusion: "chancery" has other meanings in other countries.		Oslo; the Embassy of Canada, Oslo
High commission	Located in the capital city of a Commonwealth country. Provides a full range of services. Note: Like embassies, high commissions are housed in chanceries (see above).	the High Commission of Canada in Jamaica	the Canadian High Commission to Jamaica
Permanent mission	Located in a city where a major international organization is headquartered. Only the Canadian permanent mission in Geneva provides consular services.	the Permanent Mission of Canada to the International Civil Aviation Organization	the Canadian Permanent Mission to the International Civil Aviation Organization
Consulate general	Located in a major city that is not the country's capital. Most consulates general provide a full range of services.	the Consulate General of Canada in Detroit	the Consulate General of Canada to Detroit; the Consulate General of Canada, Detroit
Consulate	Similar to a consulate general, but not all consulates offer a full range of services.	the Consulate of Canada in Chongqing	the Consulate of Canada to Chongqing; the Consulate of Canada, Chongqing
Consular agency	Located in a non-capital city. Provides limited consular services.	the Consular Agency of Canada in Acapulco	the Canadian Consular Agency in Acapulco; the Consular Agency of Canada to Acapulco
Consulate headed by an honorary consul	Located in either a capital city or non-capital city. Most provide only consular services.	the Consulate of Canada in Asunción	the Canadian Honorary Consulate in Asunción; the Consulate of Canada to Asunción; the Honorary Consulate of Canada in Asunción
Office	Located in either a capital city or non-capital city. Generally, offices are established for specific missions—for example, supporting Canada's foreign aid program—and offer only limited consular services. Designated either "Office of the Embassy" or "Office of the High Commission," depending on the supervising mission.	Office of the Embassy of Canada to Slovakia in Bratislava	Office of the Canadian Embassy to Slovakia in Bratislava; Office of the Embassy in Bratislava
Trade office	Located in cities around the world, generally within one of the other types of mission abroad, such as an embassy or consulate. The trade network also includes regional offices in Canada. Provides services to Canadian businesses.	Canadian Trade Office, Kolkata	the Trade Office of Canada in Kolkata

Diplomatic and consular staff

Designations follow for staff in embassies, high commissions and permanent missions. Note that not all missions have representatives of every rank.

Title	Definition
Ambassador or high commissioner	The senior diplomat at an embassy, high commission or permanent mission; appointed by the governor-in-council. A permanent mission may have 2 ambassadors: the permanent representative and the deputy permanent representative. The full titles differ in format: it is "ambassador **of** Canada **to** [country]," but "high commissioner **for** Canada **in** [country]." Occasionally, the designation "ambassador" is used for special purposes, such as "ambassador for the environment." Special ambassadors are based in Ottawa and travel to fulfill their responsibilities.
Chargé d'affaires en pied (e.p.)	A diplomat, accredited by letter to a country's minister of foreign affairs, who acts in lieu of a resident ambassador or high commissioner accredited to the head of state or government. Use "chargé," not "chargée," when the officer is a woman.
Chargé d'affaires ad interim (a.i.) or acting high commissioner	A diplomat in temporary charge of an embassy during the absence of the ambassador or in the interval between the departure of an ambassador and the arrival of a successor. At high commissions, this officer is called an acting high commissioner. As noted above, use "chargé," not "chargée," when the officer is a woman.
Minister	Second rank of diplomat in an embassy, high commission or permanent mission.
Minister-counsellor	Third rank.
Counsellor	Fourth rank.
First, second and third secretaries	Fifth, sixth and seventh rank.
Attaché	Person who performs specialized functions in support of an embassy, high commission or permanent mission—for example, a military liaison or technical worker.
Consul general, consul, vice-consul	In embassies, high commissions or permanent missions, consular designations are used only in conjunction with those above. They denote staff who provide consular services. Consuls general are appointed by the governor-in-council.

Designations for staff and other representatives of Canada working in consulates general, consulates and consular agencies

Title	Definition
Consul general	First rank of consular officer; appointed by Governor-in-Council.
Consul	Second rank.
Vice-consul	Middle-ranking officer.
Honorary consul	A special representative. Like ambassadors and high commissioners, honorary consuls are appointed by the governor-in-council; unlike them, they are non-staff appointments.

Except for consulates headed by honorary consuls, most offices have both Canada-based and locally engaged staff. Assistants to honorary consuls are employed directly by the honorary consuls, not by the department.

1.4 Administrative divisions

The following are the department's administrative units, from largest to smallest, and their French equivalents.

English	French
Branch	Secteur

English	French
Bureau	Direction générale
Division	Direction

Referring to staff and administrative units in external documents

In external documents, refer to Global Affairs Canada "staff" or "employees." Staff are all employed by the department, so do not differentiate among Trade, Foreign Affairs or Development "staff" or "employees." In internal documents, it is acceptable to make the distinction.

Avoid using departmental symbols (for example, MXICO, LDCE) in external documents. Use "Global Affairs Canada" instead or a well-known program of the department, such as the "Canadian Trade Commissioner Service." In internal documents, you may use symbols but you must introduce them in parentheses upon first mention.

Example:

Embassy of Canada to Mexico (MXICO)

1.5 Official room names

The official names of the main meeting rooms at 125 Sussex Drive, Ottawa, are:

Example:

Cadieux Auditorium (French: Auditorium Cadieux)

Robertson Room (Salle Robertson)

Skelton Lobby (Salon Skelton)

Rendez-Vous Room (Salle Rendez-vous)

1.6 Styles of address and dignitaries

To determine if someone is, or was ever, a member of the Privy Council, and therefore retains "the Honourable" before their name, see the **Queen's Privy Council for Canada**.

To determine how to address dignitaries, such as the Royal Family or federal, provincial, territorial, foreign or religious dignitaries, see **Styles of Address**.

2 Spelling and special treatment of words

2.1 Spelling authority

The spelling authority for the department's English texts is the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary,* Second Edition. Follow the dictionary spelling even if it leads to inconsistencies in the text.

Example:

The World Food Programme delivers food assistance programs in emergencies.

Where a dictionary shows more than 1 spelling for a word, select the first entry. See **Section 2.2, "Departmental spelling preferences"** for exceptions.

Consistency in spelling requires careful attention. If your publication is long and contains many specialized terms, it may be useful to prepare a list of recurring words and terms for quick reference.

If you enable the spell-check feature on your word-processing program, you can add new terms or amend default entries according to departmental style. It is also useful to set the spell-check feature (in Microsoft Word 2016, under Review > Language > Set Proofing Language) to "English (Canada)."

2.2 Departmental spelling preferences

Canadian spelling is a hybrid of British and U.S. spelling patterns. In general, it is departmental practice to use

- "-our" not "-or" in words such as "labour," "honour," "neighbour"
- "-re" not "-er" in words such as "centre," "fibre"
- "-t" not "-tt" in words such as "benefited," "targeted" (but note "combatted")
- "-ll" not "-l" in words such as "travelled," "signalled," "equalled" (but note "unparalleled")

The choice of spelling style for a particular publication is often determined by the type of publication, the intended audience and the subject matter.

The words listed here are current departmental recommendations that may differ from the spellings given in the dictionary:

acknowledgment (not acknowledgement)
addendum, addenda
adviser (not advisor)
aging (not ageing)
allies (only capitalize if referring to the Allies during the world wars)
al Qaeda
al-Shabaab
analyses (plural noun); analyzes (verb)
anemia (not anaemia)
anti-personnel mines (not anti-personnel landmines)
anti-terrorism
appendix, appendices
Bahá'í
behaviour (not behavior)
benefited (not benefitted)
BlackBerry
bureau, bureaus
businessman, businesswoman, business person
capacity building (no hyphen unless used as adjective)

ceasefire
centre (not center, except when official name differs)
Chornobyl
city of Québec (the place), City of Québec (the political entity); Québec for either; never Quebec City for either
clean technology, cleantech
colloquium, colloquia
combatted (not combated)
consortium, consortia
cooperation (not co-operation, except when official name differs; use hyphen in the abbreviation "co-op" when referring to a cooperative business or store)
coordinate (not co-ordinate)
counterterrorism
Daesh (use this designation only, not Islamic State or any of its variants or abbreviations, such as ISIS or ISIL)
data bank
database
decision making (no hyphen unless used as adjective)
defence (not defense, except when official name differs)
demine
diaspora (can apply to any group of people); Diaspora (applies only to Jewish community)
email
encyclopedia (not encyclopaedia)
erratum, errata
fibre (not fiber)
focuses (noun and verb)
follow-up (noun); to follow up (verb)

formula, formulas
forum, forums (not fora)
fuelled (not fueled)
fulfill (not fulfil, fullfil), fulfilment (not fulfillment)
G7, G8, G20 (not G-7, G-8, G-20)
Governor General
health care
home page
honorary (not honourary)
honour (not honor)

honourable (not honorable)
inquire, inquiry (not enquire, enquiry)
install, instalment
instill (not instil)
Internet (not internet)
intranet
Islamic State of Iraq and Syria / the Levant (ISIS/ISIL) (avoid; see "Daesh")
judgment (not judgement)
labour (not labor)
La Francophonie (not la Francophonie) - in English only
landmine
licence (noun); license (verb)
livestream (noun, verb)
long-standing (adjective)
manoeuvre

memorandums (not memoranda)
neighbour (not neighbor)
ombudsman (ombudsmen) regardless of gender
online
organization (not organisation)
peacebuilding
peacekeeping
percent (not per cent; % symbol preferred)
practice (noun); practise (verb)
pre-eminent
program (not programme, except when official name differs)
PSOPs (Peace and Stabilization Operations Program)
Q&A, Q&As (no spaces)
Qadhafi
Quebec City (avoid; see "City of Québec")
Quebec (province)
Qur'an (not Quran or Koran)
R&D (no spaces)
recognize (not recognise)
road map
round table (not roundtable, except when official name differs; hyphenate when used as an adjective preceding a noun—for example, round-table discussion)
skeptical (not sceptical)
signalled (not signaled)
small and medium-sized companies/enterprises
socio-economic (not socioeconomic)

state party, states parties
symposiums (not symposia)
targeted (not targetted)
totalled (not totaled)
toward (not towards)
travelled (not traveled)
under way (not underway)
member states
Vice-President, Vice-Consul
web (short form of proper name)
web page
website
Wi-Fi
workforce

Note: Usage may differ with the intended audience. For an advertisement in a U.S. newspaper, for example, using U.S. spellings such as "neighbor" may be appropriate.

