



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

School of Communication and Arts

STYLE AND PRODUCTION GUIDE 2015



Why a style guide?

Each news organisation has its own style guide, and while many are similar they're not identical. So if they're similar why not have just one? The reason is partly about 'correct writing' but it's also about consistency and standards of editorial performance. What one news organisation thinks is important may not be valued by another.

For example, some news organisations never use the word "actress", but call both men and women in the acting profession actors. We acknowledge that while it is no longer common to distinguish acting professionals by gender, there are some limited occasions when the word "actress" is used, such as in the Academy Awards. So, our style, similar to that of News Limited, is that usually the word "actor" is the only noun we would use to refer to men or women in that occupation, but some occasions call for gender distinctions. The ABC doesn't bother listing it, but in practice probably always uses "actor".

This example is a small illustration that different newsrooms have different approaches to style. The ABC's Radio National guide is available to the public online <http://style.radionational.net.au/?apage=U> . Check it out.

Consistent style also gives reporters a sense of being part of a professional team. If all reporters have a consistent approach to punctuation, word use, and grammar (where there is sometimes more than one right answer) the publication will give readers, viewers and listeners confidence they can trust your newsroom as authoritative in all aspects of communication: accurate in telling the news that matters, and providing reliable analysis and commentary – all within an accurate, succinct and lively style. There is no single definitive style guide. This guide is just another one.

When you work in different newsrooms you will find different approaches, but each style guide is providing consistency for each newsroom.

Most style guides in Australia use the *Macquarie Dictionary* as the final word on language and spelling. Fowler's *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* is also a popular foundation. There are a number of useful works in the Reference section.

If you find errors or inconsistencies please contact us. Use the **contact us** button in latest additions to help us keep this guide useful and up to date. Suggest words you notice are missing but which may be usefully included. Tell us why.

Academic style

This Style Guide is intended for use by journalism and public relations majors. However as university students you should also follow an accepted style of academic writing and referencing. For this, go to the UQ Library website www.library.uq.edu.au/services/referencing.html.

Click on Referencing Styles and scroll down to APA (American Psychological Association) UQ Library "How To" Guide.

Structure of this style guide

There are five sections:

1. **Quick reference.** Some of the most common style questions are addressed.
2. ***Style – an easy guide to grammar.*** This is reproduced from the News Limited style guide, called *Style* and provides a very accessible and simple overview of grammar and usage. You can use it for quick reference but, being short and simple, it is probably also a good idea to read it in full before you start your course. It will remind you of grammar points you probably learned long ago, and sometimes it may even give you some new pointers. Try it.
3. **A to Z.** This is the main quick reference section. It provides an alphabetical list of word use for journalists, from suggesting our newsroom approach to word use, to spelling, to parts of speech to rules of grammar, punctuation, and so on. Hopefully here you will find the most important and useful aspects of writing style to help you produce cleaner, crisper copy. That’s an alliteration! Journalists should probably avoid them – they’re best used sparingly by advertising copy writers, comedy script writers, but rarely by journalists. Exclamation marks are also never used by journalists. That’s a taste of the style guide’s approach. It will be useful in all your courses. Don’t read it from start to finish; just dip into it.
4. **JACdigital production guide.** This will be especially useful for those students contributing to the School’s webpage news site – anywhere from first year to final year production courses. As it is not long, you can read it from start to finish. You will also find it very helpful as a reference throughout your program of study.
5. **Writing for broadcast and JACradio.** While JACradio involves students in a number of broadcast roles, this section of the style guide is for students working in radio news. There are important differences in writing for print and broadcast. Many of these are reflected in the A to Z section; however, there are particular conventions of style and language covered in this section. It is a simple and brief guide which you can read from start to finish, and use as a valuable reference during your studies.

Latest additions

Nobody gets everything right all of the time. We want you to help us make this guide grow and become a useful tool for generations of students. We have introduced a new section with the **online edition** called **latest additions**. Here we will list new words that have entered the professional communications domain, but also words you have suggested we should include. Use the **contact us** button to send us your suggestions. But also click on **latest additions** to check on any new words which may not yet appear in the A to Z list.

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Useful links

Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Radio National style guide:
<http://style.radionational.net.au/?apage=U>

Daily Telegraph, London, style guide.
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/topics/about-us/style-book/>

UQ Academic style guide
<http://www.library.uq.edu.au/help/referencing-style-guides>

Dow Jones insight (a handy link to top gobbledegook phrases)
<http://solutions.dowjones.com/campaigns/2009/gobbledegook/>

Thanks

The A to Z section of this style guide had its genesis in the deep dark history of the School (SJC), probably in the 1990s. A key figure in its development was Dr Steve McIllwain, who wrote much of the early drafts of the A to Z. Later updates were completed by Professor Michael Bromley and Dr Chris Lawe-Davies, who was Editor of the 2010 edition.

The 2012 revision was the work of staff member Brad Turner and further edits were completed in 2015 to reflect the new School name.

The JACdigital section was put together by Skye Doherty, who takes care of the hands-on running of the site.

The JACradio style guide was developed by Dr Chris Lawe Davies and Heather Stewart, and revised for this edition by Donna Meiklejohn.

Thanks to News Limited whose introduction to grammar in *Style: The essential guide for journalists and professional writers* is lucid, brief and extremely useful. *Style* is edited by Chris McLeod and Kim Lockwood (4th edn, 2009). Melbourne: News Custom Publishing. Pages 8-31 are reproduced under statutory licence Part VB, Copyright Act (1968).

Our thanks also to the ABC for use of the introductory section of its style guide, which we have adapted.

Quick reference

Dates ‘March 26 2015’. If you need to also write the day, use a comma, thus: ‘Monday, March 26, 2015’.

Numbers, figures Numbers from zero up to and including nine are usually spelt out. Numbers including and above 10 are written in figures. The exceptions are in such constructions as ‘9am’, ‘January 2’, ‘2c’, ‘\$3’, ‘5 per cent’, ‘Erik Bloodaxe, 6, of St Lucia, . . .’ (but ‘six-year-old Erik’). Numbers that contain four numerals do not have a comma, those with five numerals or more do. So ‘1993’ but ‘19,993’. Millions are written in figures and words: 2 million.

Do not start a sentence with figures: if the number must occur at the start of the sentence, spell it out. Decimals require careful attention. Such expressions as .5 are meaningless and may be misleading if the decimal point is not clearly printed – the correct form is 0.5. The zero is important in writing decimal currency figures — \$1.05, \$210.08, but \$5, not \$5.00 – and time – 2.09pm, but 2pm, not 2.00pm.

Per cent the style is to use ‘per cent’, not ‘percent’ or ‘%’. ‘Percentage’ is one word. Unless at the start of a sentence, percentage is always written as a figure: 2 per cent, 34 per cent. Do not use ‘per cent’ in police reports of blood alcohol breath tests: the readings are in mg of alcohol/100ml of blood. Milligrams of alcohol cannot be a percentage of millilitres of blood any more than kilograms of apples can be a percentage of litres of water. Charges have been dismissed in which the police certificate tendered in court included ‘per cent’. If a reading is given as .08, then leave it as that.

The plural ‘-s’ does not apply to metric contractions. Write 1000m, 20km (not kms), 25km/h, 45g (not gms), 2.3kg, 25t, 30c, 250kW, etc. Although grammar texts may offer some rough rules of thumb for the many forms of plurals in English, students should learn the plurals of commonly used words and check with a dictionary when in doubt.

Queensland Some common place names present frequent difficulties. Note: South-East Queensland, Mt Coot-tha, Story Bridge, Indooroopilly and Woolloongabba (but Wollongong in NSW). ‘Queensland’, not ‘Qld’, not ‘QLD’.

Singular All organisations are single entities and should be treated as singular. So, ‘The government is . . .’, ‘the group is’, ‘BHP has . . .’, ‘Castlemaine Perkins Ltd brews . . .’, ‘White and Associates designs . . .’, ‘Brisbane City Council has decided . . .’

The singular number is extended to such constructions as: The architect, Smith, Jones and Brown Partners, . . . Bridge and Culvert Constructions, engineer for the project . . . Arnott’s, maker of biscuits, has decided . . .

Time Stories should be written with publication dates in mind. If an event occurs on June 22 and the next edition of the paper is June 21 then write ‘. . . will be held tomorrow (June 22).’ Similarly ‘next week’, ‘last month’ or ‘on Tuesday’ should be used and the actual date included in brackets as confirmation. News style for time is concise: ‘11am on November 2, 2015’ is an example.

Titles, ranks use Mr and Ms (not Mrs), as well as Professor, Associate Professor, Dr, Sir, Lady, Princess, Constable, Captain, Colonel, etc. At second and subsequent references Professor and Associate Professor are both written as ‘Professor’ (then ‘Prof’ in subsequent uses, but not in

broadcast). Give the person's full name at first mention, and thereafter their title and surname: 'Fred Smith . . . Mr Smith'. Similarly, 'Professor Fred Smith . . . Professor Smith', and 'Dr Fred Smith . . . Dr Smith'. Note that in the case of knights, the first name and not the surname is used: 'Sir Fred Smith . . . Sir Fred'.

Only Mr, Ms, Dr, Br, Sr and the Rev should be used as contractions. Note that 'the Rev' requires a given name as in, for instance, 'the Rev Fred Smith'. Thereafter, the reference is 'Mr Smith', not 'Rev Smith'. Roman Catholic priests are normally referred to as Fr, although some have the title Monsignor. Some Anglican priests prefer to be referred to as Fr and Anglican priests should be consulted about this, as should female priests about their preferred title. Bishops should be referred to formally at first reference and thereafter as 'Bishop . . .': 'The Bishop of Boolaroo, the Rt Rev Fred Smith' or 'the Most Rev Fred Smith' at first mention, then 'Bishop Smith'.

Titles in sport often look strange: 'Mr Thaiday', 'Mr Horwill', 'Mr Tomic'. To avoid this awkwardness, avoid honorifics for all names involved in sport, whether they are the names of sports competitors or officials. Imperial titles and police or military ranks may occasionally intrude on sports pages and are the exceptions to this rule. If a sporting figure is subject to or involved in legal proceedings, use 'Mr' or 'Ms' as with usual court reporting style.

Court reporting presents a dilemma that must be resolved fairly. Although it may appear odd that a criminal should be referred to as 'Mr' or 'Ms', many people who face charges in court are not criminals, even if found guilty. It is appropriate, then, to refer to all people involved in court proceedings in the normal way.

Police should be given their full title at first reference, and thereafter an abbreviated title: 'Senior Constable Brown . . . Sen Const Brown', 'Sergeant Hobbs . . . Sgt Hobbs'. Note that police ranks refer to rank, not division of activity. So Detective Sergeant Mary O'Leary is 'Sgt O'Leary' at second mention, not 'Det O'Leary'. Similarly, Detective Inspector Jones becomes Insp Jones.

Titles should normally be as brief as possible. Such honorifics as 'the Hon', 'the Right Hon', 'His Highness', 'His Excellency', 'the Worshipful', 'His Grace' are not used.

Style

GRAMMAR AND SYNTAX

Our business is mass communication, so we should always use simple, contemporary and popular language. But even the simplest expression is built on a foundation of grammar and syntax, and as professional communicators it is essential we understand the basic rules of print journalism.

Many journalists who studied under school curriculums that paid little or no heed to grammar will benefit from an understanding of the basic building blocks of our language. While it is true that knowledge of grammar does not make a good writer, good writing depends on good grammar.

WORD CLASSES

Recognising particular word classes (formerly known as “parts of speech”) makes discussion of grammatical rules easier to understand.

- **Nouns** describe “things”, whether concrete (you can touch – a computer) or abstract (you can’t touch – beauty)
- **Pronouns** substitute for nouns: *I, me, him, who, they, it, mine, its, his.*
- **Verbs**, or doing words, express action or being. In *The cat sat on the mat*, the cat is sitting. *Sat* is the verb.
- **Adverbs** usually describe a verb, adjective or other adverb. In *Go quickly* the adverb is *quickly*. Most adverbs end in *-ly*.
- **Adjectives** describe. In *little old me*, the adjectives are *little* and *old*.
- **Prepositions** show relationships between nouns and pronouns and other words. In *The cat sat on the mat*, the preposition is *on*. This class includes *with, in, by, from, to, for, against, over, under* and *into*.
- **Conjunctions** link clauses, phrases and words: *and, but, when*.
- **Articles** *the* (the definite article), *a, an* (the indefinite articles).
- **Exclamations, interjections** *Aha! Cripes! Heck!* are among these – although you are unlikely to need them.

SENTENCE PARTS

All sentences contain a subject and a verb. *I am* is therefore a sentence. But sentence structure is usually more complicated:

Subject, predicate, object, indirect object

- **Subject** The person or thing being discussed.
- **Predicate** The part of the sentence that says what is done to or done by the subject. It consists of the verb and the object, indirect object and qualifiers (if any)
- **Object** The thing that is directly implicated in the action.,
- **Indirect object** The thing for which the action is done. In “The editor brought the cadets drinks”, the subject is the editor. The rest of the sentence is the predicate. The object is

drinks, and the indirect object is the cadets. Many sentences have no object or indirect object: “She is unhappy with the way things have turned out.”

Shun the practice of putting *today*, *yesterday* and the like between the subject and the very it qualifies. “A Sydney horse trainer was shot dead last night” not “... last night was shot dead”, or worse, splitting the **very**, “was last night shot dead”.

Clauses

A clause is part of a sentence and consists of a subject and a predicate. It is therefore a sentence within a sentence. The most important types of clause are:

- **Main** The essence of the sentence on which the rest depends. It could stand apart from the rest of the sentence and still have meaning.
- **Subordinate** A clause that qualifies the main clause and cannot stand by itself as the main clause can. Thus in the sentence “After beating them with a large dictionary, the editor bought the cadets a round of drinks”, the first clause is a subordinate clause, and the second is the main clause. Try to avoid starting sentences with subordinate clauses. It makes your writing indirect. Compare “When asked about the reports last night, the Premier refused to comment” with “The Premier refused to comment when asked about the reports last night”, which is simpler and sharper.

A sentence can contain more than one main clause. The important thing is that two main clauses must either be joined by a conjunction or stand as separate sentences. They cannot be linked by a mere comma. For example: “The Tigers played hard, they deserved to win” is wrong. It should be either: “The Tigers played hard. They deserved to win” or “The Tigers played hard and deserved to win.”

Phrases

A phrase is part of a clause. It is a group of words that makes a unit, but does not contain a verb. It therefore cannot stand alone as a sentence. *A round of drinks* is a phrase.

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

In active voice, the subject of the sentence performs the action. In passive voice, the subject of the sentence has the action done to it: “The car hit the man” (active); “The man was hit by the car” (passive).

The word *by* next to a verb is usually a good indicator the sentence is in passive voice, which you should avoid. Active voice is, as its name suggests, more active. However, there are occasions when the information requires passive construction. Compare: “A protester waving a republican placard yesterday assaulted the Queen” with “The Queen was assaulted yesterday by a protester waving a republican placard”. The second construction, although passive, is better because it puts the most eye-catching information first.

PARTICIPLES AND ADJECTIVE PHRASES

Participles look like verbs, but they are not. Often they end in *-ing* (*Running to catch a bus, Sandra fell...*, or *-ed* (*Regarded as favourites, the Tigers ran on to the ground...*) or *-en* and *-n* (*Known for his neckties, Mr Smith...*).

The main concern with participles is that if they appear in a subordinate clause, as in the cases above, they must relate to the subject of the main clause.

(In these cases, the subjects are Sandra, the Tigers and Mr Smith).

It is therefore incorrect to write: *Regarded as hot favourites, the crowd roared at the arriving Tigers* because the subject of the main clause is now the crowd. The sentence thus implies that the hot favourites are the crowd, not the Tigers.

Similarly, be careful with **adjective phrases**, which qualify a noun or pronoun. The adjective phrase must be linked clearly to the noun or pronoun it qualifies. For example: *Tall, dark and attractive, she liked the look of the young man a cross the room*. Who is tall, dark and attractive? She or the young man?

The general rule is that the adjective phrase should be placed next to the related noun or pronoun: *She liked the look of the tall, dark and attractive young man across the room*.

This advertisement is another famous example of the problem: *Wanted: Easy chair by gentleman with sliding back and oak legs*. Easily fixed by writing: *Wanted: Gentleman requires easy chair with sliding back and oak legs*.

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

The rule is that plural nouns and pronouns take plural verbs; singular nouns and pronouns take singular verbs. But there are traps.

Collective nouns

Collective nouns usually take singular verbs and pronouns. Words such as *the Government, Cabinet, the Opposition, council, committee*, all take singular verbs and pronouns. Words such as *family* and *congregation* are also singular and take singular treatment – *the congregation is large; the family is admired* – except where the sense is directed to the collective's constituent parts as in: *The family put down their knives and forks and wiped their mouths politely* or *The congregation took their seats*.

In these cases the singular pronoun would sound ridiculous, but often the departure from the rule can be avoided by rephrasing the sentence: *Members of the congregation...* and so on.

Sport stories demand a flexible approach on collective nouns. Generally, we would use singular verbs and pronouns when the name of the team is singular, and plural verbs and pronouns when it is plural. Thus: *Norths are, Parramatta is; Carlton is, the Sydney Swans are*. Using this rule, countries take a singular verb: *Australia collapses*. But, for clarity, some publications opt for all teams being plural – but they need to be consistent whatever their approach.

Words such as *none, no one, each, everyone, everybody* should generally take a singular verb (*Everyone is going; none of them is staying*).

And, with

And, with – these are correct: *The Prime Minister and the Treasurer are...The Prime Minister, with the Treasurer, is*. This is because with is not a conjunction.

There are/is

There are/ is – the verb agrees with the subject, which follows the introductory words there and here. Thus: *There is one reason to scrap the plan; There are two reasons to scrap the plan; Here is a bunch of roses; Here are two bunches of roses*.

TENSES AND INDIRECT SPEECH

Tenses can be tricky. Learn the names of the tenses so that the rules in this book are clear.

- Present simple** he goes
- Present continuous** he is going
- Present perfect** he has gone
- Past simple** he went
- Past continuous** he was going
- Past perfect** he had gone
- Future simple** he will go
- Future continuous** he will be going
- Future perfect** will be gone

Indirect speech

The rule is that when converting from direct speech to indirect speech, the tense of the whole sentence is governed by the tense of the verb *to say* (or *claim*, *explain* etc). If you are writing in the present tense (*he says*) then the tense of the indirect speech remains as it was when uttered. So *"I love my wife,"* he says becomes *He says he loves his wife*.

But when you use the past tense (*he said*), all tenses are pushed into the past, so that present simple becomes past simple (*"I loved my wife,"* he said becomes *he said he had loved his wife*.) Under this rule, direct speech in past simple tense becomes indirect speech in past perfect tense. (*"I loved my wife,"* he said becomes *He said he had loved his wife*.)

The advantage of this is that it is clear from the tense of the indirect speech what tense the speaker actually used, and therefore what he meant. Similarly, *"I have been out walking,"* he said becomes *He said he had been out walking*. And so on.

When writing a sequence of several sentences of past tense indirect speech attributable to the same source, do not put *s/he said* at the end of every paragraph.

Allow the tense to indicate you are still in indirect speech mode, thus: *The minister said more cuts were likely. A drop in revenue was making it impossible to maintain services, and the budget had cut government funding further than expected.*

This approach can sometimes lead to absurdities if grammatical rules are followed unerringly. For example, *"I love my wife,"* he said. *"She is beautiful, although frail."* Would become *He said he loved his wife. She was beautiful, although frail*. It starts to sound as though she is also dead. So there are two rules regarding tenses in indirect speech:

- Never let tenses kill the living or resurrect the dead: *The injured are...*(not were). *The victims (of a fatal plane crash) are believed to have been...* (not believed to be).
- Rewrite to avoid unclear or nonsensical implications.

ONLY

Misplacing *only* is a common error. It is important the word should be positioned correctly in a sentence, but the strict rules of grammar need not be pursued to extremes. Imagine how the song would sound had it been punctiliously penned: *I have eyes only for you*.

Fowler says *He only died a week ago* is permissible because, when said, the intonation of and accent on the words "only" and "died" make it clear what is meant.

On the other hand, in answer to the question *Is Mort Smith really dead?* The reply *Yes, he died only a week ago* obviously carries its own desired nuance with the *only* in its grammatically

correct position. For imperious emphasis, *only* can be placed after the word or phrase to which it refers or in the inflammatory: *Men only need apply*. Some misplacements are indefensible, as in *Five people only asked for a drink* when what is meant is *Only five people asked for a drink*.

Generally, place *only* immediately before the verb only when it is the verb itself to which it refers.

SPLIT INFINITIVES

Infinitives are split when either an adverb or a phrase is inserted between the word *to* and infinitive of the verb: “to boldly go”. While they are frowned on by some, avoiding them can sometimes produce ungainly writing or even ambiguity in some cases. For example:

1. She failed to completely empty the glass;
2. She failed completely to empty the glass;
3. She failed to empty the glass completely, and
4. She failed to empty completely the glass.

The first sentence contains a split infinitive, but suggests what we wanted to impart: that she nearly emptied the glass. The next two examples fix the split infinitive, but are vague and could mean that she has removed nothing at all. The fourth sentence is intolerably awkward.

The rule is: try to avoid split infinitives, but never at the expense of clarity.

Sometimes you simply cannot avoid them. How would you say “to more than double” without splitting the infinitive?

Do not confuse split infinitives with verb phrases. Some people think “was running” is an infinitive, and avoid splitting it with such convoluted constructions as “Mary also was running” instead of the standard “Mary was also running”.

PREPOSITIONS

The same clarity rule defines the use of prepositions at the end of sentences. Many will argue this is forbidden, but as Winston Churchill is reported to have said, “This is the kind of arrant pedantry up with which I will not put” if it makes for ungainly writing.

1. Do not add prepositions to verbs; do not say *meet up with*, *sell up*, *sell off* or *buy up*. Do not say *win out*. Let’s *meet*, *sell* and *buy*.
2. Do use prepositions where Americans don’t. Meet *on* Monday, not meet Monday; write *to* Jessica, not write Jessica.
3. Do not join prepositions to nouns, as in the match got *underway*, instead of *under way*. (And it should be *The match started* in any case).

THAT OR WHICH?

The *that/which* debate has enlivened newsroom discussion for decades. Our style has been chosen as an acceptable way to deal with the question in most cases. First put forward by Fowler in *Modern English Usage*, it relies on a convenient solution rather than a rule.

Whether a clause is defining or descriptive dictates whether it takes the relative pronoun *that* or *which*. “A space probe *that* returned from Jupiter is believed responsible for an outbreak of itching across the southern United States.” The clause following “A space probe...” is defining and takes *that*.

But ... “A space probe is believed responsible for an outbreak of itching across the southern US. The probe, which returned from Jupiter, may have brought a plague of space fleas.” In this case, the same clause becomes descriptive and takes *which*.

More about *that*

This word can often be left out because its inclusion only breaks the flow of a sentence. For example: *The Premier said he would retire next week...* reads more smoothly than *The Premier said that he would retire next week...*

It can also be unnecessary sometimes when used as a relative pronoun. Example: *The dog the man bit is being tested for rabies...* has a better flow than *The dog that the man bit is being tested for rabies.*

Sometimes, however, omitting the word can change the meaning. One such case is when it follows a verb capable of being either transitive or intransitive and the *that* prevents the subject of the following clause being read as the object of the preceding verb.

Example: *The Premier said he assumed the identity of Joe Blow was genuine.*

Readers could be forgiven for believing that the Premier has been passing himself off as someone else until they reach the final two words. But the Premier was not “assuming an identity”. He was assuming something about an identity and *that* would make that clear. Many verbs require the *that* treatment, the verb *to believe* at the start of this paragraph being one.

That must also be retained when it is needed to attach an adverb to its correct verb: *The Premier said later he rang the Prime Minister* is correct if the Premier is speaking after some earlier statement or event. If he is referring to something he did later, it should read: *The Premier said that he rang the Prime Minister later.*

TRY

Meaning to attempt, *try* is a verb that should be followed by *to*, not *and*. You try to dig the garden, rather than *try and dig* it. “Try and” is common failure of spoken English, but it has no place in *print*.

PUNCTUATION

When punctuation marks are going to look ugly in copy, try to find constructions that avoid them.

APOSTROPHES

Apostrophes are the most abused and misused elements of our language. A walk down any shopping street will demonstrate horrors from all quarters – *SALE! Book’s! CD’s! Video’s!* And how often have you seen *it’s* creep into our pages when it should be *its*? In most cases this is the result of the kind of carelessness that cannot be tolerated in a newsroom.

Apostrophes are used to indicate possessive and to denote the contraction or omission of letters or numerals. Hence the possessive *woman’s*, or the contraction *don’t* for *do not*, *’64* for *1964* and so on. They are also used to form the plurals of letters, but not numerals, as in *mind your p’s and q’s*, the *four i’s and four s’s in Mississippi*, but three *F-111s*, two *B-52s*.

Where you put the apostrophe is crucial. The singular possessive is formed with *’s* (*boy’s coat*) and the plural with *s’* (*boys’ coats*). For a plural that does not end in *s* (*women*) the possessive is formed with *’s* (*women’s coats*).

Almost all singular words ending in *s* need another *s* as well as the apostrophe to form the possessive – the *princess's* dress, *Charles's* books, - but you should follow the sound. If a speaker repeats the *s*, so in print. If not, don't. When a word ends in a sibilant letter that is silent, the possessive is formed with 's: *Malraux's* plays, *the grand prix's* manager, although a better construction would be *The manager of the grand prix*.

The apostrophe is used, for clarity, in *one week's* notice and *a year's* jail. It isn't necessary in *two weeks* notice and *two years* jail. It is not used in contractions in common usage: *quake*, *flu*, *cello*, *phone*, *plane*, *bus*. It is not in *100s*, *1000s*, *in his 20s*, *the 1990s* (but the '90s) *MPs*, *MLAs* and industrial union names (*the Federated Clerks Union*), unless they end in –men's or – women's, in which case keep the apostrophe. Keep it in the informal name: *the journalists' union*, *the clerks' union*.

Do not use apostrophes when a word could be an adjective. For instance, it is *Melbourne citizens*, not *Melbourne's citizens*; it is the *Premiers Conference*, not the *Premiers' Conference*. And watch simple plurals. Certainly write the *dog's tail* and the *dogs' tails*, but not “*the dog's wagged their tail's*”!

Follow the ruling of the Geographical Names Board and drop apostrophes from place names. So *Wilson's Promontory*, *Kings Cross*, *St Andrews*, *Badgerys Creek*, *Halls Creek* and so on.

COLONS

Colons are used as a mark of introduction to a word, phrase, sentence, passage, list and so on. Fowler says the colon is used “to deliver the goods that have been invoiced in the preceding words”.

The first word after a colon is not capped if what follows is not a complete sentence: *Ivan the Terrible had positive characteristics: generosity, warmth, tolerance*. But: *This is what a historian might say: Even Ivan the Terrible was misunderstood*. Where possible, this rule should apply in heads.

Do not use the colon as an attributive mark in heads when the attribution follows the message. Do not write *Opposition wrong: PM*. Instead, say *Opposition wrong – PM*, or *PM: Opposition wrong*.

COMMAS

Commas are perhaps the most misused of common marks, often put in where they shouldn't be or left out where they should be. Some writers think if a sentence is long it must have a comma, so put in meaningless ones: *Assistant Commissioner (operations), Mr Joe Plod, said today, that if the police were still on strike on Wednesday, he would ask the Industrial Relations Commission to sever their union, the Police Association, from the hearing of the police award case*. The only necessary commas there are those around the name of the union.

Do not use a comma before and in a series unless there is a likelihood of ambiguity: *Cars, buses and trains were stalled*. But: *Many of the plays of that time were written by Shakespeare, Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Ford*.

Use commas to set off a non-restrictive clause: *The house, which was 100 years old, was still in good condition*. Do not use the comma after an identifying noun used in the restrictive sense: *The painter van Gogh had a hard struggle*. The absence of commas in *His brother George was best man* means the bridegroom has more than one brother. Commas around George mean he is the only brother. (Be careful not to imply bigamy: *The Prime Minister's wife Mary will*

accompany him says he has more than one wife and the one called Mary will go with him.)

The comma may be used to introduce a quote: *She said, "I will be back."* But if the quote is long, or more than a sentence, use a colon.

Generally, what is between a pair of commas can be regarded as being in parenthesis and should be able to be removed and leave the sentence making sense. This includes names. The use or omission of commas can alter meanings and lead to legal action. *Professional golfers who drink too much do not usually live long* has a different meaning if commas are used: *Professional golfers, who drink too much, do not usually live long*. That has the potential to inspire a class action.

In quotes, the comma and the full stop usually come before the final quotation mark: *"I will arrive tomorrow,"* he said. *"But I will leave next day."* The exception is when the passage quoted does not form a complete sentence: *He said he was "fed up"*.

Commas must not be used as a joining device. They cannot be used to link sentences. For example: *The Tigers played hard, they deserved to win*" is wrong. It should be either *"The Tigers played hard. They deserved to win"* or *"The Tigers played hard and deserved to win."*

DASHES

Dashes should be used sparingly. They tend to slow the flow and should not be used as all-purpose punctuation marks. The dash is properly used (in pairs) when what follows is a series punctuated by commas: *The Government will face many problems – unemployment, education, declining revenue and rising costs – during its term of office*. The dash is also needed to avoid confusion: *The costs – taxes and lawyers' fees – were higher than expected*.

DOTS

Dots, in threes, like dashes, are sometimes used indiscriminately – and incorrectly – in places where dashes, commas or even a simple full stop should go. For example, *He told me ... and I believed him ... that the moon was upside down*, should have dashes or commas in place of the dots.

Dots may legitimately be used at the end of sentences in which the speaker is trailing off or in which something is left hanging: *He told me the moon was upside down and I believed him ...*

Dots are also used to indicate matter has been omitted: *Jane Smith said she would...go tomorrow*. (Take care that omissions do not alter the meaning or result in an ambiguity, and do not overdo this practice.)

Dots should not be used just to fill out a headline.

FULL STOPS

Full stops are the most effective punctuation mark. If you are not sure whether to use a comma, semi-colon, dash or dots, try a full stop. You'll be surprised how well it works.

HYPHENS

A simple test of whether they are needed in two or more words before a noun is to remove any of the words and see if what is left makes sense.

If you say a *red haired man* you are saying *a red man with hair*. You mean a red-haired man. In *a dark skinned pickled herring merchant* meaning is incomprehensible. It could refer to a herring merchant who is dark, has been skinned, and is pickled, as in drunk. But hyphens make it

clear: *a dark-skinned pickled-herring merchant.*

But do not use a hyphen between an adverb ending in *-ly* and an adjective. So, it is a *part-owned subsidiary*, but a *wholly owned subsidiary*.

Nouns ending in prepositions need a hyphen (*a build-up, to break down*), but their verb forms do not (*to build up, to break down*).

Prefixes must be joined, either directly or with a hyphen, to the word they belong to. For example: *overrate, over-estimate; semi-trailer, semiquaver; counter-attack, countermand; extra-mural, extraordinary; vice-chairman.*

When the prefix *re-* means *again* it takes a hyphen only when the word can be misread, usually when the main word starts with *e*. For example, *reappoint*, but *re-elect*. Be careful with words that have different meanings with and without hyphens: *recover* and *re-cover*, *relay* and *re-lay*, *re-sign* and *resign*.

Hyphens should be there in *four-minute mile*, where *four-minute* is a compound adjective, but not otherwise. It is *a middle-of-the-road party*, but *a party that sticks to the middle of the road*.

Don't use hyphens in compound words in which only one syllable is accented or in which the hyphen would look odd: *busybody, counteract, eavesdropping, hairdresser, schoolboy, teapot, teetotaller, wheelbarrow*. While we have a *23-year-old man*, he is not *23-years-old*. He is *23 years old*. You must also tie the number to the word year (or week or whatever it is). If you think it doesn't matter, look at the difference between *two year-old horses* and *two-year-old horses*.

Hyphens and slashes

The hyphen used to link numbers indicates a range; *1000-2000* means those numbers and all between them. Writing *1000/2000* generally means those two numbers, not inclusive of those in between.

QUESTION MARKS

Direct questions should be followed by a question mark, not a full stop. (*How many politicians do this sort of thing?*) But when a question is merely part of a statement (*I wonder how many politicians do this sort of thing.*) use a full stop.

Most of our papers avoid punctuation, including question marks, in headings.

QUOTATION MARKS

It is a cardinal rule that what people say is reported accurately. This can be difficult, especially with politicians, because it is sometimes hard to know exactly what their words mean. If you are reporting a speech delivered at a lunch or dinner, it may also be difficult to ask the speaker to explain what he or she meant.

Follow the rules here and you'll keep yourself out of trouble:

- anything between quotes should be exactly what was said.

In his address to the forum the Prime Minister said: "Let me just make the point – and I say this often – that this Government had no intention – not now, not in the future, not ever – of giving in to those who have it in their minds to commit acts of terrorism on the peoples of the national of Australia"

- it is acceptable to tidy up people's minor grammatical faults and interpolations such as

“y’know”, but be careful not to change the meaning of their statements.

The Prime Minister said: “This Government had no intention – not now, not in the future, not ever – of giving in to those who have it in their minds to commit acts of terrorism.”

- if more work is needed turn it into indirect speech.

The Prime Minister said his government would never give in to terrorists.

Style points

- if a comment can be best expressed in indirect speech, avoid quotes do not use partial quotes unless necessary. (For example, the partial quote would be justified if the Prime Minister said the unions were “a bunch of pigheaded morons”, but not when the quoted material merely conveys information: *Police said the thieves stole “two crates of sporting goods”.*)
- avoid using brackets to introduce explanatory material inside the quote, as in “*They (the unions) are pigheaded morons (because of their refusal to negotiate).*” Better to say: *The Prime Minister said the unions were “a bunch of pigheaded morons” because of their refusal to negotiate.*
- if words are left out of a quote, show it, as in “*They are...pigheaded morons,*” he said. But: *The Prime Minister said the unions were “pigheaded morons” because of their refusal to negotiate.*
- when a new speaker is introduced, put his or her name before the quote, either by using indirect speech (*Prime Minister Peter Latham said the unions were at fault...*) or by using a colon (*Prime Minister Peter Latham said: “They are a bunch of pigheaded morons.”*)
- Do not leave the reader wondering who is talking until the end of the quote. Except when they are essential for clarity, do not put in quotes: trade names, makes or models of cars or aircraft, sports events or trophies, fictional or stage characters, pets, ships, trains, names of royal, official or history houses, castles and palaces, nicknames, pen-names.

Punctuation

- when the quote is a complete sentence, the close quote mark goes outside the final punctuation. “*I am extremely hungry.*”
- when the quote is partial, the close quote mark goes inside the final punctuation. *He said he was “extremely hungry”.*
- a quote-in-a-quote carries single quote marks. “*He told me he was ‘extremely hungry’, so I gave him a biscuit.*”

SEMI-COLONS

Semi-colons are useful, especially in lists of names and offices where commas can confuse.

Don’t confuse the semi-colon and the colon. The sentence *I needed three things; a comma, a full stop and a question mark* needs the colon (:) after things, not the semi-colon.

SPELLING

The *Macquarie Dictionary* is the reference for the spelling of words not listed in this book.

GENERAL

our as opposed to –or (humour or humor?)

The choice between these endings or words such as *harbour, glamour* and so on remains one of the most contentious choices in spelling. As far as News Limited goes –*our* is the choice. But do

not change the official spelling of organisations, ships, buildings or the titles of books, movies etc. Thus, it is *Australian Labor Party* but *British Labour Party*.

Doubling consonants in word endings (*totalling or talling?*)

The general rule for final consonants is to double them before adding the suffix if:

- The preceding vowel is a single letter (e.g. *wet, wetted, wetting*) and the accent is on the last syllable before the suffix (*regret, regretted*). To illustrate: *occur; occurred, occurring; defer; deferred, deferring; budget, budgeted, budgeting; rivet, riveting, riveted; fever, fevered, feverish*.
- Unfortunately this is only a general rule, with many exceptions, such as *format/formatted; kidnap/kidnapped; program/programmed*.
- Words ending in *-l* do not appear to follow any particular rule. Thus, we have: *channel, channelled, channelling; devil, devilry, devilish; equal, equalled, equalise; libel, libelled, libellous; total, totalled, totality*.

Use the spellings listed here and in the alphabetical sections of this book. Otherwise, use the first listed spelling of the *Macquarie Dictionary*.

Eliminating the etymological digraph (*anaemic or anemic?*)

A digraph is a combination of vowels such as *-ae* or *-oe*, as in *haemoglobin* and *foetus*. Attempts are being made to weed them out of the language, with spellings such as *paediatrician* and *archaeology* beginning to take hold, as is *fetus* (which was the original Latin spelling anyway, the *oe* not being added until the 14th century).

- However, we cannot make a rule. Look up each word in this guide. And do not alter the spelling of an organisation such as the Regional and General Paediatricians Society.

-ise not -ize (realise or realize?)

The suffix *-ise* is our style. Do not try to apply this to words like *capsize* where *-ize* is not a suffix.

-or and -er noun endings (impostor or imposter?)

The agentive nouns ending in *-or* and *-er* are a contradictory mixture. Historically, *-or* was the Latin suffix while English added *-er* to coin new agentives from its own verbs. If in doubt, the only sure answer is to consult the dictionary.

-ed/-et endings

We prefer *burnt* not *burned*; *learnt* not *learned* (although *learned*, pronounced learn-ed, is in use among lawyers when referring to each other in court).

As a general guide the *-or* suffix is likely to be attached to Latin stems ending in the following: **at-** *agitator, demonstrator, spectator*; **it-** *auditor, creditor, monitor*; **ut-** *distributor, interlocutor, prosecutor*; **ct-** *collector, contractor, instructor*; **nt-** *inventor, precentor*; **st-** *imposter, investor, transistor*; **ns-** *censor, sponsor*; **s-** *divisor, incisor, supervisor*.

There are many exceptions such as: *adviser, digester, presser, computer, dispenser, preventer, conteste, molester, promoter, decanter, presenter, protester*.

-ible and -able endings

The *-ible* and *-able* adjectives provide a problem. Like the *-er* and *-or* agentives, the variation depends on Latin versus English formations, but a pattern is even more difficult to establish. It might be helpful to note that new or recent formations will probably end with *-able*.

Attempts have failed to make a universal rule for words ending in *-eable* (*likeable* or *likable*). What follows is the spelling for common *-ible* and *-able* words. If the word you are looking for is not here, use the first spelling in the Macquarie Dictionary:

-IBLE	discernible	indefeasible	permissible
accessible	divisible	indefensible	persuasive
admissible	edible	indelible	plausible
audible	eligible	indestructible	reducible
collapsible	exemptible	indigestible	reprehensible
comprehensible	expressible	inexhaustible	responsible
compressible	fallible	inflexible	reversible
contemptible	feasible	intangible	submersible
convertible	flexible	intelligible	suggestible
corruptible	forcible	irresistible	suppressible
credible	gullible	legible	susceptible
deducible	incorrigible	negligible	tangible
deductible	incorruptible	ostensible	transmissible
digestible	incredible	perceptible	visible
-ABLE			
demonstrable	inviolable	respectable	
actionable	detestable	irreconcilable	sanctifiable
adorable	dissolvable	likable	serviceable
advisable	drinkable	lovable	sizeable
agreeable	forgettable	manageable	teachable
amiable	forgivable	movable	tenable
arguable	immovable	notable	tolerable
believable	impenetrable	noticeable	traversable
calculable	improvable	palatable	treasonable
changeable	inadmissible	peaceable	uncontrollable
chargeable	inalienable	personable	undeniable
collectable	incalculable	preferable	unendurable
comfortable	inconceivable	preventable	unmistakable
conceivable	incurable	provable	unshakable
contestable	indispensable	reasonable	
debatable	inestimable	regrettable	
definable	inflatable	removable	

-y or -ie as colloquial endings (*footie* or *footy*?)

Colloquialisms formed in this way need to be standardised as much as possible. Taking as a yardstick the expression *Aussie* (who could spell it *Aussy*?) the *-ie* ending is generally preferred for that type of word. (Notable exceptions to this are *footy*, *aunty*, *daddy*, *mummy*,

broolly.) This also avoids the minor risk of confusion between some nouns and adjectives such as *junkie* (addict) and *junky* (trashy); *bushie* (outback type) and *bushy* (thickly grown); *hippie* (flower child) and *hippy* (with wide hips). Consult the dictionary when in doubt.

Compound (multi-part) nouns, verbs, adjectives and (occasionally) adverbs

See punctuation section for general style on hyphens. Expressions formed of two or more words often evolve from separate words through hyphenation to one word. All three forms may coexist.

Noun child care, child-care, childcare

Verb side swiped, side-swiped, sideswiped

Adjective kind hearted, kind-hearted, kindhearted

Adverb back handedly, back-handedly, backhandedly.

The form may depend on where the pieces sit in the sentence: *The childcare centre employs child-carers who know all about child care*. But the hyphenated form is the least liked and often the shortest-lived.

Double-barrelled examples can progress quickly to one word, but the multi-barrelled seem rarely to make it out of hyphens, although adverbs such as nevertheless conceivably began as three words.

Hyphens work well enough adjectivally when used in “a devil-may-care attitude” and “a live-and-let-live situation”, but beware the too-much-of-a-good-thing trap.

Compounds beginning with over- and under- (including adverbs like overzealously and understatedly) generally are one word except for the rarities like over-religious.

Say five-year-olds and six-year-olds instead of five- and six-year-olds, and likewise in similar cases of back-to-back compounds.

Compounds containing adverbs, like “heavily guarded fortress”, are adjectives.

Cock-a-doodle-do can be a noun and a verb.

It’s a multi-million-dollar Tattsлото win.

Will-‘o-the-wisps often are ne’er –do-wells.

Hyphenated prefixes (cooperate or co-operate?)

It is still standard practice to use hyphens in words in which the prefix ends with the same letter as the first letter of the root word (*re-enter*, *co-operate*, *co-ordinate*, *re-establish*). Also use hyphens to distinguish between words of different meaning: *re-bound* (bound again), *rebound* (bounce back); *resign* (quit), *re-sign* (sign on again).

1. semi (-):

This takes a hyphen when it is part of a compound adjective preceding a noun: *a semi-detached house*; *a semi-skilled worker*. But there is no hyphen when it is used as an adverb and appears after the noun: *The house is semi detached*; *the worker is semi skilled*. Same for *ill-* and *well-*

2. Compounds: semidarkness, semi-final, semi-finalist, semi-official and semi-trailer.

Plurals of words ending with “o” (*dingos* or *dingoes*?)

Of the several hundred nouns ending in “o”, only a few carry the “oes” plural – although many are those most often used. When in doubt, consult the Macquarie Dictionary. Fowler offers some rules that are only generally true:

1. Words used as freely in the plural as in the singular usually have –oes. So, *banjos; bravoes; cargoes; dingoes; dominoes, flamingos; heroes; potatoes.*
2. Monosyllables take –oes; so *goes, noes.*
3. Words whose plural is seldom used or is restricted have –os; so *crescendos; dittos, guanos; infernos; lumbagos*
4. The curtailed words made by dropping the second element of a compound or the later syllables have –os; so *chromos; dynamos; magnetos; photos; pros; stylos*
5. Alien-looking or otherwise odd words have –os; so *albinos; commandos; fiascos; ghettos; lingos, medicos*
6. Long words tend to –os; so *archipelagos; armadillos; manifestos; generalissimos*

Feminine endings

Few remain. The *aviatrix* had long flown. But retain best *actress* in awards; use *governess* in the sense of home teacher; retain the distinction between a *blonde* and a *blond* and a *fiancé* and a *fiancée*; and *waitress* just won't go away.

NAMES

If you get a name wrong the credibility of the entire story falls down. If readers see you've got this simple thing wrong, why should they believe you've checked the other facts in the story?

The responsibility for checking names is entirely the writer's. It is impossible for a sub-editor to know whether the author meant to write "Johnson" or "Johnston" or "Jonson".

Few things irritate subs more than finding a name spelt two ways in a story. Make sure this doesn't happen.

It is therefore important for reporters to check not only the spelling of the name of the person they are talking to, but also that they haven't accidentally included a typo in the story. How easy is it to type "Flower" instead of "Fowler"? How will the sub know which one is meant?

And as more reporters do voice reports for their websites it becomes important also to find out how names are pronounced (see the Web section). Asking the person to whom they are referring is the best way.

Get into the habit of checking every single name you ever put in a story, however simple and obvious it may seem.

And get into the habit of re-reading stories for inconsistencies in spelling. Is it Ann or Anne? Philip or Phillip? Jon or John? Brown or Browne? Mary-Ann or Mary-Anne or Maryanne or Mary Ann or Marian or Marion?

Take care on the phone, too. If someone says their name is Jones, are you sure they didn't say "Johns"? Check and double check. It might be Jones or Johns – but it might be Jonze. (AUS film director has that name.) Go through it letter by letter with the interview. Never assume, never get it wrong.

You might feel a bit silly asking someone how they spell Edward, but you will feel even sillier when you discover next day, after your story is in print, that it is Edouard. The first name of a Melbourne PR man was Michel. It annoyed him no end to see it in print as Michael.

Children

Be careful when identifying children. Publishing full names can result in inappropriate behaviour (such as offensive phone calls) towards people who can be traced through directories. There also

have been cases where identifying children has breached orders relating to custody and access. Always check with a parent or guardian to make sure it is okay to identify a child.

Famous names

Names always need checking (see following pages for the spelling of some difficult names). Where there is doubt over a spelling and confirmation is not readily available check to see what version is most often used.

Accident victims

When the names of accident victims are withheld because next of kin have not been told, say the names are *not available*. Avoid saying *police have released the names of...* (simply give the names of the people when appropriate to do so). Makes of cars are usually irrelevant in crashes – unless a collision happens between, say, a Rolls-Royce and a Mini Minor.