Use "a" (not "an") before an unstressed "h": a historic agreement.

2.3 Geographic names

Authority

For a bilingual list of countries, inhabitants and capital cities, see the department's publication Countries, Official Names, Inhabitants and Capitals, and Notes on Other Geopolitical Entities.

Official versus common names of countries

Generally, the common name (for example, Cambodia) is used in place of the official name (Kingdom of Cambodia).

The official name must be used in formal or diplomatic correspondence.

Canadian place names

The Geographical Names Board of Canada, an agency of Natural Resources Canada, develops standard policies for geographical naming in Canada. It maintains a searchable **geographical name database**.

Most, but not all, French place names in Canada retain their French spellings—for example, in English, the province "Quebec" has no accent (the city, "Québec," retains it). Check the geographical names database to be sure.

2.4 Organization names

Use the official name of an organization the first time the organization is mentioned. If there are subsequent references to that organization, you may include the official abbreviation (for example, DFO or DND) in parentheses immediately following the first reference and thereafter use the abbreviation only.

If no official name of the organization exists in English, include an unofficial translation in square brackets; however, do not use capital letters, with the exception of proper names, within the translation. The translation may be followed by the original language abbreviation in parentheses. (See **Section 2.8, "Abbreviations."**)

Government departments and agencies

The names of government departments and agencies change from time to time, so be sure to verify that the names you use are current. Canadian federal government entities have both legal titles and applied titles. In most cases, use the applied title in departmental publications.

For more information on using these titles and a complete listing in both English and French, visit Treasury Board's **Federal Identity Program registry of applied titles**.

International organizations

For U.S. institutions, use their U.S. spelling.

Example:

U.S. Department of Defense

For organizations and agreements where Canada is an equal partner, use the Canadian name and spelling.

Example:

Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement

North American Aerospace Defence Command

For all other international organizations, use the spelling on the organization's official website.

Example:

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Translating organization names

Apply the following rules to the translation of organization names, such as those of international agencies and non-governmental organizations.

- Use the official English name of the organization, if one exists. If the organization has an official abbreviation in its parent language but not in English, use the official abbreviation.

Example:

International Potato Center (CIP)

- If the organization does not have an official name in English, give the official name capitalized according to GAC style and followed, in square brackets, by the translated version of the name in lower case.

Example:

Asociación Colombiana de Universidades [association of Colombian universities]

- For an abbreviation in the above case, use the official one in the original language and introduce it on first reference (see also **Section 2.8, "Abbreviations"**).

Example:

Asociación Colombiana de Universidades [association of Colombian universities] (ACU)

- For names of Canadian universities, use English only, even if they do not have an official English name. Abbreviations follow the English version.

Example:

Montréal Polytechnic (French: Polytechnique Montréal)

HEC Montréal (HEC Montréal)

Laval University (Université Laval)

- Give names of foreign governments, departments and job titles in English only. Translate the name when no official English translation is given.

Example:

The Minister met with Taro Kono, Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

2.5 Personal names

Do not anglicize the spelling of non-English names. For names that have to be transliterated—for example, those in Russian and Arabic—check whether the person has a preferred English spelling. For foreign government officials, you can do this by checking to see whether the official government website has an English translation.

2.6 Accents

Use the native accents in the names of people, places and institutions outside Canada. This applies to familiar accents, such as those found in French and Spanish, as well as to unfamiliar ones.

Example:

Córdoba
São Paulo
Beata Szydło

Foreign words and phrases that have been absorbed into English usually lose their accents in the process, but check the dictionary to be sure. For example, "vis-à-vis" retains the accent.

Most French place names in Canada, such as Montréal, retain their accents in English texts, but there are some exceptions. For example, Quebec, the province, takes no accent, but Québec, the city, does. Use "city of Québec" to refer to the place and "City of Québec" to refer to the administration. Do not use "Québec City" or "Quebec City."

2.7 Capitalization

Use capitalization sparingly; words with upper case (capital) letters are harder to read than lower case ones. The main uses of capital letters include:

- indicating professional titles
- setting off the first words of sentences
- distinguishing proper nouns and adjectives from common ones
- setting headings off from body text

Proper nouns

Capitalize proper nouns and their derivatives. (If in doubt, check the dictionary.)

Example:

Japan, Japanese
Darwin, Darwinian

Note: Some words derived from proper nouns have, through usage, become part of the common language and are no longer capitalized. (If in doubt, check the dictionary.)

Example:

petri dish
pasteurize

Words that are relatively new to the language can have a lot of flux in their capitalization. Check **Section 2.2, "Departmental spelling preferences"** first; if the word isn't there, check the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, Second Edition.

Trade names

Rephrase text to remove trade names (for example, use "photocopier" rather than "Xerox"), but if a trade name must be used, ensure that the capitalization is correct. Also, avoid unnecessary use of symbols (such as ® and ™).

Example:

We saved the file using InDesign.

Titles of publications, legislation and works of art

Capitalize the first and last word of a title, as well as all other words except articles (examples: the, a, an), conjunctions of 3 letters or fewer (and, so) and prepositions of 3 letters or fewer (in, to).

Capitalize the first word of a subtitle.

Example:

The Converging Roles of Arms Control Verification, Confidence-Building Measures, and Peace Operations: Opportunities for Harmonization and Synergies (Italicize titles of books, and retain the original spelling and punctuation.)

"The End Is Near: A Look at What to Do" (Put titles of articles in quotation marks.)

Hyphenated compounds

Always capitalize the first element of a hyphenated compound in a title. Capitalize subsequent elements unless they are articles, prepositions or coordinating conjunctions.

Example:

High-Income Earners
Spanish-Speaking People
Medium-Sized Enterprises
Self-Sustaining Reactions
World-Class Capability
Under-the-Table Transactions (article)
A Run-in with Authorities (preposition)
Mom-and-Pop Stores (coordinating conjunction)

Words with prefixes

However, second elements attached by hyphens to prefixes are not capitalized unless they are proper nouns or proper adjectives.

Example:

Non-tariff Barriers
Anti-intellectual Pursuits
Strategies for Re-establishment
Post-Keynesian Economics (proper adjective)

Non-Christian Religions (proper adjective)
Trans-Pacific Partnership (proper adjective)

Do not capitalize the second part of an unhyphenated (single word) compound even if the second element is a proper noun.

Example:

Transatlantic Flights

Headings and subheadings

Capitalize only the first word and any proper nouns. (For material published **only** in print, follow ***The Canadian Style; "Capitalization"*** by default but allow flexibility for design considerations.)

Titles of office or rank

Capitalize a professional title that:

- immediately precedes the person's name and is not modified by an adjective

Example:

Prime Minister Potter and President Fox left.
Former prime minister Potter left.

Note: Avoid incorrect comma use.

Example:

Prime Minister, Beatrix Potter, left.

- precedes or follows the person's name and is set off by commas before and after the title

Example:

James Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister, walked up the stairs.
The Assistant Deputy Minister, James Smith, walked up the stairs.

- stands in for a person's name

Example:

The Assistant Deputy Minister walked up the stairs.
They discussed the matter with the Chief, Public Affairs Section.

Do not capitalize a term that refers to a role rather than to a person.

Example:

As prime minister [that is, while occupying the position], Lester B. Pearson introduced the new Canadian flag.
The deputy director [any person who occupies that position] assigns work.
In 1995, she served as high commissioner.
In his capacity as ambassador, he hosted a dinner for government leaders.

Do not capitalize professional titles in the plural, those preceded by an indefinite article or those modified by an adjective.

Example:

the deputy ministers
ministers Smith and Garneau
G7 foreign ministers
heads of mission
a member of Parliament

a parliamentary secretary
the former ambassador
former prime minister Robert Borden

Private or government organizations

Capitalize the complete and formal designations of governments, government departments and agencies (including their organizational subdivisions at all levels—branches, divisions, directorates and others), boards and committees and "the Crown" when it means the supreme governing authority. Except in legal writing, capitalize subsequent references to "the department," "the agency," "the branch" only to avoid confusion.

Example:

the Government of Canada, but the Canadian government, the federal government, the government
the Public Service Commission (the commission)
the Public Affairs Branch (the branch)

Write short forms in lower case when used in a non-specific sense, when preceded by an adjective or when used in an adjectival form.

Example:

We have formed a committee to study the matter.
The administration is negotiating an agreement with Russia.
This division has 60 employees.
Our section is preparing a toolbox.
The departmental representative arrived late.
The new act came into effect last Thursday.
The board of directors approved the funds for the expansion.