FOREIGN NAMES

These can be dangerous. Some Thai, Indian and Sri Lankan names can be more than a dozen letters long. Check every one.

The third and last name in an Asian name is not necessarily the surname. SBS presenter Lee Lin Chin calls herself Ms Chin, but her formal name is actually Chin Lee Lin.

As a guide:

Cambodian: Cambodians except members of the royal family use both their names in all references, for example *Pol Pot*.

Chinese: The family name is the first name. Thus *Lim Yew Lee* is *Mr Lim*.

Indonesian: The style varies from region to region. For example, *Sujatmo Martosuhardjo* is *Mr Sujatmo*; but *Ali Alatas* is *Mr Alatas*. Raden, Datuk and Tengku are titles, not names. You will have to ask.

Japanese: In Japan the family name comes first: *Yamnanaka Ichiro*. But when speaking or writing English the custom is to reverse the order, so you would refer to *Mr Ichiro Yamnanaka*, then *Mr Yamnanaka*.

Korean: The last two names are hyphenated. Otherwise use the same style as with Chinese. Thus *Yoo Ji-hwan* is *Ms Yoo*.

Thai: Most Thais have two names. The first is the given name and the second the family name. Use both names on first mention, then use the first only. So *Chuan Leekpai* is *Mr Chuan*.

Vietnamese: Most Vietnamese have three names. Although the first is the family name, the last name is the one by which people are usually addressed. For example, *Pham Viet Thanh* should be referred to as *Mr Thanh*.

PLACE NAMES

These are traps, especially those from Aboriginal languages. Woollongong or Wollongong? Woollongabba or Woolloongabba? This book lists many (see following sections, included A-Z). If it's not here, use the postcodes list in the phone book or an atlas. Do not guess. Don't necessarily trust the spellings in previous reports, whether you are reading them on a database (including Wikipedia) or in a paper. If the spelling has been wrong previously it may not have been corrected.

A to Z list of word use, spelling, punctuation and grammar

A

abbreviations

Abbreviations and acronyms are constructions formed from the initial letters of groups of words. Familiar abbreviations are RAAF, ACTU, MIM, BHP, CJC. Some acronyms have become words. These include Anzac, Qantas, laser, radar, scuba, flak, gestapo, Nazi. Many others are not written as words, although often pronounced as words. These include WRAN, ASIO, NATO, CSIRO, NASA, TAFE, EARC (Williams, 1975: 141). Most should be written in full at first reference, followed by the acronym in brackets. Note that no full stops are included. Avoid adopting (or inventing) obscure acronyms. Use the full title at first reference, then generic terms such as ‘the association’, ‘the group’ or ‘the committee’ in later references.

Aboriginal people, Aborigines Use ‘Aboriginal’ as the adjective, ‘Aborigine(s)’ as the noun (note the capital A). The preferred noun form is ‘Aboriginal people’. The names ‘Koori’ (NSW, Victoria or Tasmania) and ‘Murri’ (Qld) may be used where geographically appropriate and are often preferred by Aboriginal people. Other state names are ‘Nungar’ South Australia and ‘Nyungar’ Western Australia. The term ‘Black’ should be avoided: it is not a meaningful description and may be considered offensive by many Aborigines. On the other hand it is appropriate to quote an Indigenous person using the term.

Do not confuse Torres Strait Islanders with Aborigines. Although the two peoples often work together for political purposes, they do not have the same heritages and cultures. ‘Indigenous Australians’ is a term that covers both peoples.

absolutely is both overused and misused. It means free from imperfection, complete, perfect, but is often wrongly used to mean ‘I agree’, or rather ‘I strongly agree’ but is overused when it occurs several or many times in a single conversation. Such ubiquitous perfection is extremely rare, not common.

accents (See also **foreign words**) Many words in common use originally had accented letters which are no longer used – cafe, cliché, façade, rôle. Where not using the accent could cause confusion, it should be retained – the noun *résumé* (NOT *résumé*) as distinguished from the verb *resume*. Some words and phrases have not been so Anglicised and retain their accents (*vis-à-vis*). Names with accents should normally retain them – John le Carré.

accommodate, accommodation frequently misspelled. Note double c and double m.

according to Contains a hint of suspicion. Prefer ‘said’. The alternative ‘according to’ may be useful in introductions, in which case the paragraph should be in present tense. (See **indirect speech**.)

active voice This is the form used wherever possible in news writing. Use the active form:

The hammer hit the nail.

rather than the passive form:

The nail was hit by the hammer.

The word ‘by’ is often an indication that passive voice has been used.

actor/actress no need to distinguish gender. Use **actor** for both, unless source insists. (See Miss, Ms, Mrs)

AD, BC historic references. AD is before the date. BC is after the date.

admissible notice –ible

adviser not advisor, but advisory

affect/effect ‘Affect’ is always a verb and can mean ‘have an effect on’, ‘pretend’, or ‘pose as’. It should not be confused with ‘effect’.

Alcohol affects people’s ability to drive.

He affects ignorance. ‘Effect’ can be a noun or verb. As a noun, it means ‘result produced’ or ‘consequence’: The effects of alcohol on driving ability can be measured. Bright colours give the effect of spaciousness. As a verb, ‘effect’ means ‘bring about’ or ‘accomplish’: The rubber dinghy was used to effect a rescue. But this final use is best not used in journalism. Better to say, ‘The rubber dinghy was used to rescue the crew’.

afflict, inflict where the former is to receive discomfort; the latter to impose it.

age teenage, school-age, old-age. Also see **numbers**. A 19-year-old girl is hyphenated thus, whereas a 19 year-old as a noun has only the one hyphen

-age don’t use in usage, wastage, signage; prefer use, waste and signs.

aggravate means ‘make worse’. It should not be given the meaning of ‘irritate’.

AIDS is acronym for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, and follows symptoms of a person being first HIV positive. A person who is HIV positive does not necessarily go on to suffer from AIDS but they do carry the virus which causes it. Don’t write HIV virus, because the v in HIV stands for virus. People don’t die from AIDS, but they can die from an AIDS related illness.

‘a lot’ don’t use. It does not mean ‘a large amount’. There may be some confusion with the related verb ‘allot’, which means ‘assign’ or ‘distribute by lot’. Also allotting and allotted.

all time high/low use with caution as the claims are difficult for reporters to verify. Best used only when quoting source.

allege use sparingly. Better, after a charge has been referred to to use **claim, argue**. All right to quote barristers saying ‘the crown will allege that...’.

allude means to refer indirectly – modestly to a person’s achievements, passage from a novel.

Don’t confuse with **elude** meaning to avoid capture. **Allusion** is the noun form. Don’t confuse with **illusion** which is a fanciful image.

al-Qa’ida Islamic organisation.

‘alright’ One of the great non-words, whose ubiquity may suggest legitimacy. This is a confusion with such forms as ‘already’ (compare with ‘all ready’), ‘although’ and ‘always’. The only correct form is still all right.

alternate switching between two choices. Frequently confused with **alternative** meaning taking another choice. So you have **alternative routes, alternative lifestyles**. But day **alternates** with night.

alumnus is a graduate of a university. Being Latin, there are also issues of number (plural/singular) and gender. **Alumni** is the (masculine) plural for the body of graduates, assuming in Roman culture they were men. However **alumna** is a female graduate, and **alumnae** its plural. It makes it difficult to speak of 21st century graduates in non sexist terms. The practice is to use the masculine plural. Fairest is to speak of alumni and alumnus for both genders. Alumni is used to describe the association of graduates formed for the purpose of fundraising for the university.

Americanisms Parts of American English are common in Australia because of the amount of American literature Australia imports and the influence of American-based publishers

and entertainment. In itself, this is not a bad thing — many American words have been incorporated usefully into Australian English (eg, teenager, babysitter, commuter). But it does not follow that Australians should exchange perfectly good words, expressions and spellings that may have cultural and historical relevance for those that have little or none. Americanisms to be avoided include:

airplane, aluminum, baby carriage, broil, cookie, diaper, dike, elevator, eyeglasses, faucet, fender, fire department, fit (for fitted), flashlight, French fries, gasoline, gotten, gray, ground beef, intermission, jewelry, math, mom, mortician, mustache, necktie, oarlock, railroad, restroom, rowboat, sailboat, salesclerk, sidewalk, slingshot, spit (for spat), sulfur, windowshade, windshield. Avoid such constructions as ‘2am Friday’ (on Friday). Note also that spelling rules differ. See **-our/or endings**. Use the *Macquarie Dictionary* as a guide.

among/between Logic dictates that ‘between’ must refer to two objects only: ‘Between you and me’. The preposition ‘among’ refers to three or more objects: ‘It was divided among the 200 survivors’.

It is sometimes awkward, however, to apply this rule. Fowler (1965: 57) cites the cases of ‘the space among three points’ and ‘a treaty among three powers’, in which among is inappropriate and ‘between’ should be used. Take care not to use prepositions loosely: ‘centre around’, for instance, is clearly an impossibility; ‘at about’ is a contradiction.

amongst, amidst, whilst Avoid the decorative, old-fashioned ‘whilst’, ‘amongst’, ‘amidst’, ‘unbeknownst’, ‘albeit’ etc. Use the simpler ‘while’, ‘among’, ‘amid’ ...

anticipate Does not mean only ‘expect’, but to do something in expectation. In any case it is longer than ‘expect’.

‘anytime’, ‘anymore’, ‘anyday’ These should be two separate words.

apostrophe The apostrophe is probably the most commonly abused punctuation mark. The apostrophe has the function of indicating **ownership** or **abbreviation**. In itself, it has **nothing to do with plurals**.

We are all, unfortunately, familiar with ‘fish and chip’s’, the ‘1960’s’ and many other examples of the signwriter’s or advertising artist’s lack of grammar. Note that attempts to signify plurals with apostrophes are common in much popular literature. However, it is pointless and illogical to include apostrophes in such examples as ‘BMW’s’, ‘MP’s’, ‘VIP’s’, ‘the Roaring 20’s’ and so on.

Use of the apostrophe to indicate **ownership** is simple: in singular nouns an apostrophe is followed by ‘s’. In plural nouns that have the plural ‘s’ ending, the apostrophe follows the ‘s’. For example ‘a hen’s teeth’, ‘five hens’ teeth’. Note that plural nouns, such as people, children, men, women, cattle, sheep, take the apostrophe, followed by the ‘s’ — ‘people’s, children’s, men’s’.

Time also can ‘own’, eg. ‘today’s paper’, ‘yesterday’s heroes’, ‘last year’s crop’ ... Peculiar ‘rules’ have been invented in the distant past to deal with the apparent problem of singular nouns that end in ‘ss’ and names that end in ‘s’. This is a result of confusion with the rules for plurals and the outcome includes such oddities as ‘ass’milk’, ‘the actress’ role’, ‘Goss’ government’ or ‘Jones’ batting’. Even in 1973 Partridge (1973: 129) finds this usage quaint. There is no logical reason and, therefore, no grammatical reason not to apply the same rules to almost all singular nouns. The logical and accepted forms are ‘ass’s milk’, ‘the actress’s role’, ‘Goss’s government’, ‘Jones’s batting’, just as in spoken English (Fowler, 1965: 511). Plurals of names ending in ‘s’ behave in the same way as other plurals: ‘the Joneses’

house', 'the Albert-Rosses' gluttony'. Simply construct the plural (see **plurals**) and add the apostrophe. Other tricky apostrophes are when they refer to two nouns: 'Chris and Dinah's house' because they share the one dwelling, but 'Chris's and Dinah's reputations' because they are individual. The apostrophe is often omitted from the names of organisations: Australian Journalists Association, Queensland Teachers Credit Union. It may also be omitted in the names of some institutions (Brisbane Girls Grammar School) but not others (Brisbane Boys' Grammar). These should always be checked.

Place names in Australia no longer carry apostrophes. Do not use an apostrophe in such place names as Slacks Creek, Browns Plains, Dohles Rocks, Flinders View, Moores Pocket, Queens Beach.

Contractions of verbs are signified by an apostrophe: I'll (I will), won't (will not), they're (they are), didn't (did not), can't (cannot), let's (let us), it's (it is) and so on. It is not normally print style to use such contractions unless in direct speech. Contractions of nouns usually no longer carry the apostrophe: phone, flu, plane, bus, burger.

Contractions must not be confused with possessive pronouns that are already possessive and require no apostrophe. The possessive pronouns include whose, his, hers, their, theirs, our, ours, your, yours and its. Do not confuse the possessive pronoun '**its**' with the contraction '**it's**'. An easy way to remember is to note that the apostrophe stands for the missing 'i'.

Similarly, watch the confusion between contraction and possessive in 'who'. 'Who's' is the contraction of 'who is' but 'whose' is the possessive of 'who'.

appeal against a decision. We do not appeal a decision. Similarly we **protest** against government policy.

appraise is to assess the size or value of something. Often confused with **advise** meaning to inform. But advise should not be used in news writing.

appropriate is an overused word. Use with care. If a news source says 'I don't think it's appropriate that...' the first question the reporter should ask is 'why?'. If there is a logical rationale, fine. Use it. If not don't use it, because the word appropriate is merely standing in for 'I don't approve', or 'I don't like'.

around/round use 'around' as the preposition: 'around the corner', 'around here'. Use 'round' as the adjective, verb or noun: 'a round dozen', 'to round the Horn', 'a round of meetings'.

as regards Avoid this construction. Instead of 'as regards the meeting between the politician and journalist not happening' Simply say 'the reason the politician and journalist did not meet ...' (See also 'in order to' / 'in relation to' / 'in respect of')

asylum seekers are people without travel documents seeking protection in a foreign country.

They achieve **refugee** status when they are allowed to stay. Under international law anybody can apply for asylum. Consequently, it is meaningless to speak of illegal asylum seekers, queue jumpers, and so on. By far the minority of asylum seekers in Australia arrive by boat. It makes sense to speak of 'illegal immigrants' who are people arriving in Australia without visas who are not seeking asylum, or people who have overstayed visas.

at this point in time do not use this hackneyed phrase, when you mean **now** or **then**.

attorney Not used to mean lawyer in Australia. **Attorney-General** is Australia's government minister responsible for legal issues. Plural is **attorneys-general**.

attribution statements and comments must be attributed to the person who made them. Facts must be attributed to their source, unless they are absolutely a matter of common knowledge, for example, that the earth revolves around the sun.

See also **comma, direct speech, indirect speech.**

author ungendered title for men and women. Don't use authoress. Also wrongly used as a verb. Books are written, not authored.

avatar Originally Hindu to describe the descent of a divine being to earth; in social networking it has come to mean the persona or representation adopted by participants in chat rooms or games.

Ayers Rock preferable to use the indigenous name **Uluru**, which has been the practice since it was handed back to Indigenous people in the 1980s.

B

baby Mothers don't give birth to baby girls or baby boys. They give birth to boys or girls.

BAC blood alcohol content (See **per cent**)

back yard, backyard A 'backyard' is as awkward as a 'backverandah' or a 'frontyard'. 'Back yard' is the adjective-noun form and 'backyard' is the adjective. A backyard mechanic works in the back yard. Many other combinations of 'back' can be happily fused, eg, backlog, backside, backslide, background.

believe No journalist knows what is going on inside another person's mind. So it is impossible to report: 'Mr Smith believes the course of action was correct.' The report should read: 'Mr Smith said he believed the course of action was correct.' That is, journalists report what people say, not what they believe people are thinking.

basically overused. Avoid.

basis overused. Avoid in constructions such as 'We often see uncle Simon on a needs basis' when you mean uncle Simon visits us when he needs money.

bear and **bare** are often confused. The first is an animal, or 'loads we must bear'; while the second is unadorned, uncovered.

best (hyphenation) best-dressed, best-liked, best man, bestseller, best-selling.

best and **better** are often confused. You cannot have the best of two, nor can one of two be the most something: it is 'better' and 'more' respectively. The 'best' of three or more is fine, as is 'most'.

besties is current speak for best mates.

best practice often 'world's best practice'. Often a hyperbolic claim. Impossible to verify. Use it only quoting sources, if then.

Bible when referring to *the book*, initial cap, but not italic. Otherwise lower case for biblical. But the style guide is the journalists' bible.

billion is one thousand million. That is, 9 zeros. (Previously an English billion was 12 zeros, that is one million million. Now standardised at 10⁹.)

bigger/biggest The '-er' ending in comparative adjectives is used when comparing two things or qualities only. The '-est' ending refers to three or more: 'elder brother' / 'eldest brother', 'deeper blue' / 'deepest blue'.

birther (rhymes with flat earther) a conspiracy theorist who insists in the face of all available evidence that Barack Obama was not born in the USA

Bjelke-Petersen Note the final '-en', not '-on'. Sir Joh was Queensland's longest-serving Premier.

black should not be used by reporters as a term describing indigenous Australians, Africans and African Americans. On the other hand it is quite appropriate for those peoples to use the term themselves to describe themselves.

black (hyphenation). Blackmail, blackout (n), black out (v) black tie, black-listed, black list (n). Prefer **bribe**.

blond (male), **blonde** (female).

bored with, NOT 'bored of'.

botanic gardens . Only Hobart has **botanical gardens**.

both (See **only**) The positioning of 'both' should be precise:

It is incorrect to write, 'She was eating both from a plate and a bowl'. It is either,

‘She was eating both from a plate and from a bowl’, **OR** (better) ‘She was eating from both a plate and a bowl’. Think about what ‘both’ applies to. This is even more the case with **only**. **bottom line** meaning the final addition, where all things are taken into account; another term for ‘in the final analysis,’ both of which are empty. Perhaps more meaningful to say, ‘all things considered,’ but again this is meaningless unless all those things have already been discussed. Better to say ‘having considered the pros and cons,’ or ‘... strengths and weaknesses’ all of which should be made transparent.

bought and **brought** are often confused. Bought is the past tense of buy; brought is the past tense of bring. One is a purchase. The other is the act of carrying.

boyzilian wax See **manscaping**.

Brahmin for Hindu priest and Indian-derived cattle common in Australia as pure and hybrid.

Braford, for example, is a hybrid of **Brahmin** and **Hereford** cattle, with the former’s endurance and the latter’s beefiness.

brake and **break** are sometimes confused. Brake is the device which, when applied, stops vehicles, winches etc. A break, on the other hand is a short halt in the work day – coffee break, lunch break etc – or when something is broken. ‘The car refused to start because it had a break in the fuel line’.

brand names Many former (and existing) brand names, such as aspro, kleenex, esky, hoover, thermos, perspex, nylon, crimplene, pyrex, tarmac, corn flakes, bowser and cellophane, have been absorbed into the language and no longer carry the capital. But many others must be recognised as registered brand names and the capital retained. Indeed, newspapers will receive threats of legal action from owners of registered trade names if their trade name is used as a common noun. Such trade names include the familiar Coke, Breathalyser, Boogie board (body board), Biro, Glad Wrap, Hills Hoist, Primus, Roller Blades, Vaseline, Velcro, Walkman, Polaroid, Laundromat, Stubbies (shorts), Masonite, Land-Rover, Jeep, LandCruiser, Vegemite, Weet-Bix, Hoover, Xerox, Mixmaster, Levi’s. If in doubt, use the generic name — four-wheel-drive vehicle for Land-Rover, for instance, or ball-point pen for Biro.

broach is when you raise a contentious topic in a conversation. ‘The wife broached the topic of her husband’s infidelity’ **Brooch** is jewellery. Same pronunciation.

buildup (n) build up (v)

bulkbill

burka not burqa, traditional garment for arabic women, giving full body cover including the face, with just a slit for the eyes.

Burma is the preferred name for the country also known as ‘Myanma’, which was the name given it in 1989 by the ruling military junta.

burned (v) the house burned down. **burnt** (adj) the burnt out house. **burn-off** burn undergrowth to make it fireproof. **Back-burn** burning from firebreak against the wind to prevent an approaching bushfire by using up its fuel. **Burns victim**.

C

cache/cachet are often confused. ‘Cache’ (pronounced ‘kaysh’) is a collection of hidden weapons. Whereas ‘cachet’ (pronounced ‘kashay’) means having kudos, style, power.

caddie (golf), **caddy** (tea).

callous unfeeling; **callus** hardened skin.

cannon weapon; **canon**, main body of literary work etc.

canvas fabric used in the manufacture of tents or tarpaulins. **canvass** to seek opinions, informally.

capitals Use of capital initial letters is declining as written language moves away from ‘officialese’. Overuse of capitals makes reading difficult and is poor design. However, where a capital forms part of the official name or title, it should be retained –

The University of Queensland; The Australian; The Age; However, the University of Western Sydney; the Herald Sun.

No complete rule can be established on capitalisation but some observations are:

i) Organisations’ names used in full should be capitalised but not capitalised when shortened:

The University of Queensland/the university, the Immigration Department/the department, the Liberal Party/the party, the Queensland Teachers’ Union/the union, Brisbane City Council/the council, CJC/the commission. ii) Government terms should not be capitalised unless the word has another meaning and is capitalised to show that it is being used in its governmental sense. Thus ‘Federal Government/Federal Parliament’ and ‘State Government/State Parliament’ if referring to specific governments – the Rudd Federal Government, the Bligh State Government. Otherwise ‘federal government funding/parliament’ or ‘state government projects/parliament’ are not capitalised. Similarly, the ‘federal Opposition’, ‘the Coalition’, ‘State Cabinet’, ‘government Minister’, Act, Bill, and Speaker are, but only when making specific reference.

iii) Convention holds that titles of high public, regal or vice-regal office are capitalised, so: ‘the Queen’ (not ‘Queen Elizabeth’), ‘the Prime Minister’, ‘the Treasurer’, ‘the Attorney-General’, ‘the Governor-General’, ‘the Governor’, ‘the US President’. Note, however, that ‘the princess’ or ‘the duke’ are lower case, as is the non-specific ‘the queen’.

iv) Job titles are generally not capitalised to distinguish them from names and organisations in what would otherwise be a long string of capitals. For example: ‘Foxtel chief executive officer John Bloggs’. Likewise, ‘state director’, ‘president’, ‘general manager’ and other positions should not be capitalised even though it is bureaucratic practice to do so.

v) Capitals should be used sparingly with animal names. Use common names ‘sulphur-crested cockatoo’, ‘blue-tongue lizard’, ‘black bream’, ‘cocker spaniel’, ‘fox terrier’, ‘green tree frog’, ‘blue whale’, etc, as well as breed names ‘brahman’, ‘droughtmaster’, ‘mallard’, ‘brangus’, ‘braford’ etc.

Some common names, such as ‘Siberian tiger’, ‘Welsh corgi’, ‘Old-English sheep dog’, ‘French poodle’, ‘Irish wolfhound’ and ‘Queensland blue’, that is, names that retain an existing, well-known locality name, often retain their capitals, while most place-name breed names have lost theirs. These include ‘afghan’, ‘arab’, ‘chihuahua’, ‘clydesdale’, ‘orpington’,

‘tamworth’, ‘berkshire’, ‘merino’, ‘jersey’, ‘friesian’, ‘hereford’, ‘siamese’, ‘pekinese’, ‘alsation’, ‘rottweiler’ and ‘weimeraner’. The differentiation is not clear, but favour the lower-case initial - ‘german shepherd’ is now accepted.