Do not capitalize the plural forms of such words as government, department and division.

Example:

Representatives of the governments of Canada and the United States attended.

Use all capital letters for the specific part of military operation names.

Example:

Operation PROVISION

Capitalize headquarters, republic, province and the like, when referring to them as governments or administrative units. Make them lower case when referring to them as locations.

Example:

The new requirements were set out by Headquarters.

After her 2-year posting, she will have an office on the second floor at headquarters.

The Province of Alberta is considering raising taxes.

The province of British Columbia is known for its ski hills.

He will make the presentation to Cabinet.

Commonly used terms

When referring to a meeting or panel, use lower case unless you are using a proper name.

Example:

The G7 Summit will be held on Tuesday. The summit went off without a hitch.

The Panel on EC Measures Concerning Meat and Meat Products issued its final report. The WTO convened a panel to hear Canada's complaint on the EU's ban on seal products.

The Tribunal on Place of Arbitration will decide where to hear the arguments. The tribunal ruled in favour of the United States.

Geographic names and areas

Capitalize generic geographic names (for example, "river") that are part of a proper name.

Example:

the Ottawa River
the Canadian Shield
the Rocky Mountains

Capitalize generic terms if they are used in a corporate or legal sense.

Example:

The city of Windsor is located in Ontario, but *Hargrave v. the City of Windsor*

Capitalize geographic terms when using them specifically but not when using them generically as adjectives.

Example:

the Arctic, Arctic policy, but arctic boot
the Prairie provinces, Prairie wheat farmers, but prairie wildflowers

Compass directions

Capitalize compass directions only when the term is used to denote a discrete geographic area or a political bloc.

Example:

southern Asia, but South Asia (that is, the Indian subcontinent)
eastern Africa, but East Africa
the western United States, but the West
northern hemisphere, southern hemisphere
He briefly abandoned Western dress and wore a sarong.
I travelled south for 3 days.

Letters used as words

Capitalize single letters used as words.

Example:

H-bomb, X-ray

2.8 Abbreviations

Definitions

An abbreviation is a short form of a word or phrase made by leaving out some of the letters or by using only the first letter(s) of each word. Abbreviations include both acronyms and initialisms, as well as other short forms, such as Mr., Ltd. and St.

An acronym is a pronounceable word, such as NAFTA, NATO or UNCTAD, formed from the first letter or letters of a series of words.

An initialism, which is formed the same way, is not pronounceable as a word; examples are RCMP, OECD and PCO.

Use

Spell out the term in full the first time it appears in the body of the text and place the short form in parentheses directly after—if it will be used again. If the document is long and uses many acronyms or initialisms, consider repeating the full term (and short form in parentheses) at the beginning of each chapter or section, or including an appendix listing them all.

In headlines or document titles, use either the full term or, if it is better known, the abbreviation. Do not use both.

If the first instance of the full term is plural, add a lower case "s" to the end of the abbreviation within parentheses. If the abbreviation is subsequently used in the singular, drop the "s."

Example:

Chief information officers (CIOs) from 3 businesses will attend the conference. The Ottawa-based CIO will give the keynote address.

If the first instance of the full term is a possessive, add " 's " to the end of the abbreviation within parentheses. If subsequent uses of the abbreviation don't indicate possession, drop the " 's."

Example:

The National Hockey League's (NHL's) history is a rich one.

(For abbreviations of federal government department names, consult **Section 2.4, "Organization names."**)

Well-known abbreviations

Some abbreviations are more familiar than their spelled-out versions. In these cases, use the abbreviation only. Abbreviations that may be used without definition include:

AIDS
APEC
CBC
CTV
EU
G7
G20
GDP
HIV
IMF
NAFTA

NATO
NGO

NORAD
PCBs
R&D
RCMP
UN
UNESCO
UNICEF
WTO

Standard abbreviations (for example, am, pm, DNA, TV) and certain short forms of words (flu, lab, memo, phone, photo) may also be used without being spelled out first.

Use the abbreviations "e.g." and "i.e." only in tables and figures; otherwise, use their plain-language equivalents ("for example" or "such as" for the former, "that is" for the latter).

Avoid abbreviating Feminist International Assistance Policy.

Notes:

- Don't burden your text with abbreviations. Always keep the intended audience in mind.
- Try not to use abbreviations in headings or subheadings, and never use them in a heading or subheading unless they have already been spelled out in full.

LGBTQ2+ community

"LGBTQ2+" is the preferred initialism as it is all-inclusive: it represents people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit and all other groups. Note that the initialism "LGBTQI" (the "I" meaning "intersex") is commonly used in multilateral settings and other contexts outside of Canada, while "LGBTQ2" or "LGBTQ2+" is more commonly used in Canada.

For more information, see the Government of Canada's **LGBTQ2 Secretariat**.

Periods in abbreviations

Use a period

- For abbreviations of a person's given name

Example:

J.P. Jones (no space between initials)

- For Latin abbreviations

Example:

i.e. (id est)
e.g. (exempli gratia)
et al. (et alia)

Note: Use "i.e." and "e.g." only in tables and figures. In other use, replace them with, respectively, "that is" and "for example" (and take care to avoid confusing their meanings). Don't place a comma after them.

Example:

Shakespeare's wife, i.e. Anne Hathaway
Shakespeare and predecessors, e.g. Marlowe

- For geographic names (except for the 2-character symbols that Canada Post recommends for postal addresses)

Example:

B.C.
P.E.I.
U.K.
U.S.

The U.S. dollar is the legal tender of the United States.

- For titles, orders and decorations

Example:

Mr., Ms., Dr.
Rt. Hon.
Gen., Lt.-Gen., Maj., Lieut.

- Do not use abbreviations of military ranks if only the surname is given: Gen. Lewis MacKenzie but General MacKenzie.
- Even in correspondence, Rt. Hon., Hon. and Rev. must be preceded by the word "the."
- For women, use the honorific "Ms." unless the woman referred to has indicated a preference for something else, such as "Mrs." or "Miss."
- Use the honorific "Dr." only for holders of a medical degree. Refer to holders of doctorate degrees as "Mr." or "Ms." In some instances, such as in correspondence, it is appropriate to add "PhD" after the person's name—for example, John Smith.
- Make sure a title does not get separated from a name, and a first name is not split from a last name, by using a hard space between them (Ctrl + Shift + space bar in Microsoft Word).
- Use only 1 period if a sentence ends in an abbreviation that takes a period.

Do not use a period

- For non-geographic acronyms or initialisms, such as NAFTA, EU and UN.
- With international codes, such as metric, or country designations that have been published by the International Organization for Standardization.
- With abbreviations of compass directions, except with street addresses (NNW but Laurier St. E.).
- With abbreviations of degrees—for example, BSc, MBA, PhD, LLB.

Abbreviations with "the" and "a/an"

When an abbreviation is preceded by an indefinite article ("a" or "an"), apply these rules:

- If it is an acronym—that is, it is pronounced as a word (for example, MAC for Mutual Aid Committee)—use the article appropriate to the whole word (a MAC).
- If it is an initialism—that is, it is not pronounced as a word (for example, SME for small and medium-sized enterprise)—use the article appropriate to the first initial (an SME).

The definite article ("the") normally does not precede an acronym, but does precede an initialism.

Example:

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is headquartered in Jakarta; ASEAN has expanded its membership.
The CBC underwent reorganization.
NAFTA came into effect on...

Some organizations—for example, Export Development Canada (EDC)—do not use the definite article with their name's abbreviation. Consult an organization's website to determine its preference.

Example:

EDC has approved the funding for this project.

Abbreviations of offices, such as the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the Privy Council Office (PCO), generally do not take the definite article.

Example:

PCO organized the conference.
We received authorization from PMO.

Do not use the definite article with Global Affairs Canada's divisional symbols or codes for missions:

Example:

We consulted ISBAD on the project.
BNATO contacted Headquarters with details of the recent meeting.

If in doubt about the need for a definite article, check with the office in question to see what its usage practices are.

To see branch organizational charts with symbols, consult **Organizational charts by branch**. You may also search for symbols by using the Advanced Search option in TeamInfo. For recommended use of symbols and spelling, refer to **Section 1.4, "Administrative divisions."**

Miscellaneous points

Government of Canada

The abbreviation for the Government of Canada, GC, is the same in both English and French.

Example:

The GC will introduce the new legislation.
Le GC présentera la nouvelle loi.

Time of day

Omit the periods in "am" and "pm." For some publications, it may be desirable to convert to a 24-hour clock: the hour and the minute (and, if needed, the second) are represented by a 2-digit number, and a colon is used as a separator.

Example:

5:01 pm
17:01:21

Time zones

Use abbreviations of time zones (capital letters without periods) only with specific times. Otherwise, write them in full. Drop "daylight" and "standard" from time zone names.

Example:

4:30 pm ET (not EDT/EST)
Pacific Time (not Pacific Daylight/Standard Time)

Canada has the following 6 time zones.

Example:

Newfoundland and Labrador Time (NT)
Atlantic Time (AT)
Eastern Time (ET)
Central Time (CT)
Mountain Time (MT)
Pacific Time (PT)

Months and days

Write these in full in headings and body text. They may be abbreviated in tables.

Note: May, June and July are never abbreviated.

Eras

Abbreviations are used only when preceded or followed by the year.