- vi) Genus and species names are written in italics. The first or generic name is capitalised and the second, the species name, is not. Examples: *Homo sapiens*, *Aquila audax*, *Mus musculus*, *Lutjanus argentimaculatus*. If italics are not or cannot be used, words to be italicised should be underlined by hand to bring them to the attention of the subs.
- vii) People’s nationalities and languages must carry a capital initial. Even though ‘arab’ and ‘afghan’ correctly identify the animals, the people so described are Arabs and Afghans. The French speak French, Australians speak English, Jews may speak Hebrew or Yiddish, we say Chinese speak Mandarin or Cantonese, Aztecs spoke Nahuatl.
- viii) The names of games are in lower case where logical. So, ‘rugby league’, ‘rugby union’, ‘badminton’, ‘indian wrestling’, ‘stableford event’, but ‘Australian rules’, ‘American football’. Note, however, the names of governing bodies in sport, such as the Australian Football League, Australian Rugby Union, the New South Wales Rugby League, are capitalised.
- xi) There are many instances where we don’t need caps, such as with geographical features – the Swat valley, the Niger delta and the Rocky mountains, for example.

cappuccino Not ‘capuchino’ or ‘cuppa chino’, or any of the other marvellous misspellings seen frequently on restaurant menus.

carbon neutral or having a net zero carbon footprint, means achieving net zero carbon emissions by balancing a measured amount of carbon released with an equivalent amount sequestered or offset through tree planting, etc.

caricature not ‘characterature’ meaning an exaggerated image of a person – political cartoons use caricatures.

caster sugar; **castor** oil.

cancel/censure (See also ‘cancel/censor’) Often confused. The first is to ban parts of or whole documents; the second is to admonish or silence a person.

centre on NOT ‘centre around’.

century Use ‘21st century’, ‘9th century’.

chairman or chairwoman. Or use **chair** but not ‘chairperson’. See **sexism/gender**.

chancellor or vice-chancellor of a university are lower case.

character – personal traits. Also a waggish person. See also **caricature**.

christian names refer only to Christian cultures. Moslems, Jews, Bhuddists have family and given names. Best to use **given name** for all situations.

claim can be used instead of **allege**, otherwise better to use **said**. Rarely, **claim** can suggest doubt over the truth of something said.

cliche (See also **foreign words**) If an originally clever expression has been used to death, it should be left dead. Stereotyped expressions expose tired, unimaginative thinking. See also Dow Jones list of Gobbledegook words <http://solutions.dowjones.com/campaigns/2009/gobbledygook/>

Avoid ‘like the plague’ the hundreds of expressions such as:

bite the bullet; blessing in disguise; blue sky thinking; conspicuous by his absence; cool, calm and collected; few and far between; from time immemorial; going forward; the heartbreaking task of cleaning up; heave a sigh of relief; in the fullness of time; legal minefield; lift the lid on; looking tanned and fit; nip in the bud; pull no punches; political wilderness; political dynamite; rain failed to dampen spirits; sadder but wiser; storm of protest; strategizing input; tired but happy; wend one’s way ... and so on.

Ugly stepsisters of the cliché are: i) the faded simile — ‘works like a dog’, ‘cool as a cucumber’, ‘fit as a fiddle’, ‘bright as a button’; ii) the inevitable adjective — ‘burning question’, ‘blissful ignorance’, ‘gaping hole’, ‘raging floodwater’, ‘shark-infested seas’, ‘brutal murder’, ‘horrific accident’; iii) the extinct nickname — ‘the Emerald Isle’, ‘the Lucky Country’, ‘Mother Nature’, ‘Jack Frost’, ‘Old Sol’; iv) the needless foreign or Latin phrase — ‘sine qua non’, ‘persona non grata’, ‘de rigueur’, ‘en passant’, ‘Schadenfreude’, ‘Weltanschauung’.

closure a cliché, overused, meaning somebody has resolved a situation, or solved a problem, or accepted a situation. Better to say any of those instead of closure, as they are clear and simple.

collective nouns should take on singular verbs and pronouns. ‘The Queensland Orchestra is the State’s only professional orchestra’. But sporting teams are often excepted. ‘The Geelong Cats will defend their title at this year’s grand final.’ (*See News Ltd section*).

collide Means the clash of two moving objects. It is not possible, for instance, for a moving vehicle to ‘collide’ with a tree. But two cars can collide. One car does not collide with another, as it implies the first was at fault.

colon See **dash**. *See also News Ltd section*. The colon has the special function of preparing the reader for what is to come, to indicate that what follows the colon buttresses what has gone before it. It can be summed up as a momentary pause for assessment. Murray-Smith (1990: 85) gives these examples:

And most marvellous of all: the astonishing silhouettes of animals from the ends of the earth, falcons from the Nile, greyhounds, green parrots, magnificent horses, camels from the far south.

On numerous occasions Mr Cupitt repeats the same basic idea: ‘there is no longer any privileged point from which the earth can be seen objectively and as it really is.’

Murray-Smith describes the colon as providing a pause more telling than a semi-colon, but less final than a full point.

We had only one thing to fear: fear. Note that the colon is not be followed by an initial capital unless it is used in question–answer series that occur often in courts or local government reporting. Note also the absence of quotation marks in this usage:

Smith: You were there.

Jones: I was not.

Smith: I suggest that you were.

See also **direct speech**.

comma (*See also News Ltd section*)

A prime purpose of the comma is to separate clauses. Partridge (1973: 253) gives this example:

And once I had discovered that there was no longer any doubt as to whether a spark of life still lingered in him.

The adverbial clause ‘once I had discovered that’ must be separated from the rest of the sentence if meaning is to be clear instantly.

And once I had discovered that, there was no longer any doubt as to whether a spark of life still lingered in him.

An example of the need for careful comma use is in these two sentences: The Prime Minister said the Governor-General was a drunk. The Prime Minister, said the Governor-General, was a drunk. Use the comma to separate words repeated or of a similar species – nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions. For example: The dark, silent depths of the sea are very, very difficult for me, you or anyone else to explore.

Dogs, cats, mice and rats ran, climbed, jumped on, over, around the crazily arranged collection.

But do not use commas before the conjunctions ‘but’ and ‘and’ unless not to use a comma could be at least temporarily confusing. For example:

His hat was black, and silver dollars formed its band. Use of the comma in parentheses is often misunderstood. Commas are used in this way only if what they separate from the rest of the sentence may be removed without making the sentence unviable. These are correct:

The managing director, John Bull, said profits would fall. A managing director, John Bull, said profits would fall. Smith Ltd’s managing director, John Bull, said profits would fall. John Bull, managing director of Smith Ltd, said profits would fall.

These are correct without commas: Managing director John Bull said profits would fall. Smith Ltd managing director John Bull said profits would fall.

These are incorrect:

Managing director, John Bull, said profits would fall. Smith Ltd managing director, John Bull, said profits would fall.

comment It is not the news reporter’s function to describe a situation or person as ‘controversial’, ‘well-known’ or ‘notorious’, for instance, unless the reporter is recording the view of some attributed source. In any case, if something is indeed controversial, well-known or notorious, public awareness usually makes labouring the point unnecessary.

commissioner and **commissionaire** are not the same. They do very different jobs. The first holds a senior management post in a commission, such as Queensland’s Criminal Justice Commission (CJC). The second is a uniformed messenger or door keeper in a hotel or apartment block.

common sense, common-sense Fusion has not occurred as in ‘commonplace’ and ‘commonwealth’. ‘Common sense’ is the noun. ‘Common-sense’ is the adjectival construction: ‘a common-sense decision’.

community Avoid ‘the Aboriginal community’, ‘Jewish community’, ‘gay community’ when what is meant is simply ‘Aborigines’, ‘Jews’, ‘gays’. Otherwise it is more acceptable to say Aboriginal people; Jewish people; and gay and lesbian people. Use ‘community’ when that is what is intended (see **euphemism**).

community outreach management speak used by public relations personnel meaning to work

on an organisation's image and reputation, by making it appear part of that community.

compare with is preferred to 'compare to'. **Contrast with** is also preferred.

complement/compliment Complement: that which makes perfect or whole, one of two things that go together, as in 'He said heritage listing would complement existing protections'.
Compliment: an expression of praise.

congenial/congenital are often confused. The first means a person with an agreeable, pleasant manner; the second is a person with an inherited disease or characteristic.

contractions Contractions ('can't', 'won't', 'haven't', etc) should NOT be used outside quotes in print news writing. However, when a person quoted uses a contraction, as most people do in speech, then write the contraction. Contractions are used more in broadcast reporting.

consensus means agreement within a group, so it is tautological to say 'consensus of opinion' or 'general consensus'.

contemptible describes behaviour or an attitude deserving of contempt. **Contemptuous** is a look or statement, showing contempt.

continual/continuous The first means proceeding without interruption: 'central police station is open continually'; the second is a string of linked events: 'West Coast looked like being continuous premiers'.

councillor/counsellor Note that councillors serve on councils and counsellors counsel people about their problems.

court martial (n) **court-martial** (v) **courts martial** (pl) **court-martialled** (past tense).

creative commons encourages authors and other creative people to donate selected writings, music, video, and other works for free exchange in the public domain, principally, the internet.

credible a believable person; **credulous** a person too ready to believe others.

crisis The word should not be used loosely for any awkward, dangerous or serious situation. It means a point at which a decisive change for better or worse is imminent; a turning point.

cross-examination uses a hyphen, otherwise it is simply a bad-tempered scrutiny.

crucial often wrongly used to mean important. It means involving a final and supreme decision.

curb and **kerb** are often confused. To curb speech is to limit or censor. The kerb is the hard edging to a road usually made from stone or concrete.

currant and **current** are often confused. The first is a dried fruit; the second is fluid movement: water, air or electricity. The second can also mean up to date, 'current thinking'.

cyclone is a strong wind in Australia, which does not have hurricanes, typhoons or tornados.

cypress a tree in western NSW and Qld. **Cyprus** the country in the Mediterranean.

D

dangling modifiers Dangling (or unattached) modifiers are a pernicious blight on writing.

Fighting for her life, the horrifying attack left X in a critical condition in hospital.

Depressed and unhappy, his work began to suffer.

Still standing after 100 years, he plans to restore the building to its former glory.

These are examples of writers' common failure critically to examine their writing to ensure that it makes sense. In these examples, the modifier, the phrase that seeks to describe a person or thing, appears to be modifying something else in the sentence. Always take care to see that modifiers and what they are modifying are clearly associated.

damp, dampen besides the literal sense of something being made wet, can mean to dull (criticism, for example). Presumably a metaphoric antonym of crisp, brittle, brilliant in sounds particularly.

dash Do not use a hyphen as a dash. Use an en-dash (–), which is longer than a hyphen and shorter than an em-dash. You can find the en-dash in MSWord in <Insert>, <Symbols>. The en-dash takes a space both before and after.

TIP: YOU CAN SET UP MSWORD TO REPLACE THE KEYBOARD HYPHEN AUTOMATICALLY WITH AN EN-DASH BY USING <TOOLS>, <AUTOCORRECT OPTIONS> AND <AUTOFORMAT>. CHECK THE BOX. THIS ALSO APPLIES TO ELLIPSIS AND QUOTATION MARKS.

data are NOT 'data is'.

date '26 March 2015' If you need to also write the day, use a comma, thus: 'Monday, 26 March 2015'. (Also see **time**.)

deaf, mute or **dumb**. Don't use. Use 'a person with speech disability, or hearing disability'. This avoids type-casting an entire person for what is a partial feature of their lives.

decimals better than fractions. But in principle best to translate numbers into words or rounding especially for broadcasting. So that 3 1/2 can be written 'three and a half,' if it's a number less than 10. Generally numbers less than 10 are written as words, unless they're being compared. For example, 5 people out of 7 prefer sausages at barbecues. But only five people turned up for the barbecue. If a fraction is awkward, that is, not half, quarter or even three quarters, decimals are best. So, 13.7 times is fine. For numbers less than one, use a zero in front of the decimal point. For example, 0.15 per cent. But for blood alcohol content, drop the zero, thus: .15. But don't use decimals if you are just showing broad trends, when detailed precision is not required.

decorations Civilian and military decorations are used in identifying a person only if the decoration has some special relevance to the news report or feature.

defence (n) **defensive, defensible** (adj). Note, American spelling doesn't use the 'c'.

definite not definate – a common mistake.

deleb a dead celebrity.

delusion should not be confused with illusion. The former is to get something wrong, make a wrong judgement in the face of contrasting evidence. The latter is a visual trick, used by magicians, for example.

dependant (n) **dependent** (adj)

descendant (n) and **descendent** (adj).

descendant and **ancestor** are often confused. Your descendents are your children, and their children etc. Your ancestors are your dead parents, grandparents etc. So, descendant is somebody descended from ancestors.

despite, not 'in spite of', which has negative connotations.

diagnosis/prognosis are sometimes confused. The first is a speculation about the cause of a problem, or sickness. It can apply to machinery or people. The second is the likely outcome. ‘The prognosis for economy is not good. We can expect further inflation,’ or ‘The prognosis for the patient’s recovery is good. She should be up and about in days’.

dietitian not dietician

different from rather than ‘different to’. Also **differ from**.

dint means by force of - ‘she convinced me through sheer dint of argument’. A car gets a **dent**, as does an ego.

disability is always used, largely because it is ‘adjectival’ in that it describes an aspect of a person’s life, rather than socially re-classifying them. Thus a person has hearing, speech or sight disability. They are still a person, not a blind man/woman, or deaf mute. A person **uses** a wheelchair, walking frame or stick because they have a disability. They are not handicapped or crippled in all aspects of life. Neither are they confined to a wheelchair (a similar totalising tendency). They simply use it when mobility is required. But ‘disability’ can be an awkward word at times. Occasional use of blind or deaf for reasons of style is understandable.

direct speech (*See also News Ltd section*)

Quotes must not be altered from what the person actually said. It is important that direct speech be correctly punctuated so that there is no doubt as to who said what. Quote marks go outside punctuation unless the quote is a partial quote beginning in mid-sentence. Note:

‘This is the way the world ends,’ he said.

He said: ‘This is the way the world ends.’ (But avoid this form of attribution)

He said this was ‘the way the world ends’.

Note that in a running quote, where a number of paragraphs in quotation marks are written in succession, the quotation marks are not closed until the final paragraph. Note also that the quote is attributed at the end of the first sentence.

‘I found evidence of large numbers of trivial crimes in urban areas that were largely unreported,’ Ms Tucker said.

‘More sinister was the serious violent crime in the villages, which were regularly cited as the idealisation of the traditional way of life.

‘Fiji was being sold to tourists as ‘the way the world should be’.

‘I found a horrendous amount of crime in the villages.’

Running quotes must record what was actually said in the order in which it was said; they must not be a collection of quotes from throughout an interview taken out of context and thrown together. Do not start a quote without having introduced the speaker, ideally in an indirect paragraph immediately before the quote.

An example of too frequent thoughtless quoting:

The Australian Rugby Union expressed concern about safety after plastic bottles were thrown at the Australian sevens side in Wellington last week.

‘To suggest that a country who hosts more rugby games in a year than any other in the world cannot run safely World Cup events is just childish and nonsense really,’ NZ Rugby Union general manager Steve Tew said.

The reader of such a quote has no idea that the speaker quoted is not an ARU spokesperson until the quote is complete. The reader has understood the quote to be from someone else as it is being read and has a right to be intensely irritated to find the context assumed is wrong.

See also **attribution, comma, ellipsis**.

disc/disk Use ‘disk’ to refer to a computer disk, but ‘disc’ to refer to other flat, round objects.

discreet tactful; **discrete** distinct.

disinterested is often confused with **uninterested**. Disinterested means not involved, having no part of, so unbiased. Often used to describe somebody who is independent by dint of having nothing to gain financially from participating in a debate or decision. Thus, councillors or company board members make sure they are absent from voting on matters where they have a financial investment, making themselves disinterested. Uninterested means finding something not interesting; of no concern.

disoriented should be used instead of the non-word, disorientated. ‘People may become disoriented when they are suffering emotional or drug induced stress’.

dissociate should be used instead of the non-word disassociated. To end an association with somebody or something. Can be permanent or temporary. ‘The managing director dissociated herself from the port development decision, as she had always opposed any change to the port’.

distract and **detract** are often confused. To distract somebody is to draw their attention away. ‘The reporter was distracted from her work by constant interruptions from colleagues’. On the other hand, a detraction is a scaling down or devaluing. ‘The reporter’s shyness tended to detract from her considerable talent as a reporter’.

downsize misleading management speak meaning to sack staff. Don’t use.

Dr used as an honorific for medical practitioners, dentists, vets and PhDs. Not used for specialist surgeons. They are Mr, Mrs, Ms or Miss. Use the word **doctor** alone only to refer to medical practitioners.

draft an unedited or unfinished piece of writing. Not the final version. It can also mean cattle drafting (sorting), or to describe the occupation draftsman or draftswoman.

draught is a cold breeze, cold beer on tap, or the depth of a ship’s hull underwater.

drugs can be prescription or non prescription. Do not use ‘party drugs’ or ‘recreational users’ unless in a quote, as they may be inaccurate or give a halo of approval when that may not be intended.

duel and **dual** are often confused. The first is a fight to protect honour, traditionally when the gauntlet (glove) is thrown down as a challenge to fight over a woman’s heart; the second is two things occur together: dual projects, dual wheels on trucks etc.

dyeing cloth; **dying** from wounds.

E

earlier, later It is a tautology to use ‘earlier’ or ‘later’ when each is patently obvious. So an expression such as ‘The ship arrived earlier today’ clearly contains an unnecessary word if the writer means merely that the action occurred before the report. Be specific: ‘Tuesday morning’, unless it is for radio or television. Similarly, the expression ‘A verdict will be announced later this week’ is equally fatuous unless the writer is comparing in time two or more incidents.

early adopters in new media circles are people who get onto the next new thing.

ellipsis are the devices used to signify omission of words in a quoted passage. The device requires a space before and after use: ‘The committee oversees health policy . . . and regulates workplace safety.’ See also **dash** to set up MSWord to automatically set an ellipsis.

elicit to draw out an answer, confession or admission. **Illicit** not legal.

elude to evade or escape capture; **allude** to make indirect reference to. ‘The policewoman alluded to the man’s involvement in the assault, without directly accusing him’.

emigrate is to leave permanently a home country; **immigrate** is to arrive at a new country, having emigrated, with the intention of making it home. **Migrate** covers both processes.

embarrass, harass Note that the longer of the two words is the one with two ‘r’s.

enquiry (See **inquiry**.)

envelop (v) **envelope** (n).

espresso not **expresso**.

euphemism The process of finding a ‘nicer’ or apparently more palatable alternative word is constant in English and may be sometimes difficult to detect. Conservative style should treat new, ‘nicer’ words with suspicion and favour the existing usage: the US State Department, deciding it would no longer use ‘killing’ in reports on human rights, said it would use ‘unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of life’ (Mencher, 1987: 152). (Help! Help! I’m being unlawfully or arbitrarily deprived of life!) Similarly, military jargon/euphemism used ‘collateral damage’ as the preferred military way to describe killing in the Persian Gulf war. Prefer the euphemism ‘undertaker’ to the very euphemistic ‘bereavement counsellor’. If a parrot or person is dead, use ‘dead’, not one of the many euphemisms, such as ‘passed away’.

every day, everyday This is an example of two clear meanings. ‘Every day’ means ‘each day’, while ‘everyday’ means ‘ordinary’. Supermarket chains advertising ‘everyday savings’ are admitting the savings are pretty poor.

evoked and invoke are often confused. The first means to summon or trigger a memory: ‘the music evoked strong memories of a happy childhood’. The second means to refer to something or ask: ‘The priest invoked God’s name in the blessing of the fishing fleet’.

exact/extract are often confused. The first means to force, require or compel: ‘He exacted payment for his time.’ ‘It was an exacting task to fit the machine parts together; they had to fit exactly’. This also suggests the everyday meaning of exact: precise, accurate. The second word means to draw out by force: ‘He extracted juice,’ ‘She extracted a tooth’.

exclusive this word is overused and thereby devalued. Usually coupled with ‘revealed’. Do not use, unless instructed to by seniors. It’s nakedly self-promoting. After all the core business of

journalism is independence, rather than group behaviour, to seek out unknown intelligence and tell audiences what they don't know.

exhaustive Comprehensive, thorough, using everything up; not exhausting.

exotic Means foreign and, from elsewhere.

extract/extrude are often confused. The first means to draw out by force (see 'exact' above).

The second means to squeeze out, expel a plastic or metal moulding. 'The pipe was extruded and was therefore seamless'.

eyewitness don't use. It's TV hype. Use **witness**. A witness can be assumed to have seen an event, but even if the event has only been heard, use 'witness', not 'earwitness'.

expatriate (n) not expatriot. 'Expat' is acceptable.

F

facility is often used redundantly. (See also 'that' and 'of'). 'This is a toilet', not a 'toilet facility'.

faze when you mean ruffled. 'He wasn't fazed by the woman's aggression.' The spelling is not **phase**.

feat and **fete** are sometimes confused. A feat is an achievement, whereas a fete is a carnival held by schools and churches to raise funds. 'Traversing the Kakoda track in a wheel chair is an extraordinary feat'.

federal when referring to Australian central government within Australia. Otherwise use the Australian Government when writing in an international context. Australia is a federation of states; that is the system of government. Historically it has been part of the British Commonwealth. Politicians often use the term Commonwealth Government, but they are referring to an anachronism.

fewer/less Use 'fewer' when referring to numbers and 'less' when referring to quantity: 'Australia has fewer people than Indonesia and produces less oil.' Use '**more than**' when referring to number and quantity, rather than 'over' or 'in excess of'.

flammable is likely or able to burn. Not flammable means something will not burn.

Inflammable often also used, but more suited to describing a personality, rather than physical objects. 'He was inflamed by the suggestion...'

flair and **flare** are often confused. Flair is a person's particular talent or gift in anything from dance to philately. A flare is a very bright light, usually coloured, fired into the sky by boats at sea to indicate distress or used by military personnel for visibility after dark.

flatmate and **flat mate** are often confused. A flatmate is somebody who shares your flat. Whereas a flat mate is a sad friend.

flaunt To wave proudly or to show off. It has a totally different meaning from that of 'flout'.

flout To express contempt for something. It comes from the German word for 'whistle' (cf 'flute'), a way of expressing derision.

flue and **flu** are often confused. The first is a chimney pipe; the second is a seasonal disease.

fluorescent not flourescent.

flyer not **flier**.

forbear is to refrain from saying or doing something. Whereas **forebear** is an ancestor.

foreign words (and phrases) (See also, **accents**, **cliche** and **italic**) Many words and phrases of foreign origin have been absorbed into English and Anglicised (ambience, cafe, delicatessen, per diem). These are treated as English words. Other words and phrases are not considered Anglicised, or are used directly from their original language. In such cases, these words and phrases should be italicized; for example, the intifada.

forms are **filled in**, not ‘filled out’.

fractions see **decimal**

frontyard and **backyard** usually one word when they are adjectives.

front bench (n) but **frontbencher** see **backyard** and **frontbench** (adj).

full stop, full point The simplest of punctuation marks, the full point is usually relegated to sentence ending in most newspapers and this is the style in the School of Communication and Arts. Its other main use is to separate the initials of people’s names, as in R.F.X. Connor (note, no space after each).