Example:

AD (Anno Domini)
BC (Before Christ)
AH (Anno Hegirae or anno Hebraico)

Note: AD and AH precede the year number; BC follows it.

Example:

Octavian was born in 63 BC and died in AD 14.

Number symbol

When abbreviating the words "number" or "numbers," use "No." or "Nos." but not the symbol #.

Ampersand

This symbol (&) should be used only when it is part of a corporate name, when space is limited in a table or in certain well-known abbreviations. In abbreviations, leave no space on either side of the symbol.

Example:

The case is being defended by Smith, Jones & Brown.
The 2 countries signed an R&D agreement yesterday.
The Minister asked us to prepare some Q&A on that issue.

Note: Q&A can be either plural or singular, depending on the context. The example above abbreviates "questions and answers," but the abbreviation can also stand for a set of questions and answers. In the latter case, the plural adds an "s".

Example:

The Minister asked us to prepare 2 Q&As: 1 on the earthquake and another on the plane crash.

Units of measure

Units of measure should be abbreviated only if they appear with a number. Use the International System of Units (SI units).
(See also **Section 4.2, "Units."**)

Example:

Kingston is about 150 km from Ottawa.
Their weight allowance was 5,000 kg.

2.9 Compound words

A compound may be written as a single word (no hyphen), as 2 words with a hyphen or as 2 words without a hyphen, depending on custom and usage. The trend in spelling compound words is shifting away from using hyphens (for example, peacebuilding), but it is never wrong to retain a hyphen to avoid a misleading or confusing form.

Paired words used adjectivally before a noun are often hyphenated to avoid confusion.

Example:

A free-form sculpture stood on the terrace.
But: The sculpture on the terrace was free form.

Adverbs ending in "-ly" are not hyphenated.

Example:

This is a clearly written sentence.

Note: "Locally engaged staff" takes a hyphen only in citations of Treasury Board regulations.

The subject of when to hyphenate compound words is particularly contentious. It takes up more than 10 pages in The Canadian Style, to which the interested reader is referred (see **Section 12, "Resource list"**).

3 Punctuation pointers

This section is not intended to be a primer on punctuation. Rather, it provides brief information on a few items that are sometimes treated inconsistently. If you would like more detailed information on punctuation, please consult The Canadian Style, 1 of the guides listed in **Section 12, "Resource list."**

3.1 Period

Use only 1 space between sentences and after a colon.

Use only 1 period if a sentence ends in an abbreviation that takes a period.

3.2 Comma

Use a comma to set off the year in full dates and to set off a place name from the name of a larger place name in the body of a sentence.

Example:

The agreement of January 30, 2001, will hold for many years.
He left for Harare, Zimbabwe, the next day.

In a list, do not use a comma before "and" (a serial comma) unless omitting it might create confusion—for example, when 1 or more of the items also includes an "and" or "or."

Example:

The most important election issues are taxation, patronage and government spending.

The most important election issues are taxation, patronage, research and development, and government spending.

Use a comma between complete clauses when the second clause begins with 1 of these 6 conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet. (A complete clause is one that could stand on its own as a sentence; keep in mind that you can begin a sentence with these conjunctions, despite some claims to the opposite.)

Example:

The 2 countries are hereditary enemies, but their actions show they are ready for peace.

Never let a comma separate a subject from its verb.

Example:

Consular Services offers advice to travellers and provides a range of products on its website.

Not: Consular Services offers advice to travellers, and provides a range of products on its website.

3.3 Colon

Use a colon to introduce a list, a quotation that begins on the next line, a line of dialogue or text that illustrates or enlarges upon what has already been said.

Example:

Three countries had "no comment": Germany, France and Spain.

Question: How much support is Canada providing?

Nothing was standing in her way: all she had to do was make up her mind to leave.

Colons also introduce bulleted or numbered lists (see **Section 6.6, "Vertical lists"**).

3.4 Semicolon

Use a semicolon to separate 2 or more closely linked complete sentences not joined by a comma-plus-coordinating-conjunction combination.

A semicolon used this way could be replaced by a period; using the semicolon emphasizes the close relationship between the thoughts.

Example:

She filled her office with plants; the rubber tree was her favourite.

You can also use a semicolon to separate items in a list when some of those items have internal commas. In such a list, always insert a final semicolon before the "and" that introduces the last item.

Example:

His objectives were to assess the political context; to assist in early recovery, reconstruction and long-term development efforts; and to reiterate our commitment to strengthened bilateral relations.

3.5 Exclamation mark

The exclamation mark is used after a command or an expression of strong feeling. It is rarely used in departmental publications other than in a direct quotation.

3.6 Question mark

Use a question mark after all direct questions and after each indirect question in a series of indirect questions.

Example:

The questions I needed answered were: Who would write *Canadian Representatives Abroad*? Who would edit it? Who would produce it? And who would use it?

Do not use a question mark after a single indirect question.

Example:

The question I needed answered was who would write *Canadian Representatives Abroad*.

3.7 Quotation marks

Departmental style is to place:

- commas and periods inside quotation marks
- semicolons and colons outside quotation marks
- question marks, exclamation points and dashes inside the quotation marks when they are part of the quotation

Use single quotation marks in titles and subheads.

Example:

Chamberlain to crowd: 'Peace in our time'

Note: Quotation marks and apostrophes come in 2 forms: straight and curly (or "smart"). Whenever possible, use curly quotes. Whichever form you use, be consistent.

Within a text, enclose the title of an article, a part or chapter of a book, a poem, an individual episode of a television program or a song with quotation marks. Do not enclose slogans, names of ad campaigns, or themes or names of conferences or meetings with quotation marks (they are capitalized).

Example:

"Lucy Goes to the Hospital" is the most-watched *I Love Lucy* episode.

This year's conference, Diplomacy in Developing Countries, will be held in Chad.

Enclose a coined term, colloquialism, new technical term or an old term used in an unusual context with quotation marks; also set off words or letters that would be ambiguous without quotation marks. However, try not to pepper your text with a lot of unnecessary quotation marks.

Example:

Please place an "x" by the answer you believe is correct.

Use single quotation marks to enclose quoted material "nested" within another quotation.

Example:

The strategist said, "The article 'In Praise of Diplomats' had its facts right."

3.8 Apostrophe

The apostrophe shows:

- possession (replacing the preposition "of" used with a noun or any word acting as a noun)
- omission of letters in a word or phrase (for example, the contraction "can't")

Possessives

Use apostrophe-plus-"s" to indicate possession in words that do not end in "s."

Example:

An entire year's work was wasted.
John and Mary's cottage is magnificent.
The children's smiles made it worthwhile.

For singular words that end in a sibilant (s or z sound), pronunciation is the key to usage. If it sounds natural to pronounce the extra "s", use " 's "; if not, use just the apostrophe.

Example:

The boss's memos were pasted on the wall.
Brussels' edicts were ignored.
Charles's toys were scattered about the floor.

Insert the apostrophe after the "s" in plural words.

Example:

The farmers' suspicions about the equipment disintegrated.

Note: The possessive form of "it" is "its." Do not use " 's " to indicate the possessive of "it." "It's" is the contraction of "it is."

Example:

The Trade Commissioner Service is planning its next outreach program. It's due to be launched in the fall.

Do not use an apostrophe before the "s" in plural abbreviations or decades.

Example:

NGOs, 1990s

3.9 Ellipsis points

An ellipsis is a series of 3 dots (...) used to indicate omission of 1 or more words in a quoted passage (see also **Section 6.5, "Quotations"**).

Capitalize the first word of a sentence, even if you have replaced its original beginning with an ellipsis.

Add a space, but no final period, if the omission comes at the end of a sentence. Otherwise, add no spaces before, between or after an ellipsis.

Use another punctuation mark with an ellipsis only if it helps the sense.

Example:

...Trade and immigration remained the main reasons for most Canadian diplomatic activity in...the 19th century... Trade was given even greater prominence with the creation of the Department of Trade and Commerce in 1892.

- from **Punching Above Our Weight**

Example:

At other times, for instance in the 1950s..., other concerns took precedence.

3.10 Parentheses and brackets

Parentheses

Use parentheses to enclose explanations that are structurally independent of the sentence (parentheses show greater independence of the expression than commas or dashes).

Use parentheses to enclose labels for enumerations. However, avoid this format if possible by using words such as "first," "second" and so on.

Example:

If a person is caught bringing a durian into a hotel, the authorities take 3 steps: (1) fine the offender; (2) confiscate the fruit; and (3) sneak away to devour the flavourful, but offensive-smelling, item.

If a person is caught bringing a durian into a hotel, the authorities take 3 steps: first, fine the offender; second, confiscate the fruit; and third, sneak away...

Note: In a vertical list, the opening parenthesis is not used:

Example:

1)   fine the offender
2)   confiscate the fruit
3)   sneak away

A frequent question with parentheses is how to use other punctuation with them. Unless the information enclosed in parentheses is a complete sentence (with a capital first letter and a period before the closing parenthesis), there should never be a mark of punctuation before the opening parenthesis. Whatever mark of punctuation is required by the text preceding the parenthetical expression is placed after the closing parenthesis. (Look closely at this paragraph for examples of this rule being applied.)

Do not use parentheses inside a parenthetical expression; use an em dash or square brackets.

Brackets

Brackets [ ] are used sparingly in departmental publications.

Use brackets to indicate parenthetical information within a parenthetical expression.

Example:

During a lengthy visit to Argentina, Roberts and an assistant (James Smith, who was later to publish his own monograph on a South American country [Brazil]) spent weeks...

Brackets also indicate an editorial comment or explanation within a quotation.

Example:

But Masters said, "The population of Kong Hong [*sic*] has doubled in 10 years."

Robert Borden [Prime Minister of Canada from October 10, 1911, to July 10, 1920] was called to the Nova Scotia Bar in August 1878.

"We will continue working through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] to stabilize the country."

3.11 Hyphens and dashes

Three lengths of dash are common, and each has a different function:

- hyphen (-)
- en dash (–)
- em dash (—)

Do not use en dashes in online text.

Example:

Leave no space between a dash or hyphen and a word or number.

The Secretary General—herself a former diplomat—welcomed the representatives.

sweet-and-sour sauce

a $3-million investment

In Microsoft Word, em dashes are found under Insert > Symbol > More Symbols > Special Characters > Em Dash.

Use a hyphen

- In certain compound words, such as the noun "cover-up"
- To indicate that 2 or more words are being used as a single term to describe or modify another word; the exception is when the first word is an adverb ending in "-ly," for example, locally engaged staff. (See **Section 2.9, "Compound words."**)

Instead of a hyphen, use 'to'

- Use the word "to," rather than a hyphen, to indicate a range.

Example:

$4,000 to $10,000, fiscal year 2019 to 2020, pages 22 to 25

Use an em dash

- To indicate an abrupt change in the flow of a sentence or thought.

Example:

Will he—can he—obtain the required approvals?

- To separate less important information from a sentence's main thought.

Example:

But inclusion of such a paragraph—which became Article 7 when the agreement was in draft form—was not supported by the EU.

Note: Leave no space before or after the em dash.

3.12 Solidus (oblique or slash)

The solidus (oblique or slash) is used in certain abbreviations.

Example:

A/Director (Acting Director)

A solidus may indicate alternatives, especially in forms or tables.

Example:

province/state
The procedures will be changed in Canada and/or the United States.

If you need to use "and/or," use it only between 2 alternatives where the meaning "A or B or both" will be obvious. In longer series, "and/or" is likely to be vague or unnecessary.

When 1 or both of the terms the solidus separates have more than 1 word, add a space on either side of the solidus.

Example:

prime ministerial / presidential

4 Numbers, units, dates and money

4.1 Numbers

Note: Despite the general rule below, and only in media products of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, spell out numbers 1 (one) through 10 (ten).

General rule

Use digits for numbers, except in proper names, titles and figurative expressions and at the beginning of sentences.

Example:

4 countries; 125 representatives; items 1 through 10
First National Bank; *The Four Seasons*; one of these days
Twenty days ago, they came back from their trip.

Note: Spell out numbers that begin sentences, but rework the sentence if you can. Joining 2 sentences with a semicolon is sometimes all that's needed.

Example:

They came back from their trip 20 days ago.
They left in 2 groups; 15 took the train, 22 the bus.

Ordinal numbers

Spell out ordinal numbers "ninth" and under.

Example:

first, third; seventh; 10th; 31st; 32nd; 33rd; 34th

Notes:

- Do not use superscript—that is, raised font—in ordinal numbers: use 110th, not 110th.
- Do not use "st," "th" or "nd" in dates.

Numbers above 999

In most writing, use commas in all numbers of 4 digits or more—34,000 rather than 34 000. Use the space in tables, if required, to maintain alignment.

Large numbers

Substitute a word for the zeros in large numbers, but keep the first numeral.

Example:

$6 million
2.5 billion people

When referring to a range, it may be necessary to use some repetition for clarity.

Example:

$6 billion to $15 billion, not $6 to $15 billion

Percentages

Use the percent symbol (%) rather than spelling out "percent." Always use a digit for the number, even if it is under 10 (except at the beginning of a sentence). Do not put a space between the number and the symbol.

Example:

3%; 30.5%
but: Three percent of the candidates passed.

Miscellaneous points on numbers

Fractions

Hyphenate fractions when they are used as adjectives but not when they are used as nouns.

Example:

Smith won by a two-thirds majority. Two thirds voted for Smith.

Numbers with "-fold"

Numbers with "-fold" are solid with the base word (no hyphen), except those over 9.

Example:

threefold; ninefold; 10-fold; 25-fold

Solidus (/)

Use either the solidus or the word "per" in expressions of rates and proportions.

Example:

Departmental staff work 37.5 hours/week.

But do not use a solidus twice in the same expression.

Example:

3.5 kg/person per year, not 3.5 kg/person/year

And do not use a solidus with expressions of rates and proportions written out in full.

Example:

a hundred kilometres per hour, not a hundred kilometres/hour

4.2 Units

Use metric or SI (International System of Units) units for measurements. Replace any imperial measurements with SI units.

Either write out the number and unit in full or use symbols; do not combine the 2 forms.

Example:

2 m or 2 metres, not two m

Note: There is no "s" in abbreviated plurals—write 10 km, not 10 kms.

When no amounts are stated, write the unit name in full.

Example:

How many kilometres is it to the border?

Exception

It is acceptable to use imperial measurements when writing about certain economic sectors, such as real estate, where these measurements are still the standard or when referring to official programs of other governments.

4.3 Dates

(See also "Months and days" in **Section 2.8, "Abbreviations"** for style of abbreviations.)

Write the month and day (number), followed by a comma and then the year. If the name of the day is included, follow it with a comma. No comma is used if just the month and year are cited.

Example:

March 13, 2015
Tuesday, March 13, 2015
March 2015

When using the month-day-year form in a sentence, follow the year with a comma.

Example:

The January 12, 2010, earthquake caused major damage in Port-au-Prince.

Years

Use "to" to separate years in a range.

Example:

2019 to 2021

Fiscal years should be identified as such:

Example:

fiscal year 2020 to 2021
in the 2020 to 2021 fiscal year

When referring to a decade in numerical form, do not put an apostrophe between the last digit and the "s." If you spell out the decade, do not capitalize it unless you are using it as a proper name.

Example:

the 1920s **not** the 1920's
the twenties **but** the Roaring Twenties

4.4 Money

Sums of money are usually expressed in digits, except where they refer to round or indefinite amounts or are being used in a legal document.

In departmental texts, references to money should be in Canadian currency, and, as a rule, do not need to be identified as such. When it is necessary to differentiate, write:

Example:

Can$20 for Canadian dollars
US$20 for U.S. dollars
A$20 for Australian dollars
£20 for British pounds
¥20 for Japanese yen
€20 for euros

Do not put a space between the number and the symbol: $20, not $ 20.

Note: You can make sure a number does not get separated from the word it modifies by using a non-breaking space (Ctrl + Shift + space bar in Microsoft Word) between them.

5 Addresses, and telephone and fax numbers

For information on hyperlinking website and email addresses, see **Section 11.1, "Hyperlinks, tables, headings and font formatting."**

5.1 Addresses in text

In the text of a publication, the form used for a person's or institution's address should be appropriate to the reader's needs.

If the reader is never likely to want to contact the person, something similar to the following would be appropriate.

Example:

John Smith, a former departmental employee in Canada, suggested...
Katherine Kealey of Ottawa was known to...

If the full address of the person mentioned in the text is needed because they may be contacted by the reader, it should be given in parentheses.

Example:

Frank Carman of DND (Box XXX, Station X, Ottawa, Ontario KXX XXX) proposes...

In lists and directories, use the following order: name, title, organization, room or suite or floor, building, street address, post office box and station, city, province (state), postal code and country (international)

Note: For mailing addresses within Canada, Canada Post prefers the municipality, province and postal code to be on 1 line, with 2 spaces between the provincial abbreviation and postal code.

Canadian audience

Example:

John Brown
Publisher
Fantastic Publications Ltd.
Suite 306, East Tower
Grimsby Building
555 Commercial Avenue
PO Box 3333, Station A
Somewhere ON M2L 1H0

International audience

Example:

John Brown
Publisher
Fantastic Publications Ltd.
Suite 306, East Tower
Grimsby Building
555 Commercial Avenue
PO Box 3333, Station A
Somewhere ON M2L 1H0
Canada

For more information, see Canada Post's **Addressing Guidelines**.

Canada Post abbreviations are used only in mailing addresses. Use traditional abbreviations for all other purposes. The following names are usually written in full in the text, but may be abbreviated when they follow the name of a city, town or geographic feature.

	Canada Post	Traditional
Alberta	AB	Alta.
British Columbia	BC	B.C.
Manitoba	MB	Man.
New Brunswick	NB	N.B.
Newfoundland and Labrador	NL	Nfld.
Northwest Territories	NT	N.W.T.
Nova Scotia	NS	N.S.
Nunavut	NU	Nun.
Ontario	ON	Ont.

	Canada Post	Traditional
Prince Edward Island	PE	P.E.I.
Quebec	QC	Que.
Saskatchewan	SK	Sask.
Yukon Territory	YT	Y.T.

5.2 Departmental address

The address of headquarters is:

Example:

Global Affairs Canada
Lester B. Pearson Building
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa ON K1A 0G2

5.3 Telephone and fax numbers

Calling Canadian numbers within Canada

Complete information must be provided, including the area code. The area code should be joined with a hyphen to the rest of the number. Do not enclose the area code within parentheses.

Example:

613-555-5555
1-800-555-5555
1-877-TERMIUM

Calling Canadian numbers from abroad

Canadian numbers provided to an international audience do not take hyphens and are preceded by +1, where the + represents the international prefix (varies depending on the country from which the call is made) and the number 1 is Canada's country code, which must be added when calling Canada from abroad.