Full points are not used after contractions or abbreviations (Dr, Prof, Ms, St, Ave, Co, Ltd, km, g, etc, the Rev) or between the initials of organisations, states or countries (RAAF, CSIRO, CIB, NSW, PNG, the UK, the US), ships (HMAS Sydney, MV Gascoyne) or chemicals (DDT, 2,4,5-T, PVC, TNT).

funemployed current speak for the state of using unemployment as an excuse to have fun

funeral don’t say ‘the funeral of the late...’ It is the funeral of Professor Fred Smith. Nor ‘widow or widower of the late’. Dead people are succeeded by wives, husbands, brothers, and children. Outside the context of the funeral and nascent death, widower and widow can be used, but they are increasingly arcane, and not used.

fungus (n) and **fungous** (adj).

G

gaff is a large hook on a long pole used for landing big fish; **gaffe** is a social blunder. But ‘blow the gaff’ means to reveal something hidden.

gender The word ‘gender’ refers strictly to the grammatical form of nouns and pronouns (his, her, its, she, he, it): it does not refer to the sex of nouns and pronouns and is not interchangeable with ‘sex’. No male or female ‘gender’ exists. ‘Female’ and ‘male’ are sexes, not genders. Discourses can be **gendered**.

global pandemic is redundant. Do not use it. A pandemic is global. World Health Organisation deems a pandemic is not just a disease which kills many people, it is also a highly infectious disease. Hence the implicit global nature of pandemic. While it may arise in one national population, it soon spreads internationally.

‘**going forward**’ is ‘management speak’. Instead use ‘in the future’. Though it has been lampooned mercilessly, it persists. Best avoided, but if irresistible, use sparingly, and then, only quoting a source.

gorilla and **guerilla** are often confused. A gorilla is a large ape. A guerilla, on the other hand,

belongs to a small band of independent fighters and operates by making small-scale surprise raids on government or other military armies.

government is lower case except when referring to specific governments.

green ban is a work ban on a building site located in a green zone. **Green zone** a nature strip on land, wetlands or underwater where building or other forms of settlement, such as fishing, are banned. See also '**green footprint**', '**green tax**' and '**green collar**' in the *Macquarie Dictionary*.

grievous Not 'grievious'.

grille and **grill** are often confused. A security grille is better described as a security screen. Some people prefer their fish cooked on the grill, rather than in a pan.

H

half-caste not used. It is invariably a racist term singling out the heritage of Indigenous people. It is never applied to people of, say Scottish and Welsh heritage.

hanged as past tense of the verb applies only to execution by the noose. Otherwise, pictures are **hung**.

hashtag the way Twitter users categorise tweets by topic.

he or **she** when the intention is to include both genders. Acceptable and smoother to use **they**. 'He or she may apply for the advertised position' can be re-written as 'They may apply'

head of state is the person holding the highest office in the land. President Sarkozy or president Obama are heads of state. Kevin Rudd, Gordon Brown and Angela Merkel are merely heads of government. It is a matter of some debate as to whether the British Queen or the Governor-General (or both) is **Australia's head of state**. There is no doubt, however, that the Queen is the monarch **of Australia**. Britain's head of state is the Queen and Germany's is president Horst Köhler.

headlines Headlines in newspapers have a style imposed by the limits of space. The words used in headlines often only approximate or suggest a definite meaning. This style should not be imported into general writing. Do not use the short words of headlines, such as 'bid', 'slam', 'split', 'shock', 'hit', 'duck', 'loom', 'crisis', 'war', 'slay', 'hike', 'cut', 'leap', 'raid', 'rap', 'axe' unless precisely these meanings are intended. 'Slam', for instance, should be confined usually to writing about doors. This does not contradict the 'short v long' rule: it reinforces the rules of precision and clarity.

healthy Writers often refer to 'healthy' foods, failing to acknowledge the fact that most food is far from healthy – it's dead. Logic insists that the correct alternatives are 'health-giving' or 'health-promoting'.

Hence, therefore, however, and additionally. Should not be used to start sentences in news writing. More suited to polemical essay writing. Simply state the case, or quote the source statement by statement.

here, our Do not assume that these words mean the same to the reader as to the writer.

Publications are meant to be broadcast, so 'here' in, say, Brisbane does not mean 'here' in Toowoomba.

Writers make the mistake of generalising a heterogeneous readership, insisting they have the same proprietary attitude. Do NOT use ‘our Gulf ships’ or ‘our state-of-origin team’ when what is meant is ‘Australia’s Gulf ships’ and ‘Queensland’s team’. Again, be specific. Certainly do not use ‘our Indigenous people.’ They are independent and citizens of Australia.

heroine and **heroin** are often confused. Heroine as a feminine hero is no longer used. Use hero for both. Some say heroin is used far too much. Others say it should be legalised.

high hyphenation. Highbrow, high frequency (n), high-frequency (adj), high road, highway, high-grade (adj), highhanded, high-level (adj), high-definition TV, highlight, high-powered (adj)

hit the ground running a cliché meaning prepared/trained before a particular task. Do not use, unless quoting a source.

horde and **hoard** are often confused. The first is a multitude of people or insects. A horde of locusts. Derogatory description of a threatening multitude. Hoard is noun and verb: the accumulation of something to preserve it for future use, a hoard of gold; and the act of accumulating it is hoarding.

honour, hospital, hotel Use of ‘an’ as the indefinite article before ‘hotel’ and ‘hospital’ is no longer current, although it is used before ‘honour’, ‘heir’ and ‘hour’ and the adjectives ‘honest’ and ‘honourable’.

hospitalised Don’t use. Use **admitted to hospital**.

hyphen Be aware of hyphens in proper nouns – Courier-Mail, General Motors-Holden’s, Rolls-Royce, Mercedes-Benz, Harley-Davidson, Bjelke-Petersen, Toulouse-Lautrec – but note their absence in such others as Kingsford Smith, Alfa Romeo, Castlemaine Perkins, Evans Deakin, Coles Fosseys. Check if in doubt. See names.

Use hyphens in compound adjectives — ‘the red-haired woman’, ‘a single-issue campaign’, ‘limited-over cricket’, ‘an oil-fired furnace’, ‘a hot-water system’. The hyphen eliminates the ambiguity latent in multi-adjective constructions. In the last example, the hyphen makes it clear that the water, not the system, is hot.

Some commonly used expressions require more than one hyphen — ‘a multi-Style Book million-dollar project’, ‘the Gayndah-to-Moscow railway’, ‘a cat-and-mouse game’, ‘a black-and-white cow’ — or more. Although such constructions are usually best avoided, hyphens are essential in those such as ‘the old hair-of-the-dog-that-bit-you remedy’.

Note that ‘adverbial’ compounds ending in ‘-ly’ are not hyphenated: they do not have the potential ambiguity of compound adjectives. Do not hyphenate such constructions as ‘wholly owned subsidiary’, ‘fully booked concert’, ‘fairly big business’, ‘cleverly judged run’. Remember that some purely adjectival forms also end in ‘-ly’, so be careful with such constructions as ‘silly-looking arrangement’, ‘rally-car driver’.

Other adverbial compounds (those not ending in ‘-ly’) take a hyphen when part of the subject and no hyphen when part of the predicate as in ‘a well-known reason’ but ‘the reason is well known’.

Compare ‘When she was a six-year-old’ (‘person’ or ‘girl’ implied noun) with ‘When she was six years old’ (no noun implied). Hyphens are not used in the second example because the compound adjective is not potentially ambiguous. A 19-year-old girl it is hyphenated thus, whereas a 19 year-old as a noun has only the one hyphen

Compare ‘three-headed monster’, ‘R-rated movie’, ‘fixed-wing aircraft’ with ‘single-engine aircraft’, ‘12-bar blues’, ‘two-room house’, ‘nine-hole course’. If the ‘-ed’ ending can be removed to leave a meaningful adjective, then remove it.

Where no hyphen is required refer to a dictionary to determine whether there should be one word or two, as in: landowner, babysitter, taxpayer, but child care.

The hyphen is not required between most prefixes and the word stem, even if the same letter adjoins. So no hyphen is used in such words as antihistamine, predispose, reignite, postgraduate, reenter, coordinate. An exception is ‘re-sign’, which has a different meaning from ‘resign’, and ‘multi’, which often fits awkwardly with stem words.

DO NOT USE A HYPHEN FOR A DASH.

hyperthermia heat stroke (Greek root hyper=excess)

hypothermia low body temperature (Greek root hypo=too little)

I

impact is not a verb.

imply (See **infer**) A writer or speaker implies insinuates, suggests the truth of something. This implies that ‘imply’ does not mean ‘infer’.

incidence is the extent or range of effects. ‘The incidence of swine flu in Australia is declining’. Often confused with **instance** which is an example, or case, of something occurring. There have been few instances of people dying from swine flu in Australia.

indirect speech See *Radio Style guide* for alternative approaches. Ensure that you are consistent in the tense you use. ‘Said’ is the past tense of the verb ‘to say’, as your interview occurred sometime in the past. When your source talks about something that is happening at the time of the interview, use the past tense:

Cr Newman said the new water meters were not available.

When your source talks about something that happened before your interview, use the past perfect tense:

Cr Newman said the new water meters had not been available last year.

When your source talks about happening in the future, use the conditional:

Cr Newman said the new water meters would not be installed until next year.

But ‘according to’ sentences are in the same tense as that chosen by the speaker.

The new water meters will not be installed this year, according to Cr Newman. Freckles are caused by eating carrots, according to scientific studies.

Do not use ‘that’ when attributing indirect speech unless the sentence will be ambiguous without it. Thus ‘She said she was ill’ not ‘She said that she was ill’.

But the ‘that’ is necessary in ‘She said yesterday that she was ill’ to distinguish it from ‘She said that yesterday she was ill’. See **attribution, said**.

industry standard make sure it is; otherwise meaningless.

inequity uneven social distribution of justice or benefit. **Iniquity** example of a gross violation

- of rights.
- infamous** vile or shameful person, not notorious, although something infamous may also be notorious.
- infer** (See **imply**) A reader or listener infers or deduces or concludes meaning from a text or speech. Students may infer from this definition that ‘infer’ does not mean ‘imply’. Through this definition the ‘sender’ implies; the ‘receiver’ infers meaning.
- ingenious** very clever. But not linked to **genius**. Also, **ingenuous** means unself-conscious. Innocent.
- Indigenous** (n) notice the initial ‘I’ is a capital. This is a convention which includes Australian indigenous people generally referred to as Aboriginal people, or Aborigines, and Torres Strait Island people. (see Aborigine – where ‘generic’ tribal names coinciding with state boundaries are preferred.)
- innocuous** unimportant
- innuendo** oblique implication
- inoculate** to render resistant to disease or infection.
- innovative** was the most overused gobbledegook word in 2008, according to the Dow Jones Insight site (See handy links). What’s called innovative probably isn’t new and original. Check facts before you’re tempted to use it.
- in order to/in relation to/in respect of** are wordy/lazy phrases and should not be used. ‘She studied hard in order to gain a high mark’ should be ‘She studied hard to gain a high mark’. ‘The trade union leader said government policy in relation to workers rights was discriminatory’ should be ‘The trade union official said government industrial relations policy was discriminatory’. Notice the absence of ‘that’.
- inquiry** Use this spelling, not ‘enquiry’.
- insure** (v) when you take out property or life insurance; ensure is to make sure. ‘The police presence ensured a peaceful demonstration’.
- internet** lower case.
- into, in to** See **onto, on to**.
- intransitive verbs** Such verbs as ‘protest’, ‘go’, ‘laugh’, ‘vanish’, ‘appear’, ‘appeal’ and ‘die’ are intransitive verbs because they cannot have a direct object. It is no more possible to ‘protest something’ or ‘appeal something’ than to ‘laugh something’. These verbs need a preposition or infinitive. An exception is ‘protest innocence’, which is a separate and unique usage. In the cases of ‘protest’ and ‘appeal’, the preposition is often ‘against’. The verbs ‘prevent’ and ‘stop’ similarly require a preposition – ‘from’ – when combined with an active object. It is incorrect to write ‘That will prevent him coming here’. The correct alternatives are ‘That will prevent him from coming here’ or the gerundive form, ‘That will prevent his coming here’.
- ‘Irish’** Those participial continuous forms of verbs that have a Gaelic ring (‘will be holding’, ‘will be having’) should be avoided in favour of the more direct future tense (‘will hold’, ‘will have’).
- is/are** agreement between the subject and verb is important. One in 25 people is something, not are something. ‘Data are’ is correct. ‘Data is’ is wrong.

Islamic and **Islamist** are often confused. The former relates to Islam; the latter to Islamic militancy and fundamentalism. So it is not ‘Islamic terrorists’ but ‘Islamist terrorists.’

-ise/-ize endings Although dictionaries have tended to favour ‘-ize’ endings to verbs, with ‘-ise’ as an alternative, news style is to favour ‘-ise’ endings. Kahn (1985: 306) points out that very few verbs take only ‘-ize’ endings. They include ‘capsize’, ‘prize’, ‘seize’ and ‘size’. Many hundreds more verbs take only the ‘-ise’ ending — ‘advertise’, ‘advise’, ‘apprise’, ‘comprise’, ‘devise’, ‘disguise’, ‘exercise’, ‘improvise’, ‘promise’, ‘poise’, ‘raise’, ‘revise’, ‘supervise’, ‘surprise’, ‘televise’. Using the ‘-ise’ ending is much less likely to be incorrect. This usage extends to noun construction with ‘-ation’, adjectives, and so on: ‘civilisation’, ‘recognisable’.

To avoid the unacceptable use of –ize endings, you can set MSWord to ‘Australian English’ through <Tools>, <Spelling and Grammar> and <Dictionary language>. The alternative is to manually amend –ize endings to –ise.

it Use this pronoun with care to avoid confusion of meaning. Consider: ‘He shot at the rat with his revolver and it exploded.’ Another dangerous use of ‘it’ is to use it or another pronoun earlier in the sentence than the noun to which it refers: ‘Its style book is likely to dominate the discussion at the next meeting of the Journalism Students’ Association of the University of Queensland’s School of Communication and Arts.’

italics (See also **accents**, **cliche** and **foreign words**) Titles of newspapers, magazines, films, radio and television programs, books, etc. are written in italics (*The Australian*, *60 Minutes*, *The Media Report*, *The Inner Circle*). But NOT the names of businesses, organisations, or sports clubs (Channel 7, Friends of the ABC, Brisbane Lions). This applies to businesses, organisations and clubs with non-English names (Agence France Presse, Al-Jazeera, Ajax).

Words and phrases used directly from a language other than English are also italicized.

it’s is not possessive. It is the contracted form of ‘it is’. Common mistake. All pronouns already have a built-in possessive: mine, yours, its, his, hers, theirs. No apostrophe required. (*See also News Ltd section*).

J

jargon Jargon develops rapidly in specialised groups, probably because it improves communication within the group. This does not mean anyone outside the group will understand the jargon. Avoid what is obviously jargon, including the jargon of journalism — although ‘journos’ may refer to ‘pars’, a ‘story’, a ‘byline’, the ‘leader’, the ‘intro’ and so on, these terms may not be clearly understood by readers. Unless writing for a specific audience, avoid pop argot, electronic/military ‘buzz’ words (jargon), political/economic cant, ‘arty-crafty’ obscurity and the gobbledegook (more jargon) of much sociological writing.

judges sit in the High Court (federal), Federal Court, Supreme courts (states), and Family courts (states). Referred to initially by full name: Justice John Smith, and subsequently as Justice Smith. District courts (most states) and County Court (Victoria) refer to them as Judge Smith. And ... ‘the judge said,’ not ‘his Honour said ...’ Magistrates in courts of petty sessions are not judges. Initially referred to as Magistrate Joan Smith; thereafter as Ms Smith. A judge or magistrate is the court effectively. Thus they do not ‘tell the court’ anything. Counsel, witnesses and defendants tell the court things.

judgment Only one ‘e’.

junta somewhat loaded term meaning small governing elite, either self-appointed or elected. It has negative connotations. Best use the term ‘government’.

K

Koran is the sacred text and book of the Islamic faith. It is capitalised and italicised. There are a number of spellings including Qur’an. But *Koran* is preferred.

L

lady Even if the wife of a knight or peer, a woman is a woman. ‘Lady’ is used only as an imperial title or part of a proper name (eg, Lady Fairfax, Methodist Ladies’ College). This applies equally to sports reporting: the ‘ladies’ tee’ is the ‘women’s tee’; the ‘ladies’ hack event’ is the ‘women’s . . . ‘

lama is a buddhist priest. **Llama** is a South American animal.

Last Post does not have the article ‘the’. It is not played but sounded.

laud (v) praise, literary esp. **Laudable** behaviour or sentiments worthy of praise.

Laudatory (adj) praiseworthy contents in, say, statements.

lead/led ‘Lead’ is the present tense of the verb ‘to lead’, pronounced ‘leed’. It is also a heavy metal, pronounced ‘led’. The past tense of ‘to lead’ is ‘led’, also pronounced ‘led’. The word used for the lead paragraph in a news story is arcane, but spelled ‘lede’ and pronounced ‘leed’.

leverage as a noun and verb in the world of finance is the practice of debt financing a commercial venture.

leveraged is the adjective used to describe a company financed largely through debt; it can also be the proportion of a company financed through debt, as against share issues or savings.

lengthy Use ‘long’.

lent and **leant** are often confused. Lent is the period in the christian calendar before Easter. Leant is the past tense of the verb ‘to lean’ against a wall.

less than See **fewer/less**.

liaise Note the extra ‘i’. See also **Ukrainian**.

libertarian person advocating free thinking, free speech and free life style; libertine free living, especially sexually/morally. Bohemian.

licence (n)/license (v) (See **practice/practise**.) American spellings are different.

like ‘He (n) treats (v) that student like a baby’ is correct — ‘like’ is used as a preposition. ‘He treats that student like a mother treats a baby’ is incorrect — ‘like’ is used as a conjunction. Use of ‘like’ is also incorrect in ‘He went on talking like nothing had happened’; ‘It looked like he would never stop’; ‘Like the professor said . . .’ Kahn (1985: 330) points out that, as a rule of thumb, if ‘like’ can be replaced with ‘as’ (‘in the way that’/‘in the same way’), ‘as if’ or ‘as though’, then ‘like’ is incorrect. Use of ‘like’ is correct only when replacement is

impossible.

load and **lode** are sometimes confused. The first is something carried; the second is the rich centre of an ore body or text.

loan/lend ‘Loan’ is the noun, ‘lend’ is the verb. The past tense of the verb is ‘lent’. So a loan is what is lent, not ‘loaned’. See **verbalised nouns**.

loath (adj) reluctant, unwilling; **loathe** (v) hate.

local avoid. Instead give the location – town, suburb, state, nation which the person represents.

lumber and **lumbar** are often confused. The first is a north American name for timber; the second is the lower back, which often requires ‘lumbar support’ in quality car seats.

M

malt and **moult** are often confused. The first is an ingredient of beer, along with hops and yeast; the second is what animals do when they lose their winter coats: hair, feathers or skin (snakes).

man (v) As a verb it is commonly misused to mean ‘to staff’ or ‘attend’, viz, ‘to man the pumps’ or ‘man the barricades’ represents an old world. Also ‘man hole’ – an access hole in a road or house ceiling – is not exclusively the domain of men. ‘It can be more fairly and accurately described as an ‘access hole’.

manscaping current speak for the use of waxing and make-up to accentuate muscle shape on male torsos. See **boyzilian wax**

many avoid, especially in radio leads. If there is a trend, or quantum making news, specify what it is.

marshal is a rank or role either military or quasi military – ie, track marshals at car and horse races. The verb, to marshal, stems from it, meaning to organise or keep order.

Marshall male given name, or family name, Alan Marshall, Australian novelist best known for *I can jump puddles*.

martial is military or combatory. Hence martial law (military rule in the face of a breakdown in democratic government); martial arts (self defence) or martial music – played by military bands.

may and **might** Might is the past tense of may. But also, the words meanings are close but different: ‘The boy may still be alive’ and ‘The boy might still be alive’. The first suggests a possibility the boy is alive; in the second the possibility is weaker.

may and **can** are often confused. Often permission to do something is sought with the following question, ‘Can I do this?’ The corrective reply is: ‘I’m sure you can, but you may not’. That is, permission is not granted, but the questioner’s ability to do it is never questioned.

measures Scales of measurement are not part of what they measure. So temperatures cannot be hot or cold, only high or low. Similarly, height cannot be tall or short, or prices expensive or cheap. What is **measured** may be tall or short, expensive or cheap.

media (See **plurals**.) Media is a plural noun (the singular is medium). Although it is now common to treat media as a singular noun, do NOT do so. The media ARE ...

mediums is the plural of people who claim to contact spirits.

merino, merinos

metal processed mineral used in industry and society, eg, iron, steel, gold, mercury, silver etc.

mettle resolute, strong character.

meter, metres A meter is a device for measuring; a metre is a finite length.

meticulous Should not be confused with ‘scrupulous’ or simply ‘careful’. It has the useful meaning of ‘too careful’, ‘slavishly precise’.

militia and **military** are often confused. A militia is a fighting unit made up of reservists, or citizen soldiers, not professional soldiers. A military unit, on the other hand, is an army of professional soldiers.

minuscule A spelling to watch.

money See **numbers**.

monetise 21st century vogue word meaning to convert an activity into one that earns money. An example might be where bloggers monetise their site, by selling advertising and paying themselves.

monetarism an economic theory based on money supply.

moving on cliché for somebody who is not letting past events dominate their thinking, words and actions. Avoid it and use the simpler words of the definition.

mucous (adj) ‘mucous membrane’; **mucus** (n) is the fluid of the mucous membrane.

muslim (n) a follower of Islam. Hence **muslim countries, muslim law**.

N

NASA National Aeronautics and Space Administration (USA)

NASAA National Association for Sustainable Agriculture Australia.

NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organisation – former cold war association. Formed in 1949 by some European countries with US and Canada to form defence alliance against the then Soviet Union (USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). Reformed in 1991 as a group of European countries extending non-military cooperation and demilitarisation to former eastern bloc nations. Russia invited to join in 2002.

names (*see also News Ltd section*) Names of people, places and things are of fundamental importance to news writing. The correct names and the correct spelling of names must always be checked and rechecked. Even the most common-sounding name must not be assumed to be spelt the usual way: consider Smith, Smyth and Smythe; Main St, Maine St and Mayne St; Fraser and Frazer; Ffrench and French; Thompson, Thomson, Thomsen, Thompsen and Tomson; Johnson, Jonsson, Jonsen, Johnston and Johnstone. Some cultures use names differently from the European way.

Asian names

* **Chinese:** In Chinese names, the family name (surname) comes first. For example, ‘Chiang Chi-kwang’, in a second reference, becomes ‘Mr Chiang’. (For guidance, hyphens never appear in surnames.) Some Chinese adopt the Western style of family name last, though to avoid confusion they often use initials, for example, ‘C.K. Chiang’.

- * **Indonesian:** Some Indonesians have only one name, some two or more by which they wish to be known, for example, ‘Suharto’, ‘Deddy Iskandar Muda’.
- * **Japanese:** Among themselves, Japanese use the family name first, then the given name (only ever one), for example, ‘Sato Ichiro’. In English you would refer to him as ‘Mr Sato’. When speaking with foreigners Japanese may adopt the Western order, ‘Ichiro Sato’.
- * **Korean:** Similar to Chinese, for example, ‘Yi Yoon-kyung’; then ‘Ms Yi’.
- * **Vietnamese:** Vietnamese have two-part or three-part names. Though the family name is placed first, the last name is the key to identification. Therefore, in a first reference say, ‘Vo Van Kiet’, then ‘Mr Kiet’ (not ‘Mr Vo’).

Muslim, Polynesian or Hungarian names may also have the family name first. Many cultures do not share the European practice of a married woman taking her husband’s family name; the wife retains her family name. In some languages, such as Russian, a diminutive name may be used instead of the formal name. Always check carefully the correct use of names.

name and position the convention in broadcast is to give the position first, then the person’s name. In print the convention operates the other way round – name first then position. Viz, ‘ABC company managing director, Steve Ingliss says...’ versus ‘Steve Ingliss, managing director of the ABC company, said...’.

netbook a miniature, low-cost laptop designed to primarily connect to the internet.

negress not used. **African American** is the term used. Not Afro-American. Or if she is from an African nation, simply identify her by her nationality, if necessary, otherwise simply her name.

negro (see negress)

next edge in social networking it’s the next development opportunity.

Niagara may rhyme with **Viagra** but it has one more ‘a’.

no brainer ambiguous 21st century vogue word meaning ‘clueless conduct or stupid act, usually ending in grief’ or ‘simple decision that is easy to arrive at’. Use only when quoting source. Better, use simpler words of the definition.

non-sexist language Avoid using gender-exclusive terms such as ‘fireman’ (use ‘firefighter’) and ‘man-made’ (‘artificial’, ‘manufactured’).

nor Use only after ‘neither’.

NRMA is the NSW equivalent of RACQ, RACV, RACWA, RAA (SA) and stands for National Roads and Motorists Association.

numbers, figures Numbers from nought up to and including nine are usually spelt out. Numbers including and above 10 are written in figures. The exceptions are in such constructions as ‘9am’, ‘January 2’, ‘2c’, ‘\$3’, ‘5 per cent’, ‘Erik Bloodaxe, 6, of St Lucia, . . .’ (but ‘six-year-old Erik’).

Bloodaxe’). Numbers that contain four numerals do not have a comma, those with five numerals or more do. So ‘1993’ but ‘19,993’. Millions are written in figures and words: 2 million.

Do not start a sentence with figures: if the number must occur at the start of the sentence, spell it out. Decimals require careful attention. Such expressions as .5 are meaningless and may be misleading if the decimal point is not clearly printed – the correct form is 0.5. The zero is important in writing decimal currency figures — \$1.05, \$210.08, but \$5, not \$5.00 – and time – 2.09pm, but 2pm, not 2.00pm.

O

obliged/obligated both are verb forms. The first is preferable.

of often used unnecessarily. Avoid its use in situations where it is redundant. (See ‘that’ also)
For example: ‘Nearly half of the Melbourne Cup field are overseas owned’. Or, ‘Minister of Defence’ rather than ‘Defence Minister’.

offence (n); **offensive** (adj) (see **defence/defensive**). Note that this is different from the American spellings.

officialese Reporters of government, especially local government, and the law must avoid the bureaucratic language to which these organisations or their servants cling. ‘Re your Correspondence of the fifth Ultimo’ or the like from someone’s ‘most Humble and Obedient Servant’ still may be found in bureaucratic writing, and everyone is familiar with impenetrable legal documents. Reduce the language to simple English and eliminate the pomposities. Local government bodies that like to refer to themselves grandly as ‘Council’ should be reported as ‘the council’.

one and **won** are sometimes confused. ‘It was the one race she had to win, and she won it convincingly’.

online lower case.

only, nearly, almost It is important to recognise that such a qualifying word as ‘only’, as well as similar qualifiers ‘nearly’ and ‘almost’ need to be associated clearly with the words they are to qualify.

‘He only grows apples and pears’ is understood in speech, since stress can be placed on words to affect their content. In writing, though, it is not clear whether the grower grows only apples and pears or if he only grows them; that is, he does not sell them, eat them or do anything but grow them. In its present place, ‘only’ appears to qualify ‘grows’, rather than ‘apples and pears’. The best way to ensure that ‘only’ is correctly placed is to insert it as close as possible to the word it is to qualify.

onto, on to Note the difference between ‘We walked on to the next bridge’ and ‘We walked onto the next bridge’. The Oxford English Dictionary gives ‘on to’ as the only correct form, but school style is to use both terms, as in the examples.

optician makes, repairs and dispenses spectacles. An **optometrist** tests eyesight, with a view to prescribing spectacles. An **ophthalmologist** (or **oculist**) cares for eye health and is also a medical practitioner.

ordinance a decree or command, authoritative with force of law; **ordnance** military equipment and ammunition.

orient to place a thing or person in a conscious direction. Earlier, **the Orient** was the lands to the east and south east of the Mediterranean. Thus one sense of **orientation** meant to align a church facing east. Now orientation can be in any direction, but is an alignment with purpose.

Orientate similar.

over (See **more than, fewer/less**.) Planes fly over water.

P

pantomime watch the m occurring twice.

palate, palette and pallet sound the same but have different meanings. The palate is the roof of the mouth, which can sometimes be congenitally malformed, in which case it is described as a ‘cleft palate’. Wine tasters often refer to the palate as the characteristic flavour of a wine; at the same time it is the place in the wine taster’s mouth where the flavour is most intensely experienced. Artists, on the other hand, use a flat board with thumbhole, known as a palette, to mix paints before applying them to a painting. The spatula used to mix or apply the paints is called a palette knife. Finally, a pallet is a wooden rack used to store and carry bulk items for sale or warehousing, and designed to be lifted and carried to trucks by a forklift.

paralympics Not Para-Olympics. Participants include those who are paraplegic and quadriplegic (note the ‘i’).

parsimonious and profligate are sometimes confused. The first is extreme thrift, frugality; the second nearly its opposite – recklessly immoral, extravagant. But simpler words are preferable, such as those providing the definitions.

part, portion Do not use ‘portion’ for ‘part’. A ‘portion’ is an allotted share.

partner is not a verb.

participles Look carefully at how participles relate to nouns. Misplaced participles usually require complete rewriting of a sentence. Note the difficulties with the following: ‘Standing 12 metres high, the wind blows through the tower’s chimes’, ‘Being stolen, the police returned the money’, ‘Walking to church, a dog bit Billy’.

pastime one word with one t.

peal of bells. But the **peel** (n,v) of fruit.

peloton a huddle of road race cyclists designed to break the wind.

perquisite unearned gifts, benefits or bonuses accompanying an obligation. Origin of ‘perks’.

prerequisite that which is required as qualification for the next stage of a qualifying or other process.

per This Latin preposition should be used very sparingly. Replace ‘per annum’ with ‘a year’, ‘per person’ with ‘a person’ or ‘each’, ‘per hour’ with ‘an hour’, etc.

per capita Do not use this Latin phrase for ‘each’, ‘a head’ or ‘a person’: it means none of these (Fowler, 1965: 428) and is an unnecessary elaboration.

per cent The style is to use ‘per cent’, not ‘percent’ or ‘%’. ‘Percentage’ is one word. Unless at the start of a sentence, percentage is always written as a figure: 2 per cent, 34 per cent.

Do not use ‘per cent’ in police reports of blood alcohol breath tests: the readings are in mg of alcohol/100ml of blood. Milligrams of alcohol cannot be a percentage of millilitres of blood any more than kilograms of apples can be a percentage of litres of water. Charges have been dismissed in which the police certificate tendered in court included ‘per cent’. If a reading is given as .08, then leave it as that.

person ‘Person’ is usually the singular, ‘people’ the plural: not ‘persons’ as in American usage.

personnel Note the double ‘n’, as in personnel officer. **Personal** of interest, relevance to an

individual.

phenomenon is the singular form of **phenomena** which is often wrongly used for either.

phishing In computer security, phishing is the fraudulent process of attempting to acquire sensitive information such as usernames, passwords and credit card details by masquerading as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication, usually email.

platypus is the singular of **platypuses**. Not platypi.

plurals Plurals are generally formed by adding an 's' or 'es' to the singular noun (donkeys, asses). But English has many other plural forms.

Many words that end in 'y' change to 'ies' in the plural ('babies', 'gypsies'), except when they are proper nouns ('the two Germanys', 'both Aunt Sallys').

Many words ending in 'f' or 'fe' take 'ves' in the plural ('self'/'selves', 'life'/'lives'). Others simply take an 's' ('belief'/'beliefs', 'roof'/'roofs', 'carafe'/'carafes'). Some have optional 'ves' or 's' plurals; in this case use the dictionary's first option.

The 'o' ending can vary randomly ('potatoes', 'tomatoes', 'broncos', 'albinos'). Words that end in 'i' can be trusted always to take only 's' in the plural ('taxis', 'corgis', 'bikinis').

The plurals of Greek-derived words that end in 'on' may be formed with 'a' ('phenomenon'/'phenomena', 'criterion'/'criteria') or simply with an 's' ('protons', 'neutrons', 'skeletons').

Remember that 'the media are', 'the data are' and 'the strata are'; 'the phenomenon is' and 'the criterion is'.

Plurals of Latin words ending in 'us', such as 'cactus' and 'ignoramus', are usually formed with the addition of 'es', not 'i': 'cactuses'. Others, such as 'genus' and 'opus' require the 'era' ending: 'genera', 'opera'. Greek words ending in 'pus' (for 'foot'), such as 'platypus' and 'octopus', no longer have the plural 'podes' ending and never had the 'i' ending. Plurals are formed with 'es'.

The plural '-s' does not apply to metric contractions. Write 20km (not kms), 25km/h, 45g (not gms), 2.3kg, 25t, 30c, 250kW, etc. Although grammar texts may offer some rough rules of thumb for the many forms of plurals in English, students should learn the plurals of commonly used words and check with a dictionary when in doubt.

point in time Do not use this hackneyed phrase. See **at**.

poky too small. **Pokie** vernacular of poker machine.

poured and **pored**. Poured is the past tense of pouring liquid – milk, water etc. Pored is the past tense of 'to pore' over or read with great concentration.

PoW for prisoner of war. **PoWs** plural.

practicable is a task able to be done with relative ease and inconvenience. 'Finalising the report by tomorrow is practicable'. **Practical** is an idea or person who is not theoretical. They may also be theoretical, of course, with a practical bent. But the concepts should not be confused, even though they are both present in the one person.

practice (n) **practise** (v) See also **licence** (n) and **license** (v) **advice** (n) and **advise** (v). Practices may be practised; licensees are licensed and hold licences. American usage differs.

prescribe to establish prior conditions; or a medical practitioner prescribes drugs. **Proscribe** is

to denounce and banish an idea, thing or person.

preventive not ‘preventative’. Hence ‘preventive medicine’, ‘preventive dentistry’ or ‘preventive measures’.

principle and **principal** are often confused. Principles are rules or standards; whereas the principal is the person of highest rank, often head of a school. Also principal is a sum of money before interest. When money is borrowed some of the repayments are towards interest, some are towards the principal.

prise lever or ease open; **prize** reward.

proactive not necessary when you mean **active**. As the antonym of **reactive** it is acceptable when used in the same sentence, to emphasise different kinds of reaction.

prodigy person with extraordinary talents; **progeny** offspring.

program Use this spelling, rather than ‘programme’. Fowler (1965: 463) points out that ‘program’ was the regular spelling until the 19th century and that for consistency the spelling ought to conform with other words derived from the Greek ‘gramma’, such as ‘telegram’, ‘anagram’, ‘cryptogram’, ‘diagram’.

prophecy (n) a detailed prediction dealing with philosophical, supernatural or spiritual; **prophesy** is the verb.

prostate male gland; **prostrate** lying flat, face down in supplication.

proved This is the past tense of ‘prove’. The word ‘proven’ is an obscure Scottish legal term often used redundantly in phrases such as ‘proven winner’ or ‘proven track record’. Both winners and track records imply proof.

public accountability is sometimes used by public servants or industry. Just accountable will do, naming to whom the subject is accountable. ‘The public’ is meaningless unless clearly defined.

pardah a screen hiding Arabic or Indian women from the view of men. It can also mean the act of concealment, which suggests that a **burka** performs **pardah** (See ‘burka’).

Q

Queensland Some common placenames present frequent difficulties. Note: South-East Queensland, Mt Coot-tha, Story Bridge, Indooroopilly and Woolloongabba (but Wollongong in NSW). Type ‘Queensland’, not ‘Qld’, not ‘QLD’.

quite/rather Unless used ironically (in quotes) the apparent qualifiers are a waste of space.

quotation marks Quotation marks have a number of functions. They are used to: i) define what exactly has been said or written by a source (see **direct speech**); ii) define words used in a special way or to emphasise the unusual sense given to a word; iii) define some titles; iv) define familiar names. Examples of (ii) are:

Bathers were warned to watch for ‘Noah’s arks’.

We ate some of the ‘stew’ from the bucket. In the first example, a special kind of language, rhyming slang, is used. In the second, the writer is suggesting ironically that what was eaten could hardly be described as stew.

An example of (iii) is in identifying titles within titles: Eckersley, R. (1986), ‘Science becomes news’, *Australian Journalism Review*, 8 (1 and 2).

Names of books, magazines, journals, films, radio and television programs/series and plays should be italicised. Poems, songs, short stories, episodes and individual segments within radio and TV programs, and articles should be put within quotation marks. For example, ‘A dangerous business’ broadcast in Four Corners in July 2004.

Use of (iv) is in such examples as Noel ‘Crusher’ Cleal, Allan ‘Captain Grumpy’ Border, Arthur ‘Legs’ Diamond, Ian ‘Molly’ Meldrum.

Double quotation marks are used in all cases, except inside double quotes, where single quotes are used:

‘Bathers were warned to watch for ‘Noah’s arks’, she said.

TIP: YOU CAN SET UP MSWORD TO PRODUCE ‘SMART QUOTES’ RATHER THAN ‘STRAIGHT QUOTES’ BY FOLLOWING THE <AUTOFORMAT> INSTRUCTIONS: SEE **DASH**.

Quotes (See **attribution, direct speech, indirect speech.**)

R

racquet for tennis; **racket** an intrusive noise, a dodgy/illegal scheme.

ramp up to increase the scale or level of activity. Cleaner and clearer to simply say ‘to increase effort/production’.

real (and **pregnant**) often has comparatives and superlatives attached – ‘more real’, ‘most real’, ‘almost real’, and so on. THIS IS WRONG. Something is either real or it is not. Same with pregnancy. Somebody is either pregnant or they are not. There are no degrees of pregnancy or of reality. It is an incomparable adjective.

recent avoid, especially in radio leads. Specify when.

redaction editing existing content to produce new meanings.

reforestation is to re-plant trees and other growth, usually to restore a native ecology.

Afforestation to plant trees, even if no trees have previously been there.

refute and **reject** are often confused. Refute means to disprove, not to dispute or disagree. Reject is to refuse to accept or acknowledge the existence of something.

regime a period or structure of government. **Regimen** is a routine or list of activities.

reign and **rein** are often confused. ‘The reign of Queen Elizabeth II will continue till her death’. ‘The cadet reporter needed to be reined in, as she was attempting stories well beyond her capabilities’.

relatives people who are blood related. Do not use ‘relations’.

restive has a meaning close to ‘restless’, almost the opposite of ‘restful’.

restaurateur Not ‘restauranteur’. The word comes from the same French construction as ‘amateur’.

revealed this word is overused and thereby devalued. Usually coupled with ‘exclusive’. Do not use, unless instructed to by seniors. It’s nakedly self-promoting. After all the core business of journalism is ‘revelation’ – to tell audiences what they don’t know. Reporters simply do this by doing their job.

revert to not ‘revert back’ to .

roofs not rooves.

S

sacrilegious notice the i after r. It’s not spelled ‘sacreligious’.

said/says In print news reporting, the simple, unequivocal ‘said’ is always preferred in attribution. Broadcast reporters work in the present tense ‘says,’ but some newspapers are adopting the present tense. Such words as ‘admitted,’ ‘agreed,’ ‘concluded,’ ‘continued’ and ‘commented’ all have shades of meaning that interfere with objectivity in reporting. Avoid replacing said/says with ‘believes,’ ‘feels’. Use words other than ‘said’ only in exceptional circumstances. Use the form: ‘The country was going to the dogs, the colonel said.’ Do NOT use the nursery-rhyme form ‘. . . said the colonel’.

See **direct speech, indirect speech, tenses**.

sailors in a ship not sailors on a ship.

scald the result of boiling water or steam applied to person; or bring milk to the boil. **Scold** discipline in a parental manner, give a tongue lashing.

sculpture (n) the art piece; **sculptor** (n) the artist; **sculpt** (v) the process of a sculptor producing a sculpture.

sensors and **censors** are often confused. Sensors are electronic devices for sensing temperature, pressure etc which send signals to gauges. Censors classify films, books and other texts with a view to banning parts or all of them. (See ‘censor/censure’). (*See also News Ltd section*).

semi-colon The semi-colon is used for clarity in a series. It separates a series of equal elements when the individual segments contain material set off by commas.

We decided to spend our money for fishing gear on a top-of-the-range, two-speed, roller-bearing reel; 30kg nylon, monofilament line, probably about 1000m; hooks, sinkers, rings and split shot; and a selection of jigs, plugs, wobblers and spoons.

A semi-colon must be used when joining two independent clauses without using ‘and’, ‘or’ or ‘but’.

Smith opened the window; her accomplice opened the door. A semi-colon must be used when a conjunctive adverb, commonly ‘however’, joins two independent clauses. The board meets tomorrow; however, nothing will be decided. They were ordered to return; nevertheless, they chose to stay.

Note that a comma must follow the conjunctive adverb.

sequester to remove or keep separate and alone. A writer can sequester herself in a quiet, private place to write without interruption. Private property can be sequestered by the courts.

sequestering carbon pumping CO2 from coal burning industries particularly into subterranean

chambers called **carbon sinks**.

sewage is carried in **sewers**; **sewerage** is the system.

sexism/gender University of Queensland policy is to avoid sexism in language. Such words as ‘spokesman’ should be replaced by ‘spokesperson’. Use ‘chair’, not ‘chairman’ or ‘chairperson’.

Do not use the archaic forms ‘she’ and ‘her’ when referring to boats, ships or aircraft. Nations are also sexless, and the pronoun is ‘it’. Similarly, though cyclones may have male or female names, their pronoun is ‘it’.

English has no singular pronoun that includes both genders. Although the generic form ‘their’ is becoming accepted, avoid the form:

‘Each student must be aware of their responsibilities.’

A better alternative is:

‘Students must be aware of their responsibilities.’

However, when the common sex of a group of people is clearly understood, the correct pronoun gender should be used.

Each student of this exclusive girls’ school must be aware of her responsibilities. See *Valuing Diversity: A Guide to Using Culturally-Inclusive Language* (University of Queensland, 2001).

sexting New speak for sending sexually explicit texts and pictures by mobile/cell phone.

Shiitake mushroom Japanese delicacy, pronounced without the double i accentuated.

Shiite one of the two major Islamic divisions, with the double i pronounced as a diphthong – first time as in ‘ee’; second time as in ‘ite’. The other division is **Sunnite** or **Sunni**.

shoo-in not ‘shoe-in’ when you mean something will be easily achieved. ‘Will you meet the deadline?’ ‘It’ll be a shoo-in’. Origin uncertain, but from horse racing, meaning a sure winner – a shoo-in.

short v long Use a short, simple word rather than a longer word. Although longer words have their place, avoid the temptation to seek ‘tone’ by using the sonorous rather than the direct.

Long and Short

accordingly (**so**); adjacent to (**next to**); ameliorate (**improve**); approximately (**about**); ascertain (**learn**); assist(ance); (**help**); attempt (**try**); commence (**begin, start**); consequently (**so**); construct (**build**); consume (**drink, eat**); converse (**talk**); deceased, expired (**dead**); discontinue (**stop**); donate, contribute (**give**); endeavour (**try**); evince (**show**); exceedingly (**very**); expedite (**speed**); extinguish (**put out**); facilitate (**help**); heretofore (**before/until now**); incarcerate (**jail**); inebriated (**drunk**); inform (**tell**); inquire (**ask**); lacerations, contusions (**cuts, bruises**); luncheon (**lunch**); manufacture (**make**); merchandise (**goods**); necessitate (**force**); orientate (**orient**); possessed (**had/owned**); proceed (**go**); purchase (**buy**); remunerate (**pay**); reside (**live**); residence (**house**); resuscitate (**revive**); shortly (**soon**); situated (**usually omit this word**); state (**say subsequently**); terminate (**end**); therefore (**so**); utilise (**use**); whole of (**all**).

shot-put, pronounced ‘oo’. **Shot-putter** is the athlete with same pronunciation. But a golf **putt** is pronounced with a short u as in ‘but’, ‘butt’ or ‘butter’.

Sims, The a strategic life-simulation computer game developed by Maxis and published by Electronic Arts.

singular All organisations are single entities and should be treated as singular. So, ‘The government is . . .’, ‘the group is’, ‘BHP has . . .’, ‘Castlemaine Perkins Ltd brews . . .’, ‘White and Associates designs . . .’, ‘Brisbane City Council has decided . . .’

The singular number is extended to such constructions as: The architect, Smith, Jones and Brown Partners, ... Bridge and Culvert Constructions, engineer for the project, ... Arnott’s, maker of biscuits, has decided . . .

sliver is a very thin slice of something – meat, timber, or yarn ready for roving or slubbing;
slither is sometimes confused, but means the action of a snake moving, or person sliding over a surface.

sneak (present tense) **sneaked** (past tense) not ‘snuck’.

some should not be used. Better to specify how many.

somebody is preferred to ‘someone’. Similarly anybody, nobody.

sometimes, some time, some times, sometime These all have separate, distinct meanings and are not interchangeable: ‘I go fishing sometimes.’ ‘I’ll go fishing at some time.’ ‘Some times are better for fishing than others.’ ‘I’m a sometime (former) fisherman.’

spelling Use the *Macquarie Australian Dictionary* whenever unsure of spelling. Where it gives you a choice of spellings, use the first option, unless this style guide says otherwise. Note that spellcheckers in computer software are often based on American dictionaries, are unable to detect errant homonyms (eg, there, they’re, their) and are of limited usefulness. Avoid the temptation to guess spelling: guessing inevitably makes a writer look stupid. Always check. Intuitive spelling ability can be developed only by reading, referring and remembering, although some rules are helpful.