Example:

+1 613 555 5555

Calling international numbers from Canada or abroad

International numbers to be called from Canada or abroad are preceded by +, followed by the relevant country code.

Example:

United Kingdom: +44 20 1234 5678
Azerbaijan: +994 12 345 6789

Use the above examples as a guide to adding spaces to international numbers. Generally, there is a space after the country code (see above, +44); further spaces and number grouping vary by country, but typically there will be a space after the area code (20) and after the exchange (1234). Do not use hyphens or parentheses with an international phone number. A complete list of **country codes** is available from the International Telecommunication Union.

6 Fonts and formats

6.1 Italics

How to use italics

Minimize the use of italics. Standard uses include the following.

- Names of acts, legislation and charters; titles of long works, such as books, long poems, reports, films, plays and television and radio programs (but not individual episodes); periodicals; newspapers; and works of art

Note: Titles of articles, parts of a book, short stories, poems, songs and individual episodes of radio and television programs are set in roman (regular) type and enclosed in quotation marks.

- Most foreign words and phrases, but not the names of organizations and not commonly used words of foreign origin; examples:

Italic
ancien régime
bête noire
de minimis
inter alia
lèse-majesté
sic

Roman
ad hoc
ad interim
a priori
attaché
chargé d'affaires
communiqué
de facto
vis-à-vis

Note: When in doubt, consult the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, Second Edition.

- For names of ships, trains, aircraft and spacecraft—but not the abbreviations preceding them, such as CCGS, HMCS or SS.

Example:

The CCGS *Terry Fox* will depart next Thursday.
HMCS *Iroquois* and HMCS *Halifax* will rendezvous in the strait.

Note: Do not put "the" in front of HMCS or HMS, for reasons that are obvious when the abbreviation is written out: (the) Her Majesty's Canadian Ship *Victoria*.

- Use boldface type to give a word or expression emphasis; however, use it sparingly. For **print-only** material, use bold or italics for emphasis.

Do not use italics

Do not use italics in the following situations:

- for emphasis (use bold sparingly instead)
- for proper names
- for the names of legislative bills (that is, not yet passed by the legislature)
- for the titles of episodes of radio and television programs, short stories, songs, articles, poems or parts of a book: these are set off by quotation marks
- for slogans, titles of ad campaigns, themes or names of conferences or meetings (they are capitalized)
- for memorandums of understanding, letters of intent, joint declarations, agreements, treaties or government programs
- for design or decorative purposes
- for long passages of text, such as quotations
- for web page titles

6.2 Bold

Reserve bold type for headings and for text requiring particular emphasis. It may also be used to draw the reader's eye to important telephone numbers or web addresses. But be careful about using boldface for emphasis: overuse will defeat the purpose.

6.3 Superscript and subscript

Use superscript for:

- footnote references in text and tables
- units of area and volume (cm^2, m^3)

Use subscript for:

- short forms of chemical elements, compounds and formulas (CO_2)

Don't use superscript in ordinal numbers: use 10th, not 10th; 32nd, not 32nd; 51st, not 51st.

6.4 Footnotes and endnotes

Departmental style

Generally, use as few footnotes or endnotes as possible. If the material is important enough to be mentioned, it may belong within the text.

Often footnotes are set in a smaller point size than the main text.

Notes to text

Numbering

Footnotes or endnotes to the text are numbered consecutively throughout the document or chapter with superscript Arabic numerals.

Position

Place the note number outside any adjacent punctuation (except a dash).

Example:

- This footnote number is correctly positioned.[1]
- He said, "This footnote number is correctly positioned."[2]
- The footnote number is placed before a dash[3]—but after other types of punctuation.[4]

If there are many notes (for example, in a historical overview), the use of endnotes rather than footnotes may contribute to a cleaner-looking document. See **Section 8.1, "Notes,"** for more detailed information regarding footnotes.

Footnotes to tables

Numbering

Footnotes in numerical tables are denoted by superscript lower case letters. Sources for tables appear with the footnotes (consult **Section 7, "Figures and tables"**).

Position

Position table footnotes directly below the table. The elements below the table are ordered as follows: source, general notes and notes on specific parts of the table.

6.5 Quotations

Quotations from another source must be reproduced accurately. Where possible, the original should be checked. Spelling, italics and punctuation must follow the original exactly, even where these do not follow departmental style.

Any inaccuracies in direct quotations must be retained but may be identified as being in the original by using *sic* in square brackets or by suggesting a correction in brackets.

Example:

Masters said, "The population of Kong Hong [*sic*] has doubled in 10 years."

A better alternative might be to convey the same information through indirect or reported speech so that the error may be corrected.

Example:

Masters reported that the population of Hong Kong had doubled in 10 years.

Any deviation from the original must be shown by ellipsis points (...) for omissions and square brackets (not parentheses) for insertions.

Example:

During the meeting, he [the Deputy Minister] requested that division heads submit their policy recommendations.

If text before or after the quotation leads into or follows on from the quotation, no punctuation is needed.

Example:

The editorial policy states that "if text before or after the quotation leads into or follows on from the quotation, no punctuation is needed."

Colons, commas or even periods may, however, be used to lead into a quotation. Punctuation is usually used where the transition is abrupt.

Omissions from quotations

Use ellipsis points (...) to indicate an omission of 1 or more words. Do not use ellipses at the beginnings of quotations if you have indicated the omission of words by some other means, such as using a lower case letter to

begin the quoted material.

Example:

According to Jane Doe, the sales representative didn't "know a word-processing package from a spreadsheet."

In this example, the content of the sentence (as well as the use of the lower case "k") lets the reader know that the speaker said more than was actually quoted.

6.6 Vertical lists (bulleted and numbered)

Listing points by using bullets, numbers or letters (that is, in a vertical list) makes each point stand out. Use numbers or letters to suggest a ranking or a chronological order; otherwise, use bullets.

If the introduction is a complete sentence and the bullet points are complete sentences, begin each point with a capital letter but omit end-of-line punctuation.

Example:

The instructions were clear:

1. Choose a topic
2. Write the essay
3. Give the essay to the teacher

If the introduction and the bullet points are phrases, begin each point with a lower-case letter and omit end-of-line punctuation.

Example:

The instructions were to:

- choose a topic
- write the essay
- give the essay to the teacher

Points must be parallel in structure. The example below is parallel because each item begins with "to" and is a phrase rather than a complete sentence. The list would not have been parallel if, for instance, the last item began with "highlighting."

Example:

Capital—that is, upper-case—letters have 3 main uses:

- to give emphasis, as in official titles and initial words
- to distinguish proper nouns and adjectives from common ones
- to highlight words in publication titles

7 Figures and tables

Although some material might usefully be presented in either a table or figure, one or the other is often a better choice: is the intention to give exact values (use a table) or to show trends (use a chart)?

7.1 Figures

Numbering

Use consecutive Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3 and so on) throughout the text. If there are numerous figures, for example in an appendix, these may be numbered using a system that combines the letter designating the appendix and an Arabic numeral: Figure A1, Table A2.

Styles

There are several types of figures, including statistical figures (pie charts, bar charts, scatter diagrams and line charts), organization charts, flow charts and maps. Some data can be expressed in several forms; choose the one that is most suitable.

- **Pie**—Pie charts show proportional relationships. Keep the number of slices to a minimum because the larger the number, the harder it is to compare the slices.
- **Bar**—Bar charts show trends or compare quantities. The bars can contain a number of different elements distinguished by shading or colour. It is possible to stack elements within bars or to have several bars for each item. The bars represent discontinuous items (for example, the provinces of Canada).
- **Scatter**—Scatter diagrams show all data points plotted on x-y axes to show trends or patterns. Various elements can be distinguished by using different graphic shapes for the points.
- **Line**—Line charts show variation in 1 dimension over variation in another. Both dimensions must be continuous (for example, growth in height over age).
- **Organization**—Organization charts show the hierarchy in an organization or project. Elements are arranged so that relationships become apparent.
- **Flow**—Flow charts are diagrams representing an algorithm or process. They are similar to organization charts in that they are a series of boxes that have relationships to one another.
- **Maps**—All maps should have a north arrow and a scale. Scales should be in bar form so that they will change with the scale of the drawing during reduction or enlargement.

Maps are often problematic. If any of the borders are in doubt, add a disclaimer, such as:

Example:

The boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the department.

7.2 Tables

Tables should be able to stand alone from the text. Therefore, any abbreviations should be common ones or be explained in a note.

Numbering

Use consecutive Arabic numerals throughout the text (Table 1, Table 2 and so on).

Footnotes, notes and sources

Table footnotes are indicated by superscript, lower case letters (for example, 2001[a]); they should be consecutive from top left to bottom right. Table footnotes are often set in a smaller point size than the table itself.

They are used to give explanations of material in the title or body of the table.

A general comment may be designated as a "Note." If there are many abbreviations, they are often best collected as 1 note rather than footnoting each separately.

Position table footnotes directly below the table. The elements below the table are ordered as follows: source, general notes and notes on specific parts of the table.

Missing entries

Missing entries are indicated in various ways:

- "n/r" and "n/a"—for "not recorded" and "not available" or "not applicable" (define the abbreviation in a footnote)
- "0" for "zero values"
- a dash for "unknown" or where the other options are unsuitable

Leading zeros

For numbers less than 1, precede the decimal point with a zero.