Some words that cause frequent difficulties are:

abattoir, accommodate, adviser, aficionado, Antarctic, (A)arctic, asphalt, athlete.

barbecue, berserk, bureaucratic, burglar.

calendar, callus/callous, Caribbean, cemetery, combated, commitment, connoisseur, consensus.

dependent/dependant, descendant, develop, diphtheria, ecstasy, eighth, eisteddfod, environment, exaggerate, exhilarate, exhort, exorbitant.

February.

gauge.

haemorrhage, hierarchy.

immediately, indispensable.

jewellery.

loathe/loathe.

mackerel, manoeuvre, mathematics.

necessary, nickel, nuclear.

parallel(ed), papaw, phosphorus, possess, prejudice, privilege, propeller.

quite/quiet.

reservoir, restaurant, riesling.

separate.

targeted, tetanus, tragedy, truly.

undoubtedly.

vacuum, vegetable, villain.

weird

specious something that appears impressive but that has little substantive content (an argument, for example).

spacious roomy.

spokesman/spokeswoman okay but you may want to use ‘representative’ or ‘official’.

spoliation. Note the spelling. Despoiling or plundering documents so they’re useless as evidence. (It’s not ‘spoilation’.)

stationary not moving; **stationery** writing materials.

storey floor level in a building; **story** a narrative. American storeys are different from ours. Our ground level is their first. Our first is their second, and so on.

substantive essential content, of, say, an argument, which can be understood independently of context, as it stands; **substantial** ample or considerable amount of tangible matter.

suicide This noun should not be used as a verb. Use ‘commit suicide’. A person cannot ‘suicide’ any more than a person can ‘homicide’ another.

swat (v) flies, and **swat** (n) is the instrument used; **swot** (v) is to study hard. Somebody who studies hard can also be known as a **swot** (n).

synergy where two or more organisations, people work together harmoniously; mutually beneficial cooperation; producing greater benefits than the sum of their parts. Tends to be overused. Check the conditions are present.

T

24/7 meaning anytime, all the time. Only use when quoting source.

t-shirt, not ‘tee-shirt’.

tautology Do not say the same thing twice in different words, a wasteful habit well developed by some sports commentators. Some common examples are ‘repeat again’, ‘total stranger’, ‘new innovation’, ‘different alternative’, ‘general consensus’, ‘close proximity’, ‘future prospects’, ‘full potential’, ‘past history’, ‘essential prerequisite’, ‘a new record’, ‘8.30pm at night’, ‘2am in the morning’, ‘actual facts’, ‘the reason why’, ‘the reason . . . is because . . .’

tea-tree (not ‘ti-tree’) even though it is not used for tea.

technical terms Technical terms should be used without quotation marks or italics –

‘Elevons are moveable control surfaces located on the trailing edge of an aircraft’s wings. An elevon serves the same function as an elevator and an aileron.’

This is not the case when the technical word or term is directly taken from another language, and has not been Anglicised (in which case, it is italicised – *Gemeinschaft*, a sociological

term), or it is so unfamiliar that it is being cited (it is then put in quotation marks).

temporal and **temporary** are sometimes confused. Temporal is having to do with time; or having to do with a present life. It can also refer to regions near a temple. Temporary means not permanent.

tenses (see also **indirect speech**) Print journalism normally uses the past tense, as reports follow the events, etc. described:

‘The greatest cricket show on earth yesterday warmed the hearts ...’ (Courier-Mail).

This is not necessarily the case in broadcast journalism, where the reporting may coincide with the events. In this case, use the present tense:

‘Crowds are gathering here for the greatest cricket show on earth ...’

However, the use of tenses should be accurate and both the present and future tense should be used where appropriate, irrespective of medium: ‘Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation is eyeing a \$US7 billion buy-out ...’ (Financial Review). ‘Australian troops in Aceh will remain unarmed ...’ (Sydney Morning Herald).

Pay particular attention not to mix tenses, particularly in indirect speech. See **attribution that, which** These relative pronouns are not interchangeable and writers should not imagine that ‘which’ is the literary form of ‘that’. Use ‘that’ in so-called restricted clauses.

The house that Jack built is still standing.

Use ‘which’ (and commas) for unrestricted clauses.

The house, which Jack built, is still standing.

The first usage here is restricted to one particular house; the second is not restricted. In the second example, the clause between the commas simply adds extra information that is not essential to the sentence.

For further explanation, see *Style* (News Ltd section).

that usually best dropped; clumsy and tautological. ‘A spokesman for the Prime Minister’s office said that Mr Rudd had not worked yesterday’, or ‘He thought that it was a good idea’ instead of ‘He thought it was a good idea’. Sometimes it is useful, such as ‘police said last night three people had died’. This is an ambiguous statement, needing ‘that’ to clarify when the police were speaking - last night or today. Always ask yourself whether it is necessary. If it’s not necessary LEAVE IT OUT. (See also **which** and **that**), and when to use them.

the In journalism the definite article is often omitted (‘Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’). This is a debatable practice as prime minister is not a title but a role. However, there are two instances where it is unacceptable to omit ‘the’ – where ‘the’ forms part of the title or name (The Australian, The University of Queensland), in which case it takes a capital letter; where ‘the’ confers uniqueness (the Queen [if you so desire], the Mufti of Jerusalem), in which case it does not take a capital ‘t’.

timber is wood; **timbre** (pronounced ‘tambr’) is the tonal quality of a sound.

time Stories should be written with publication dates in mind. If an event occurs on June 22 and the next edition of the paper is June 21 then write ‘... will be held tomorrow (June 21).’ Similarly ‘next week’, ‘last month’ or ‘on Tuesday’ should be used and the actual date included in brackets as confirmation. News style for time is concise: ‘11am on November 2, 1911’ is an example.

See also **numbers**.

time shifting is the recording of programming to a storage medium to be viewed or listened to at a **time** more convenient to the consumer. Typically, this refers to TV programming but can also refer to radio shows via podcasts

tire and **tyre** are often confused. To tire of something is to become sick of it. Whereas a tyre is the pneumatic rubber device on vehicle and bicycle wheels used to soften the ride and improve road holding. The confusion arises perhaps out of the American spelling of the pneumatic device, which is tire.

tiresome Means ‘tedious’ or ‘boring’, not ‘tiring’.

titles, ranks use Mr and Ms (not Mrs), as well as Professor, Associate Professor, Dr, Sir, Lady, Princess, Constable, Captain, Colonel, etc. At second and subsequent references Professor and Associate Professor are both written as ‘Professor’ (then ‘Prof’ in subsequent uses, but not in broadcast).

Give the person’s full name at first mention, and thereafter their title and surname: ‘Fred Smith . . . Mr Smith’. Similarly, ‘Professor Fred Smith . . . Professor Smith’, and ‘Dr Fred Smith . . . Dr Smith’ Note that in the case of knights, the first name and not the surname is used: ‘Sir Fred Smith . . . Sir Fred’.

Only Mr, Ms, Dr, Br, Sr and the Rev should be used as contractions. Note that ‘the Rev’ requires a given name as in, for instance, ‘the Rev Fred Smith’. Thereafter, the reference is ‘Mr Smith’, not ‘Rev Smith’. Roman Catholic priests are normally referred to as Fr, although some have the title Monsignor. Some Anglican priests prefer to be referred to as Fr and Anglican priests should be consulted about this, as should female priests about their preferred title. Bishops should be referred to formally at first reference and thereafter as ‘Bishop . . .’: ‘The Bishop of Boolaroola, the Rt Rev Fred Smith’ or ‘the Most Rev Fred Smith’ at first mention, then ‘Bishop Smith’.

Titles in sport often look strange: ‘Mr Langer’, ‘Mr Mundine’, ‘Mr Rafter’. To avoid this awkwardness, avoid honorifics for all names involved in sport, whether they are the names of sports competitors or officials. Imperial titles and police or military ranks may occasionally intrude on sports pages and are the exceptions to this rule.

Court reporting presents a dilemma that must be resolved fairly. Although it may appear odd that a criminal should be referred to as ‘Mr’ or ‘Ms’, many people who face charges in court are not criminals, even if found guilty. It is appropriate, then, to refer to all people involved in court proceedings in the normal way.

Police should be given their full title at first reference, and thereafter an abbreviated title: ‘Senior Constable Brown . . . Sen Const Brown’, ‘Sergeant Hobbs . . . Sgt Hobbs’. Note that police ranks refer to rank, not division of activity. So Detective Sergeant Mary O’Leary is ‘Sgt O’Leary’ at second mention, not ‘Det O’Leary’. Similarly, Detective Inspector Jones becomes Insp Jones.

Titles should normally be as brief as possible. Such honorifics as ‘the Hon’, ‘the Right Hon’, ‘His Highness’, ‘His Excellency’, ‘the Worshipful’, ‘His Grace’ are not used.

See **decorations**.

toddler use only once the age range of toddler has been specified. Strictly speaking there is no such word – **toddle** describes walking with difficulty, whether young or elderly.

try to, not ‘try and’. ‘I will try to get to the shops’. It simply doesn’t make sense to say ‘I will try and get to the shops’. The ‘and’ implies there are two activities, when there is only one, the attempt to get to the shops.

transsexual is a person who has undergone a sex change, or sexual realignment;

transvestite dresses as the other sex.

trolley (singular); **trolleys** (plural).

tweet a micro blog post on the **Twitter** social network. – 140 characters.

U

uber new word meaning irresistible or invincible. Originally German. Now used in English.

Uluru formerly known as **Ayers Rock**. Preferable to use the indigenous name **Uluru**, which has been the practice since it was handed back to Indigenous people in the 1980s.

under/over should not be used with numbers – ‘under/over 300 people attended the meeting;’ neither should you write ‘less than 300 people attended’. The correct usage is ‘**fewer/more than** 300 people attended the meeting’.

under water , **underwater** (adj) ‘Underwater’ is the adjective. An underwater film is made under water.

under way is often wrongly written as one word, but **underage** is one word, so is **undertaker**.

under the radar cliché meaning undetected. Do not use, unless quoting a source. Derived from WWII when planes could fly low enough not to be detected by radar.

unfriend the new term for removing someone as a friend on Facebook (or some other social network).

uninterested see **disinterested**. They are not interchangeable. See disinterested.

union the adjectives to this noun do not take on apostrophes when writing their proper names, only when subsequent lower case mention is made. For example, the ‘Federated Clerks Union’, becomes ‘the clerk’s union’.

unique Has an absolute meaning and has no degrees. A thing cannot be ‘rather unique’, ‘very unique’ or ‘quite unique’, although it can be ‘almost unique’ or ‘nearly unique’. Other absolute adjectives include ‘absolute’, ‘complete’, ‘contemporary’, ‘entire’, ‘essential’, ‘extreme’, ‘supreme’, ‘total’.

University of Queensland (The) Do not refer to The University of Queensland as Queensland University as this could lead to confusion with Queensland University of Technology. The ‘The’ before the University of Queensland is capitalized because this is the university’s proper name. When referring to it as ‘the university’, do not capitalise ‘university’. See **capitals**.

user friendly originally a computer term for software designed to appeal to inexperienced users. Gaining general currency, but best avoided. Go for language stemming from the situation: easy to operate, easy to use, simple, and so on.

user pays usually a principle increasingly being adopted by government services, replacing services funded from general revenue. Voluntary student unionism is an example, in contrast to the previous student unions which levied all students.

V

versus This Latin preposition is used often in sports copy. It must be used only as a preposition, never as a verb. Do not write ‘South Sydney will versus Balmain’.

verbal nouns Although many nouns have usefully become verbs (‘shop’ – ‘to shop’, ‘ship’ – ‘to ship’) and others are sidling in to the written language (‘to lunch’, ‘to video’), writers should not assume the process is universal and automatic. It is not yet possible in Australia to get away with ‘to impact’, ‘to audience’ or ‘to road’ ‘to partner’.

W

wag (n) is a colourful person. Hence **waggish**. Also **wag** (v) to absent yourself from school, work etc.

wasteful words

An important part of clear writing, especially news writing, is economy of words. Writers should rigorously check for flabby expressions and usually prefer the concise forms. (See also **short v long** and **Writing for Broadcast**.)

Some commonly used wasteful expressions and their preferred forms are:

a large proportion of (many, most); as a result (because); at about (at OR about (not both)); at the present time (now); at this point in time (now); black ban (ban); carry out (do); call a halt (stop); constructed of (made of); consult with (consult); continue to remain (stay); exceeding speed limit (speeding); filled to capacity (full); gain entrance to (enter); gale-force wind (gale); in advance of (before); in attendance at (at); inclement weather conditions (bad weather); in conjunction with (and/or); in consequence of (because in order to, to in the course of, in/during/while); in the early hours of Tuesday morning (early on Tuesday); in the majority of instances (mostly); in the vicinity of (near); in view of the fact that (since); is of the opinion (believes); made an approach to (approached); made good their escape (escaped); meet with (meet); on account of the fact that (because); on the increase (increasing); place under arrest (arrest); preparatory to (before); prior to (before); render assistance (help); sit down (sit); situated at (at); speed up/stand up/wake up (speed/stand/wake); succeeded in defeating (defeated, beat); sustained injuries (was hurt); 12 noon/12 midnight (noon/midnight); take strike action (strike); visit with (visit); was a witness to (saw); was suffering from (had); wearing apparel (clothes); with the exception of (except).

web 2.0 pronounced ‘web two-point-oh’ web interactivity in use since 2004 especially for social networking sites, information sharing and games, where readers can write actively on websites, in contrast to passive read only applications.

Western Australia Not ‘West Australia’. ‘Western Australian’, not ‘West Australian’.

where Avoid misuse of the word ‘where’ when ‘at which’, ‘in which’, ‘during which’ or ‘with which’ is intended, as in: ‘The meeting where it was discussed’.

which and **that** are generally confused. ‘That’ is used with a defining clause: ‘She finished writing the novel that she started last year’ tells us (defines) which novel is being talked about.

On the other hand ‘She finished writing the novel, which she started last year’ describes the time taken or the process of writing the book.

who and **whom** are often confused. ‘Who’ is the subject of a clause, ‘whom’ is its object. Thus it is ‘No-one knows who sent it’ but ‘no-one knows to whom it was sent’.

window of opportunity cliché best avoided. Just opportunity says as much.

wringer and **ringer** can be confused. The first is an old-fashioned device atop washing machines for squeezing clothes dry between wash and rinse cycles. It consists of two rollers and a tightening screw. The second is a person who rings, a bell, for example, or fast learner.

Y

young people is preferable to ‘youth’ as a collective noun. But use only once the age range has been specified. ‘People aged between 10 and 17 attended the concert...the young people were noisy, sometimes drowning out the music’.

youth avoid using it as a collective noun. ‘Youth worker’ is acceptable.

JACdigital v3.1

*Style and production guide for JACdigital.com.au
University of Queensland School Communication
and Arts*

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Meet JAC

Welcome to the new JACdigital website. It has been developed on a WordPress platform by Skye Doherty and Matthew Petersen at the University of Queensland's School of Communication and Arts

JACdigital is the website for students. Publishing stories on JACdigital is a great way to build your portfolio and learn about digital publishing.

By submitting a story to JACdigital you are confirming that:

- It is your own original work
- You have carried out your own reporting and all facts are true, to the best of your knowledge
- That your sources are aware that your story could be published
- That you have the right to use images, audio, video and text that are not your own

To make sure JAC showcases the best student work, there is an editorial process that will get your content looking great.

This document sets style standards for the JACdigital.com.au website. These standards will ensure the style and functionality of the site are maintained despite the large number of stories passing through it.

It is important that you follow these guidelines closely. Failure to do so will result in reduced marks for assessed work and could affect the function of the website.

This document works in conjunction with hands-on training. Please attend an OWL session to learn how to use the content management system.

Content for upload on the JACdigital site should be edited and produced using the appropriate software – Audition, PremierPro, PhotoShop, etc...

About WordPress

WordPress is open source software and there is a large development community that supports it. This guide draws on the WordPress Codex and previous versions of the JACdigital production guide. The Codex is an online encyclopedia of knowledge about WordPress and how to use it. If you are stuck, it is a good place to go:

WordPress Codex: http://codex.wordpress.org/Main_Page

To access the content management system, you need to log in to WordPress

Registering and logging on

If you are new to JAC you will need to register. Go to the homepage: www.jacdigital.com.au and click on the Register link at the bottom left of the page.

You'll need to fill in a username and password. This will need to be a valid UQ student address. It's a good idea to use your student number – with the s – as a username. You'll also need to read the Terms of Use. You'll receive an email when your registration is confirmed.

Once you're registered you can log on. Again, head to the bottom left of the page and click logon, enter your username and password.

Update your profile with your first and surnames and choose your screen name – best choice is first and surname so your stories carry a full byline.

Using WordPress

Once you are logged on you will be taken to the WordPress Dashboard. This is the content management system where you upload your stories, images, audio and video.

This guide covers how to create and publish content, but for a comprehensive guide check out the Codex:

http://codex.wordpress.org/Getting_Started_with_WordPress#WordPress_for_Beginners

Your Dashboard

As a student your user role is Contributor. This means you can create and edit posts, upload rich media and read comments on your stories. You can also read other posts in the system and create a user profile.

These functions are in the menu on the left.

Posting

There are two types of content in WordPress: pages and posts. Pages are good for static information and posts are better for topics that will be updated. You will be creating posts for your stories.

Posts are entries that are organised under categories. They appear in reverse chronological order and the posts and comments are included in the site's RSS feed.

A JACdigital story can contain a number of components, including: text; images; video; audio; links; interactive content.

Regardless of medium, each post/story needs some common components:

- **Headline**

- Image
- main body
- Excerpt
- Rich media
- SEO metadata

File types

Only certain file types are acceptable for rich media. Make sure your content has one of these extensions:

Image: .jpg

Audio: .pm3

Video: .mov or .mp4

Create a post

To create a new post go to:

Dashboard > Posts > Add New



Fill in the title field and enter your content in the editing panel.

Use the tool bar to format text, upload images and insert hyperlinks. Highlight or put your cursor where you want it and click the tool.



Headlines

Write your headline in the box that says: Enter title here.

Good headline writing is an art. Headlines should be short (three to six words), true and grab attention. Avoid puns and don't try to summarise the story. Go for maximum impact and play to the strongest news value. If the story is well-written the first paragraph should provide suitable subject matter for a headline.

Make sure your headline contains a verb.

Images

Every post needs an image. This needs to be 590px wide by up to 450px deep. This is a Medium image.

WordPress will crop thumbnails – 150px by 150px – from bigger images for use on the homepage and category pages. There is also a Large image option, 950px wide, which is the full width of our theme - DO NOT use this measure.

All images must be .jpg files. Do not upload other formats. Crop your image in PhotoShop before uploading it. Wordpress can scale down images but not up – if you upload an image that is less than 590px wide you will not meet the production requirements.

To insert an image, place your cursor at the beginning of your story, click on the first icon beside the Upload/Insert navigation.

Choose select file and navigate to your image. Click upload.

Drag and drop or browse to your image file.

Fill in the following details:

Title	A short name that relates to your story title
Alternate text	A brief description in case the image does not load on a user's computer
Caption	An appropriate caption. Include names of people
Description	A description, include creative commons licensing or attribution
Link URL	Do not edit
Credit copyright below	Enter the name and organisation of the person who took the image - See copyright below
Alignment	Set left for a thumbnail or centre for a larger main image

Size Choose Full Size or Medium

Credit:

Alignment None Left Center Right

Size Thumbnail (150 x 150)
 Medium
 Large
 Full Size (590 x 443)

[Use as featured image](#) [Delete](#)

Featured image

This allows you to link an image to your story without showing it in your story. Featured images show up on the Home and Category pages. Upload your image as above, then select Use as Featured Image.

Main body

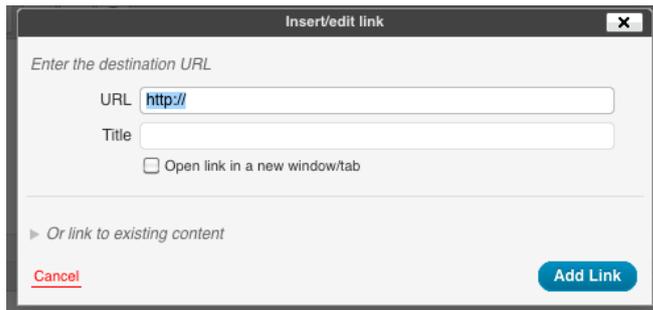
Your text can either be written in the editing pane or copied from elsewhere. If you are copying text from another program, please scrub it to remove imported code. There are two ways of doing this:

1. paste the text in the editing pane, highlight it and hit the eraser tool. This is the least effective option
2. Copy your text, hit the Paste as Plain Text or Paste from Word icons, copy the text into the popup pane and hit insert. This is the best option.

Body copy needs to be consistent throughout the site. Use bullet points and bold text sparingly and do not change the text size. Refer to the SCA Style Book for guidance on when to use italics, inverted commas, capital letters etc.

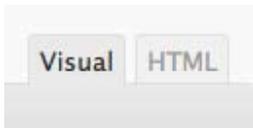
Text stories should follow the inverted pyramid convention or an appropriate feature style.

It is best practice to add relevant hyperlinks to your stories. To add a hyperlink, highlight the text you want linked and click on the chain icon. In the popup past the URL. If it is an internal link select open in same window, if it is external select a new window. Add a title in the Title field.



Using HTML

WordPress allows you to edit in Visual or HTML mode. Most formatting can be done without using HTML, however, there are a few times when this is handy. Sometimes, if you copy text from elsewhere, random code will be imported. You will be able to see and edit this in HTML mode.



There are plenty of online resources about using HTML and several sites offer tutorials. Check out:

W3 Schools: <http://www.w3schools.com/>

HTML Dog: <http://htmldog.com/>

Excerpts

Excerpts are handcrafted text used in other places, such as in the category highlights on the homepage and in RSS feeds. Each post needs an excerpt. This could be a summary of the story, or, if your story is well structured, might be the first sentence. Keep excerpts short – 15 to 20 words.

You will also need to insert a More line. This will ensure the full text of your story does not appear on the top slots of the homepage.

To do this, put your cursor at the end of the first paragraph and click the More tool in the toolbar:



This will insert a grey line in your story.

Multiple pages

You can create multiple pages in your posts using the page break tool. Click on the icon with sizzors and a dotted line where you want the new page and it will add a page break. On preview you will see Page 1 Page 2 etc at the top and bottom of the story. This the icon:



If you use multiple pages you will need to put some thought into headlines and layout. Your main headline will appear on all pages, so you will need give individual individual stories separate headlines. You'll also need to break up the layers of headlines, byline and page numbers with an image.

Do this: After the page break line insert another full-width image, video etc (590px), below this write the next headline. This will need to be formatted as a Heading 3 – chose this from the drop down style menu or use the <h3> tag. Then write your story.

Audio

Uploading audio is a two-step process and there are two ways of inserting an audio file into a post. Only one of these should be used if you are using multiple pages. In all cases, audio files must be .mp3. Do not upload other formats.

To add an audio file to a post first upload it to the Media Library. Go to:

Dashboard > Media > Add New

Either drag and drop or browse and upload your file – make sure it is a .mp3 and no bigger than 100MB

Add a Title, Caption and Description and copy the File URL

Maximum upload file size: 100MB. After a file has been uploaded, you can add titles and descriptions.