Example:

0.217
0.324
6.600

3.214
12.622
0.300

8 Notes and bibliographies

Notes and bibliographies tend to be used sparingly in departmental publications, and only a brief introduction to the subject is presented here. However, ethics and copyright laws require you as an author to identify your sources, especially if you are quoting directly. For detailed recommendations, please refer to the style guides listed in **Section 12, "Resource list."**

8.1 Notes

Notes present explanatory or supplementary material or identify the source of a quotation, fact or concept. They can be positioned as footnotes or endnotes. If only a few notes are needed and the material is concise, choose the footnote format. Endnotes are the better choice when the material is longer; they can be placed at the end of each chapter or at the end of the document. Lengthy material should be incorporated into the text or placed in an appendix at the end.

Footnotes or endnotes to the text are numbered consecutively throughout the document or chapter with superscript Arabic numerals. The note number should be outside any adjacent punctuation (except a dash).

Example:

This footnote number is correctly positioned.[1]
He said, "This footnote number is correctly positioned."[2]
The footnote number is placed before a dash[3]—but after other types of punctuation.[4]

Another way to present notes that identify the source of a quotation or concept is the author-date system. In this method, the author's last name and the date of publication of the work in question are both enclosed in parentheses within the text. The full details of publication are then listed in the bibliography.

Example:

According to one scholar (Galbraith 2012), raising the minimum wage would go a long way toward getting people to spend.

Ensure that it is clear what, specifically, the note is referencing.

A footnote or endnote must provide enough information to enable the reader to find the source document. It is the author's responsibility to ensure that the information is accurate and complete.

If the work cited is a book, include:

- full names of the author or authors (first name, last name)
- complete title
- editor, compiler or translator, if applicable
- name of series, if applicable
- number of volumes, if applicable

- city of publication
- publisher
- date of publication
- volume number, if applicable
- page number(s) of citation

Example:

Paul Heinbecker, *Getting Back in the Game: A Foreign Policy Playbook for Canada* (Toronto: Key Porter Books), 2010, pp. 15-19.

If the work cited is an article in a periodical, include:

- full names of the author or authors (first name, last name)
- title of article
- name of periodical (do not abbreviate journal names)
- volume and number
- date of volume or issue
- page number(s) of citation

Example:

"A 'Sense of Purpose' in Troubled Places," *Our World,* Issue 16 (Winter 2012), p. 16.

8.2 Bibliographies

A bibliography usually appears at the end of the book, report or other document.

A bibliography may list all the works consulted during preparation of the text, as well as others you feel the reader will find useful, or it may be limited to works actually cited in the text. A bibliography may also be annotated with comments concerning the scope or usefulness of the publication listed.

In most cases, a straightforward alphabetical listing by authors' last names is sufficient.

Example:

Craik, Kristin. "Canadian Auto Manufacturing Breakdown." *Business Review Canada*, 28 3 (February 2012): 60-71.

Pearson, Lester B. *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson.* Vol. 3, *1957-1968.* Edited by John A. Munro and Alex I. Inglis. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1975.

When the author-date system of references has been used in the text, the bibliography must list the date of publication immediately after the author's name.

Example:

Pearson, Lester B. 1975. *Mike: The Memoirs*...

When citing websites, include as much information as you can about the author and title, and ensure that the web address you provide works.

Example:

Clay, R. (2008, June). Science vs. ideology: Psychologists fight back about the misuse of research. *Monitor on Psychology*, 39(6). Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/monitor/2008/06/ideology.aspx

Brody, J.E. (2007, December 11). Mental reserves keep brain agile. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/11/health/11brod.html?n=Top%2FNews%2FScience%2FTopics%2FMemory&_r=0

9 Plain language

The Government of Canada's communications policy calls for clear, objective and simple communications with the public. Such communications use straightforward, familiar vocabulary. The table below gives a few examples of

plain language.

Instead of…	Use…
a large number of	many
a majority of	most
at the present time, at this point in time	now or today
bring to a conclusion	conclude
conduct an investigation	investigate
due to the fact that, for the reason that	because
despite the fact that	although
few in number	few
give authorization	authorize
give consideration to	consider
in a position to	can
in order to	to
in the absence of	without
in the event that	if
it would appear that	apparently
last of all	last
prior to	before
until such time as	until

Plain language is also about organizing your ideas and structuring your sentences to convey your message effectively. Explain complex ideas. Avoid long strings of adjectives and nouns piled on top of one another. For example, "long-term departmental expenditure review statement" could be reworded as "statement on a review of the department's long-term expenditures." It takes more words, but the meaning is clearer.

9.1 Inclusive writing practices

Using the singular "they" is a good solution for gender-neutral language. It can function as a third-person singular indefinite pronoun meaning "he or she" (for example, "anyone can come if they want to"). It is particularly useful when the gender of the person is unspecified, unknown or non-binary. Similarly, "their" can replace "his," "her" or "his or her," and "themselves" can replace "himself," "herself" or "himself or herself" (for example, "Did anyone hurt themselves in the accident?") (Source: *Canadian Oxford Dictionary,* Second Edition).

10 Frequently confused pairs of words

This is a small sample of words that are often confused. When in doubt, look it up!

alternate(ly), alternative(ly)

Alternate means "by turn."

Alternative means "in a way that offers a choice."

among, between

Divide something between 2 people or among 3 or more. Often, however, between is the correct word to express the relation of 1 thing to several others.

Although between expresses a relation of 1 thing to another, it may also be used to express a relation of 1 thing to many surrounding things, both individually and severally (a treaty between 3 or more countries; a choice between the 3 most promising candidates).

Example:

Diplomatic relations between Italy, France and Germany are strained.

Among expresses the relationship collectively (can be replaced by "into a group of") and broadly (can be replaced by "one of").

Example:

He fell among thieves.
It is among my dearest possessions.

as such, therefore

As such does not mean therefore. It stands in for a noun or adjective that comes before.

Example:

I am your supervisor. As such, I give you permission to exercise some autonomy.
Not: The ministers must arrive tomorrow morning. As such, I booked their tickets for this afternoon.

at present, presently

At present means "now."

Presently means "soon" or "in the near future."

comprised of

Avoid "comprised of." Use "comprises" and follow the same construction as with "includes," or use "is composed of." (See also note below, "comprise, include.")

Example:

The committee comprises a chairperson, a secretary and 3 members.

comprise, include

A list introduced by comprise must include all members of the set. When comprise is used, it should always fit the saying, "The whole comprises the parts."

A list introduced by include, on the other hand, may be either complete or incomplete.

Example:

The Atlantic provinces comprise Newfoundland and the Maritime provinces. The Maritime provinces include New Brunswick.

consider, consider as

Ottawa is considered a high-tech area. Considered as a politician or as a mother, she is exceeding all expectations.

i.e., e.g.

Avoid using "e.g." and "i.e." by choosing clearer language.

Instead of "e.g." (which stands for *exempli gratia* and introduces an example), write "for example," "for instance" or "such as."

Example:

We should meet on a fixed day every month (for example, the second Tuesday).

Instead of "i.e." (which stands for *id est* [that is] and introduces a definition or clarification), write "that is," "in other words" or "namely."

Example:

Global Affairs Canada's FIP is made up of the official departmental identifier (that is, Global Affairs Canada) plus the Canada wordmark.

imply, infer

The speaker implies and the hearer infers.

Example:

When I implied that I was interested, the salesperson inferred that she had a potential customer.

Indigenous and Aboriginal

Capitalize adjectives referring to Indigenous people(s). Use "Indigenous" as the preferred, inclusive adjective, except when referencing the name of an older program or act (for example, Section 35: Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, *Constitution Act*). The term "Indigenous" can be used to describe First Nations, Métis and Inuit. The term "First Nations" is not a synonym for "Aboriginal" or "Indigenous."

The term "Indian" should only be used in reference to the *Indian Act*. The term "Status Indian" refers to the legal status of a person who is registered under the *Indian Act* and is not equivalent to the term "First Nations." In English, the term "Métis" takes an accent. Use "Inuit" (meaning "the people") rather than "Eskimo"; the singular is "Inuk" and the adjective is "Inuit."

practical, practicable

Practical means "useful."

Practicable means "capable of being carried out."

that, which

Use that for restrictive clauses; use which for non-restrictive clauses. A restrictive clause cannot be omitted from a sentence without changing the meaning. A non-restrictive clause adds incidental facts that do not significantly limit the meaning of the principal clause.

Example:

A satellite **that is inflated with gas** is very vulnerable. (Eliminating the boldface words, a restrictive clause, would change the meaning of the sentence.)

Echo 1, **which was inflated with gas**, circled the earth every hour and a half. (The boldface words, a non-restrictive clause, may be omitted without affecting the meaning of the sentence.)

11 Style for the web and social media

Clear, simple text is one of the core requirements of Treasury Board's standards on web accessibility and usability. These standards are mandatory for all government web material. For more information on writing for the web and plain language, see:

- **Canada.ca Content Style Guide**
- **Global Affairs Canada's Quick Guide to Web Writing**

11.1 Hyperlinks, tables, headings and font formatting

Hyperlinked text

Hyperlinked text must clearly identify the page it links to.

Example:

Good: Read more about **softwood lumber**. (links to the department's softwood lumber page)
Bad: For more information on softwood lumber, **click here**.

Links must direct visitors to relevant content pages in the visitors' chosen official language. Links should not send visitors to a welcome (splash) page, to a language selection page or to an intermediary page where they must hunt for the link they want.

Example:

Good: For information on industry sectors in international markets, visit **Market reports**. (the TCS's English-language market report page)
Bad: For information on industry sectors in international markets, visit **Global Affairs Canada**. (The department's bilingual splash page)

Unilingual hyperlinks

Users must be clearly informed that they are being directed to a unilingual website.

Example:

For more information, visit **La Francophonie** (in French only).

In some instances, such as an official report, more explanation may be necessary. For example: "This link leads to a site belonging to an entity not subject to the *Official Languages Act*. Information on this site is available in the language of the site."

Hyperlinks in media products

Media products, especially news releases and media advisories, often use embedded hyperlinks to link to further information. Usually, the linked text is simply the title of the target page.

Example:

For more information on the situation in Syria, visit **Travel Advice - Syria**.

Hyperlink placement

Place hyperlinks at the ends of pages, sections or paragraphs, not in the middle of text.

Links in the middle of text invite readers to leave the page without reading the rest of the text. At best, they slow readers down as they decide whether to stay on the page or click on the link.

Example:

Bad placement (as opening sentence): Canada has made a multi-faceted response to the recent report by the **Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency**. (link to the Director General's biography)

Hyperlinked email addresses

Spell out email addresses instead of embedding them in text.

Example:

Please submit your request by email to abcxyz@international.gc.ca.
Please submit your request by email: abcxyz@international.gc.ca.

Note: Allow your word processor to hyperlink the address automatically (MS Word does this by default).

Tables

Use tables for tabular data only.

Do not use the "table" function in word processing software to format ordinary text—for example, to add tabs and indents. Use tables only as tables—that is, to arrange information in grids with row and column headings.

Headings and subheadings

Align headings and subheadings to the left margin.

Capitalize the first word and all proper nouns; make others lower case.

Example:

Developed nations applaud Canadian initiative to reduce trade barriers

Font formatting

To emphasize or highlight a word, use **bold**. Avoid ALL CAPS (except for military operation names—see **Section 2.7, "Capitalization"**) and underlining (except for hyperlinks). Use *italics* only when necessary (see **Section 6.1, "Italics"**).

Coloured text

Do not use differently coloured text as the sole means to convey information (for example, a red font to show emphasis). When using colour, make sure it is supplemented by another element—for instance, a red font that is also bold. Many people cannot see colour, and many devices cannot display it.

11.2 Web writing guidelines

Cater to reader behaviour

Web readers look for information. Fast. They scan a page and decide in seconds whether it has what they need. So good web pages make scanning easy. They:

1. lead readers directly to the information
2. provide only the information they need
3. provide it in a usable, easily digested form

Determine what information your readers need

Important information is factual. It answers the questions who, what, when and where. The question why—interpretation, background and rationale—is less important.

If you can't provide all the information, link to another site that can fill the gap.

Put the most important stuff first

Make sure you answer who, what, when and where first. Readers scan from top to bottom and from left to right, so "first" means near the top and near the left. Put interpretation, background and rationales at the end.

Note: Journalists use this "inverted pyramid" writing style. To see it in action, read a breaking news story.

Break information down into "chunks": pages, sections and paragraphs

Each chunk should address 1 subject or 1 facet of the subject. If your subject is too large for a single page, create another one.

Use headings and subheadings to divide chunks

Make headings short and specific. Take key words or concepts from the chunk that follows and put them near the beginning of the heading. Most readers read only the headings and subheadings—so they've got to be

informative. Use separators like hyphens, dashes or colons to replace words.

A good heading announces what information will follow.

Example:

Good: Canada's seagulls: good fliers
Bad: Jonathan Livingston Seagull had nothing on these birds

Build simple paragraphs

Develop 1 main idea in each paragraph. State that idea in the first sentence; add information in the ones that follow.

Write clear, to-the-point sentences

Make 1 point per sentence. The sentence can be simple, compound or complex, but it should make 1 point only. Shorten a long sentence by breaking it in two.

Look out for ambiguity. Short is good—but too short can leave out vital information and lead to confusion.

Use bulleted and numbered lists

Break up a list by making it vertical with bullets or numbers. This makes it easier to read. Keep these guidelines in mind:

- Put the list in context with an introductory sentence or two
- Keep the list short (4 or 5 items)
- Use numbers if the total number of items is important or you want to rank them, or if they are steps to do in order
- Don't overuse the technique: long lists and pages full of lists are hard to scan

Writing by the numbers

1 point per sentence
Maximum **20 words** per sentence
1 idea per paragraph
1 to 5 sentences per paragraph
40 to 50 words per paragraph
400 to 800 words per web page
70 characters or fewer for web page titles

Note: Word processors will count for you. For a portion of the text, in Microsoft Word 2016, select the text you want counted, then choose Review > Word Count.

Use plain language

- Use the active voice, not the passive. Put the "doer" first, the action next and the "do-ee" last.

Example:

Good: The snake embraced Martha.
Bad: Martha was embraced by the snake.

- Make clear who or what did the action.

Example:

Good: We fixed the hyperdrive.
Bad: The hyperdrive was fixed.

Avoid words and phrases that only a specialist (you the writer, for instance) would know. If you must use a specialized term, define it.

Use short words (3 syllables or less) when possible.

Avoid negatives. They're hard to decipher and slow readers down.

Example:

Good: My spaceship broke.
Bad: My spaceship is non-functional.
Good: We will probably conquer your planet.
Bad: It's not unlikely that we will conquer your planet.

And remember...

Leave time for editing. It takes time to be clear and concise.

Leave time for translation—and for editing the translation.

For a list of references, see **Section 12.4, "Writing for the Web."**

11.3 Writing conventions for tweets, Facebook and LinkedIn posts

Accents and other typographic symbols

Use accents as required, but avoid superscript characters.

Character count

Social media posts generally have a maximum number of characters:

- Twitter: 280 characters without a hyperlink, or 256 characters with a hyperlink.
- Facebook: no limit for a post; 25 characters for the title of an advertisement and 90 characters for the ad itself.
- LinkedIn: 1,300 characters for posting updates, and no limit for publishing articles.

Included in the character count:

- All spaces
- Typographic symbols (#) (@)
- The hyperlink (allow for 20 characters, regardless of the actual length)
- The numbers (for example 1/2, 2/2) at the beginning or end that indicate a series of tweets on the same subject
- Each emoji counts as 2 characters in Twitter

Abbreviations

Avoid using abbreviations unless it is otherwise impossible to respect the maximum character length. In such cases, use simple and obvious abbreviations (+ for plus, Min for Minister). Dollar amounts can be written with symbols: $K (thousands of dollars), $M (millions of dollars), $B (billions of dollars).

Hashtags

Hashtags provide an indexing function that links tweets or Facebook messages on the same subject. Hashtags always begin with the pound sign (#). Do not include the following in a hashtag:

- spaces (for example, #Canada not # Canada)
- punctuation (for example, commas and exclamation marks)
- hyphens or dashes (for example, #G20 not #G-20)

Write compound words in hashtags as 1 word with no hyphens so that the whole expression is indexed, not just the first word (for example, #happybirthday). Use of upper and lower case is optional, as the indexing function is not case-sensitive: #G8Summit, #g8summit and #G8summit will all be indexed in the same way.

12 Resource list

12.1 Dictionaries

The *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, 2nd ed. Katherine Barber, ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Le Nouveau Petit Robert, Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française. Paul Robert. Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2011.

Le Grand Robert & Collins, dictionnaire français-anglais, anglais-français. Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 2010.

12.2 Style and usage guides

The Canadian Style: A Guide to Writing and Editing. Also available in print—Toronto: Dundurn Press Limited in cooperation with Public Works and Government Services Canada Translation Bureau, 1997.

Editing Canadian English, 3rd ed. Editors' Association of Canada, 2015.

Fee, Margery, and Janice McAlpine. *Guide to Canadian English Usage*, 2nd ed. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2011.

The Chicago Manual of Style, 17th ed. (subscription required) Also available in print—Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

A Practical English Grammar, 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Plain Language, Clear and Simple. Ottawa: Multiculturalism and Citizenship, 1991.

12.3 Useful websites

Natural Resources Canada **searchable database to query by geographical name**

Canada Post Canadian **Addressing Guidelines**

Commission de toponymie du Québec **Searchable database of place names in Quebec (French only)**; **English database search instructions**

Policy on Communications and Federal Identity

Policy on Official Languages

Global Affairs Canada's **up-to-date list of departmental ministers, parliamentary secretaries and deputy ministers**

Departmental news releases, backgrounders, speeches and media advisories:

- Those published most recently are available at **News: Global Affairs Canada**
- All published after 2015 can be found by using **the Government of Canada News advanced search**
- Those published earlier are available at **Library and Archives Canada Government of Canada web archive**.
- Press releases published between 1946 and 1995 are archived at the **Global Affairs Canada Digital Library**.

Global Affairs Canada **departmental symbols**

International Telecommunication Union **dialing procedures** (PDF), including international prefixes and country codes:

TERMIUM Plus: the Government of Canada's terminology and linguistic data bank

Travel Advice and Advisories by destination

Treasury Board's **Federal Identity Program registry of applied titles**

12.4 Writing for the web

Treasury Board's **Canada.ca Content Style Guide**

Treasury Board's **Standard on Web Accessibility**

Treasury Board's **Standard on Web Usability**

Global Affairs Canada's Quick Guide to Web Writing

12.5 Virtual Library

Visit the department's **Library online** to access its online collection of language resources, including bilingual and unilingual dictionaries.

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