Banjo [Hide](#)



File name: Banjo.mp3
File type: audio/mpeg
Upload date: February 15, 2012

Title

Caption

Description

File URL
Location of the uploaded file.

Credit:

[Delete](#)

If you haven't already done so, create a new post. Write your headline, text and excerpt. All posts must have these, even if it is just an introductory paragraph that explains what the audio or video is about.

Then choose one of these methods:

1. Put your cursor where you want the audio to appear. Select the Insert Media icon above the tool bar. Find your file in the Media Library and select it. A dialogue box will appear with details of the file. Make sure these are complete.
2. Below the Link URL field, select **Audio Player** and then hit Insert into Post

Link URL

Enter a link URL or click above for presets.

- 3.
4. The second option is ideal if your post only appears over a single page. This method will automatically place the audio file at the bottom of your post. If you use this method for stories over multiple pages, the audio will appear on every page.
5. Do this: At the bottom of the post there is the Podcast Episode pane. Go the to the Media Library and copy the URL of the audio file. Paste it in the Media URL field and hit verify.
6. Select Auto Detect for the File Size and Duration fields



Audio files still need an image. It's a good idea to use a thumbnail shot of the talent in your story or another image that relates. In the event that you do not have a suitable image, you may use the podcast icon in the Media Library.



This can be inserted into the post or used as a featured image.

Video

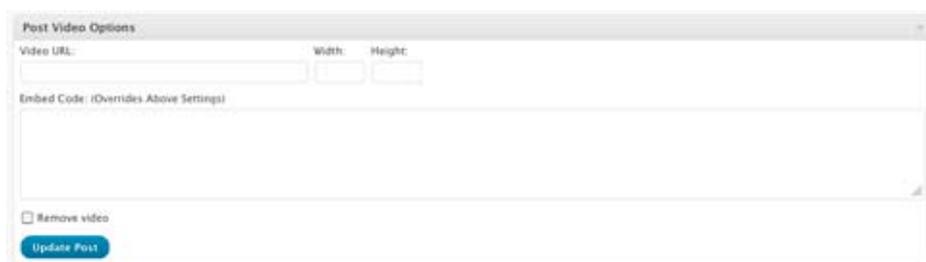
Uploading video follows the same process as the second Audio option above. You must add the file to the library then add the details to the Post Video Options pane.

Again, copy and paste the File URL. This time you must also include dimensions. Videos must be 590px wide.

The maximum file size allowed is 100MB.

If this is insufficient, it might be a good idea to upload the video to a site such as YouTube or Vimeo and embed the file in your story.

In this case, paste the code in the **Post Video Options** pane.



Again, you will need an image. Take a photo of your talent, or a scene from your video. When you upload video using this method it will appear above the text. In this case you will need to set a featured image [see above].

To embed video in-line, switch to HTML view and paste the embed code in your story where you want it to appear.

Problems embedding?

Students sometimes have difficulty embedding rich media content. This is a WordPress bug and it has to do with the permissions attached to your logon. If this is the case, speak to your lecturer. You may need to add a screenshot or holding image and paste in the URL of the video etc ... Editors will be able to embed the content for you.

Slideshows

The oQey slideshow plugin allows you to add photo slideshows to your posts. Images must be full width and so it should be used as a main feature in place of a teaser image. It will appear in the main homepage content well, but like video and audio, you will need to assign a separate feature image.

The oQey Gallery menu is on the left and there is an upload icon above the post tool bar. To use the feature you need to first create a gallery of the images you want to use: This is separate from the normal image upload process where you will upload your featured image.

Make sure your images are 590px wide and 450px deep.

1. go to the oQey Gallery menu on the left and select Galleries.
2. Name your gallery and hit Create – Make the name relate to your story.
3. Select Upload (panel 4 on the right) to browse and select images. These will appear below and you can drag them to the order you need.
4. hit the circle icon on each image to add a description so captions will appear.
5. Copy the gallery shortcode

To insert the gallery, go to your post and put your cursor at the beginning. Hit the oQey icon in above the tool bar and select your gallery. Alternatively, paste in the shortcode you copied.



Remember, you will need to upload your featured image separately and as normal. Remember to crop your images to the right size.

Polls

Use the Polls tool on the left-hand menu to create a poll in your story. Select Polls > Add New

Insert your questions and answers and select a style. Please use something neutral, some of the more decorative polls will clash with our theme.

When you have created your poll, save it and a shortcode will be generated. You can either paste the shortcode into your post or create a new post with the poll inserted.

If you have a PollDaddy account, you can use it to create a poll to use on JACdigital.

Publishing

Once you have uploaded all your content you need to tell the system where the story should appear. WordPress organises posts into Categories, and these are displayed on the JACdigital homepage. Posts are also assigned Tags.

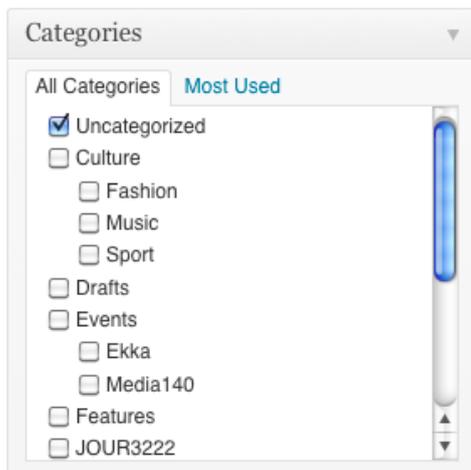
Categories and Tags aid website navigation and allow posts to be grouped with others of similar content. Users can select a category and see all the entries under it. Similarly, if the search by tags, all entries tagged with certain words will be returned.

Categories

Each post in WordPress is filed under one or more categories. Generally you will need to add your post to an assignment submission category and editors will then move it to a appropriate section on publication.

It is important that you select a category. Do not leave your story uncategoryed. If you do, it could be overlooked.

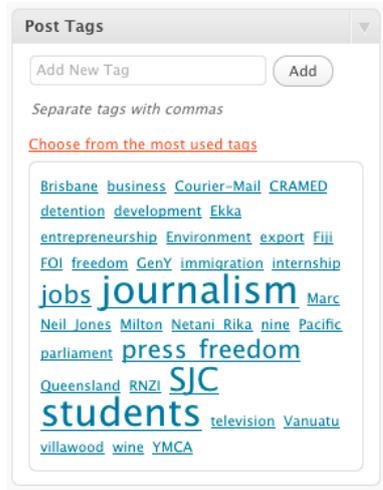
Select one or more categories by ticking the appropriate box.



Tags

Every post in WordPress can be filed under one or more Tags. These appear in the tag cloud on the homepage.

Tags should be reused where ever possible. Click the link to ‘choose from the most used tags’ and select as many as are relevant to your story. If you need to add unique tags, add them to the new tag field.



Multiple bylines

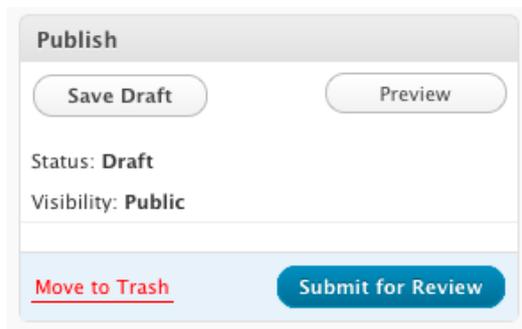
If you are working in teams you will need to override the default byline field. This is generated from each user’s profile, so make sure you have filled in your first and surname.

To customise the byline, use the Custom Author Byline field below the story editing pane. Type in the byline you want to appear on the story.

Submit

When you have finished your story, you can submit it via the Publish pane. Editors review stories prior to publication.

If your story is incomplete, select Save Draft, so you can return to it later.



Copyright

Your stories will be visible to the world, so you **MUST** ensure that your content does not breach Copyright laws.

The easiest way to do this is to produce all the content yourself, ie: write the text, take the photographs, shoot the video. In many courses this is a requirement and there are penalties for using content created by others.

There are two situations in which you can use someone else's content:

1. Where you have the express written permission of the owner of the work
2. Where work is released under the Creative Commons agreement, for instance, where photographs on Flickr have been released under Creative Commons (be careful here, only some Flickr photographs are offered under the CC agreement).

Under **NO** circumstances should you use a commercial sound track for your video eg: a song you downloaded and listen to on your iPod. Under **NO** circumstances should you "borrow" video from YouTube or any other video sharing site.

Any content sourced from elsewhere must be attributed. If it is not already in the image credit, do so at the bottom of your story in italics, aligned right, eg:

Image: [George on Flickr](#) - make the text a hyperlink to the image

Graphic: courtesy of xxx, used with permission

Your portfolio

JACdigital generates author pages, so you will be able to see all your stories at one URL. This is the format: <http://jacdigital.com.au/author/USERNAME> - put your username, in lower case, after author/ to see a page of your stories. This will come in handy for showing potential employers **or linking to from your own website.**

Writing for broadcast

(adapted from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *News & Current Affairs Style Guide*)

What is news? What is current affairs?

All material produced by the News and Current Affairs Division must adhere to the ABC's four key values – honesty, fairness, independence and respect – enshrined in Editorial Policies. They must also conform to our principles of editorial responsibility, which require accuracy, impartiality and balance.

However, there are often significant differences between current affairs and news.

Both can provide information, context and analysis. But while news is primarily involved in informing our audience at the earliest opportunity of a current event or issue (and will generally only provide sufficient context and analysis to perform that primary function), current affairs has a broader brief. Current affairs stories and programs will explore issues in greater depth, provoke and promote public debate by putting issues on the agenda for discussion, and investigate matters of public importance.

Because of its broader brief to explore, provoke and stimulate, current affairs reports will often employ a wider range of styles in their language and construction. Interviews and debates may be more conversational, stories more discursive, and programs more adventurous by using music, humour, and other story-telling devices.

In both current affairs and news (and some programs will be a combination of both) there will often be “live” unscripted reports and interviews. These are, by their nature, unpredictable, particularly when dealing with breaking news.

broadcast writing

Accuracy, brevity and clarity.

These basic aims of writing for broadcast can be applied to all programming from TV documentaries to Radio News stories, from one-minute TV news updates to online stories.

Journalists' work should be characterised by simple writing and expression. The more complex the subject, the greater the need for simplicity of expression.

We should write the way we speak. That does not mean we use slang, but we don't use formal, official words and phrases that often obscure meaning or sound inflated. Newspaper style has little relevance or application in the broadcasting business.

Don't surrender to the language of the police bulletin, the political rally, the computer blurb and the myriad other sources of stodgy officialese. We don't converse with people in long, convoluted sentences, which have several qualifying phrases, and commas, such as this one. So don't write this way.

Our audience usually gets only one chance to catch the message of what we're saying. If we present them with convoluted phrasing, confusing syntax, too many ideas in a sentence, jargon or what some call “weasel words”, we will lose the audience.

There are few stories that can get away without some context. Our audience is well-informed and some people will know more than we do about the subject of a story, but the majority will need to be reminded of why the story is important, what led to it and how the latest development

has taken it further. Context should be succinct. Say what is necessary so the audience is not asking questions about who, what, where, why, when and how.

The way you introduce a story will often determine whether it succeeds. Write the link or intro first. This forces you to pinpoint the main interest of your story. Adopt crisp, direct speech that appeals to the imagination. Emphasise key information, build a context, and tease other facts that will come later in the body of the story.

Use the continuous present tense wherever possible. Write “company executives say”, rather than “said”. But be consistent. Switching back and forth between present and past tense within a sentence is wrong. Stay in the same tense right through a story if possible.

Our job does not end with the accurate setting down of essential facts. From that beginning, we should aim to give the news a meaning and an interest that are essential to capture the attention of the audience and enable the story to be properly understood.

Our objective is to give warmth, colour and life to all our stories where this is possible.

Words that are clear and plain are not in themselves dull. Short words usually do the job better than long ones. Stick to words and phrases that are simple and well understood.

Poor grammar signifies that an idea has not been properly thought through. Cliches are the first refuge of the thoughtless. Be creative, clear and specific.

Always write for meaning. Break your prose into separate sentences if that’s the safest way of ensuring clarity and avoiding ambiguity.

A first draft is the form of a story you read through and check for factual errors, awkward phrasing or literals, before offering it for use in a bulletin. Don’t submit copy expecting producers to do your writing for you.

Always re-read your scripts before you file them. And if you have time, read them again. Check your scripts for factual errors, awkward phrasing or literals, before offering them for use.

No matter how experienced we are, it’s likely our writing can be improved. Rarely should a story be broadcast without first being checked by someone else. A sharp editor or producer can make good writing even better.

There are alternatives for many words that obscure our meaning, rely on bureaucratic jargon, are archaic, easily misunderstood, or are gender biased.

On the left below are words you should avoid altogether or which are overused or used inappropriately. On the right are words that will help the audience better understand your meaning.

Avoid

abated

accessed

acquired

admits

airlifted

a large proportion of

all-time high

Use

eased

got

got

says

flown

many, most

record/new high

ambulance men	ambulance officers
amongst	among
an horrific	a horrific
anticipate	expect
appeal (a decision)	appeal against (a decision)
apprehended	caught
armed gunmen	gunmen
as a result	because
ascertain	find out/discover
at about	at OR about (not both)
at large	free
at the present time	now
at this point in time	now
back-to-back victories	consecutive victories
bailed	granted bail
biggest ever	biggest
black ban	ban
bundled out	eliminated/beaten
call a halt	stop
carry out	do
centre around	centre on
chairperson	chairman/chairwoman
choppered	taken (by helicopter)
cleaning lady	cleaner
claims	says
commenced	started/began
concedes	says
constructed of	made of
consult with	consult
continue to remain	stay
currently	now (if necessary at all)
cutbacks	cuts
daylight savings	daylight saving
(the) deceased	the dead man/woman
defiant	See: Editorialising
determined (yet to be)	decided
due to the fact that	because
embankment	bank

embattled	in trouble/troubled
exceeding speed limit	speeding
eye witness	witness
fatally injured	killed
filled/packed to capacity	full/packed
finally	See: Editorialising
first ever	first
fixed-wing aircraft	plane
firemen	firefighters
following	after
foreman	supervisor
freak accident	accident
gain entrance to	enter
gaol	jail
gale-force wind	gale
gets under way	starts/begins
going forward	(usually unnecessary)
gone missing	is missing
gunned down	shot
hit-run	hit and run
hopefully	See: Editorialising
hospitalised	taken to hospital
housewives	women
however	(over-used)
icon	(as in sporting icon – unnecessary)
in advance of	before
inclement weather conditions	bad weather
in conjunction with	and/or
in consequence of	because/in/during/while
n the early hours of Tuesday morning	early on Tuesday
in the majority of instances	mostly
in the vicinity of	near
in view of the fact that	since);
is able to	can
is of the opinion	believes
impact on	have an effect on/affect
imprisonment	jail

in attendance at	at
incident	attack/robbery/murder – be specific
interface	work together or meet
January 15	January the 15th/mid-January
lady	woman
living memory	(usually meaningless)
local residents	residents/neighbours
located	found
loved ones	family and friends
made an approach to	approached
made good their escape	escaped
manning	staffing
meanwhile	(over-used)
meet with	meet
militant group	group
miracle	remarkable/extraordinary
molotov cocktail	petrol bomb
mother of three	woman
negative territory	down (as in stock price movement)
occupants	people
occurred	happened
on account of the fact that	because
one-point-five	one-and-a-half
ongoing	continuing
on the increase	increasing
our	Australia's/Queensland's (be specific)
over the weekend	at the weekend
over 300	more than 300
passed away/passed on	died
pending	until
per (hour)	an (hour)
place under arrest	arrest
policemen	police officers
positive territory	up (as in stock price movement)
preparatory to	before
prior to	before
protest (a decision)	protest against (a decision)

refuses to say	won't say
(on a) regular basis	regularly
relocate	move
render assistance	help
rushed (to hospital)	taken
sedan	car
sit down	sit
situated at	at
situated near	near
spokesperson	spokesman/spokeswoman
sportsmanlike	sporting
stand up	stand
stretchered (off)	carried (off)
subsequent to	after
succeeded in defeating	defeated, beat
suicided	committed suicide
sustained injuries	was hurt
take decisions	make decisions
take strike action	strike
therefore	so
tragedy	accident/deaths (be specific)
transpire	happen
transported	taken
try and	try to
12 noon/12 midnight	noon/midnight
unaccounted for	missing
upcoming	coming/tomorrow's/next month's
utilise	use
vessel	ship/yacht/boat (be specific)
visit with	visit
vowed	promised/threatened/said
wake up	wake
was a witness to	saw
was suffering from	had
wearing apparel	clothes
whilst	while
will reappear in court	will be back in court

with the exception of	except
worst-ever	worst
would of	would have
wounded	injured (usually)

This list is a small sample, but it makes clear the way you should think about the language you use. It's also accepted that not all examples and guidelines can be hard and fast rules. Use your common sense, keep it simple and if you are in any doubt, err on the side of editorial and style safety.

JACradio News Style Guide

Radio newsrooms use different computer programs including iNews, NewsBoss and NewsRoom to:

- compile their rundowns;
- write and time their news scripts, and,
- edit, store and play audio inserts such as voice reports, interview grabs or sound bites.

Although the technology has evolved, the elements of radio journalism, basic terminology and layout of news copy remain the same.

1. Double space between lines;
2. Double-double space between paragraphs;
3. Use a 12-point font;
4. Write one sentence to each paragraph;
5. Spell out numbers and money amounts in full, except years. They should be written numerically '1999, 2001'. (Examples: October the twenty-seventh, 2002; Two-point-two million dollars).
6. Write all words with difficult or unusual pronunciations in their phonetic pronunciation at the top of the copy in brackets and in upper-case letters. Example: 'Mr Smith says his rheumatic condition ...' would be accompanied by the phonetic ROO – MAT- ICK at the top of the story. This includes your own name if it is difficult to pronounce or if it is a relatively straightforward pronunciation but is unusual to the eye. This helps the news reader who may not have had time to pre-read the bulletin.
7. Adopt the following layout for your story:
 - top left, the date;
 - under the date, the exact time you write the story;
 - top right, the catchline or name of the story - one or two words that clearly indicate what the story is about;
 - all audio to go with the story MUST have exactly the same catchline.(This is to ensure there is no confusion especially if there are stories with similar names being used in a program or saved in the computer file for different purposes.)

- under the catchline, write your name followed by a forward slash and the original source of your story. Examples: Smith/interview; Jones/annual report; Tee/class handout; Brown/own idea.
- double-double space down and begin your story;
- If there's audio, double-double space down, then write the details: either the name of the interviewee, speaker or reporter, the duration and outcue on separate lines. Some newsrooms require journalists to write the audio transcript in bold.

Examples:

Starts: followed by a colon and the first three words or sounds on the audio.

Ends: followed by a colon and write the last three words on the audio. It is critical that these words are exactly the same as those on the audio.

Dur: which is short for 'duration' at the bottom of the audio insert transcript.

You get the time for this from the computer editing software – it must be exact to the nearest second.

- For a straight copy story, you can estimate the length by counting three words per second, but there is no need to write Dur: on the copy. Do not use word count on your computer because it automatically counts years. Example: 2015 is counted as one word but when we say it, it is four words.

8. Do not abbreviate words in your story, although it is allowed in the audio transcript. Spell words out in full. Example: 'centimetres', not 'cms' except for every-day abbreviations such as Dr, Mr, Mrs, Ms.

9. Titles or descriptions should always come before the person's name, not after. Example: 'Prime Minister, Julia Gillard' NOT 'Julia Gillard, Prime Minister'.

10. Attribution should come at the beginning of the sentence, not at the end.

11. When using organisation names, don't use initials in the first instance. Use the name in full and only the initials subsequently if they are well known. Example: 'The Australian Medical Association' .. for first usage but subsequently, because it is a well-known acronym, you can use the AMA. Organisations that are known almost exclusively by acronyms may be referred to by the acronym throughout. Examples: FBI, ASIO, AIDS.

12. Avoid trailing off wraps and reports with talent as the final voice. If this happens, do not use a reporter sign off.

13. Use reporter sign-offs in domestic or audience areas only when on location. Examples: 'Dan Higgins, Kakadu' or 'Kylie Smythe, High Court, Canberra'.

14. Vary throw lines. Examples: ‘Claire Smith reports’, ‘Claire Smith reports it’s the biggest fall in the past ten years’, ‘the fall is the biggest in a decade...as Claire Smith reports’, and ‘Finance Reporter Claire Smith reports from Sydney’.

15. Keep the throw brief so that reporter’s or talent’s name is close to the audio.

16. If there is a vital fact to the story, don’t rely on the talent to give its only mention. But when reinforcing the vital fact, use varied wording.

17. Avoid repetition of words between the intro and grab or voicer.

18. Voicers and wraps should be a maximum of 35-40 seconds duration.

19. Copy stories should be generally three pars, or a maximum of four. Each paragraph should be no more than two lines long.

20. Grabs should be between 10 and 20 seconds.

21. Write names of people and places in CAPITALS.

8.3.00COLES-MYER PROFIT

10.45am..... Smith/annual report

Australia’s biggest retailer, COLES MYER, says it’s turned rising sales volumes into a better half-year profit.

For the six months to January it’s reported a profit after tax and abnormal items of almost two hundred-and-ninety-five million dollars.

That’s up seven-point-two per cent on the previous corresponding period.

COLES MYER directors have declared an increased interim dividend of thirteen-and-a-half cents per share.

15.3.01..... ARMED ROBBERY

5.45am Valley/Police rounds

Police are searching for a man who used a knife to hold up and rob a video store at SOUTHPORT overnight.

Police say the man threatened the attendant at the Movies 4U store in SCARBOROUGH STREET around midnight.

The man escaped with an undisclosed sum of money.

He's described as one-hundred-and-seventy-five centimetres tall, around forty years of age, with a dark brown beard.

He was wearing a black spray jacket with a hood.

9.7.06JOBS PREVIEW 2

10.40amThirsk/rounds

Falling employment and a higher jobless rate are being predicted ahead of the latest official labour force statistics due today.

Finance Reporter, ADRIAN THIRSK, says the February data will intensify the current focus on the state of the national economy.

CART:

As the word "recession" continues to be bandied about, financial market forecasts for last month's employment outcomes centre on a drop in total job numbers of five-thousand, and an unemployment rate rising to six-point-seven percent. At the big recruitment firm, Morgan and Banks, GEOFF MORGAN says employer confidence was being quickly eroded last month. //What we're seeing is, currently, is a downturn in display advertising across the board, which is due to, I think, a lot of, lack of confidence in where the market's going.// Commonwealth Bank currency strategist, MICHAEL WORKMAN, says today's employment figures will have implications for the Australian dollar.//If they're big and negative obviously that changes the growth outlook. And I think that's the issue running for the currency at the moment.//

Dur. 41 secs

Starts: "As the word ..."

Ends: "... at the moment"

(If no transcript)

16.3.01UNEMPLOYMENT

.....7.10 am Brown/interview

Note: These transcripts are from ABC Radio news, which still uses the word 'CART' when referring to an audio insert. 'CART' is an abbreviation for 'cartridge', the term for a tape system once used to record audio.

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