Generic Education Style Guide
To be used alongside company specific terminology guide

Contents

About the Style Guide

The guide is based on the [Government's A to Z Style Guide](#), [Ofsted's Style Guide](#) and the Plain English Campaign's [How to Write in Plain English Guide](#)

The guide includes basic advice, rules and conventions for language and style for all written communication for everyone in your business. It will help you all to write in a consistent and clear way.

Further support with writing for education

For a terminology guide specific to your company and products, or for further guidance on writing for education, please contact Claire Ashton on claire@camarketing.co.uk.

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Essential Advice

Writing for education
- Most of the people you will write for are educated to at least degree level. This does not mean that you need to write in a 'clever' way. Your target market is time strapped and does not appreciate wordy information because it is harder and slower to read.
- The more simply you write, the quicker it is for them to read and the sooner they understand your message. Try to write in the same way you would if you were talking to the reader.

Write as if you are talking to one person
- Write simply, as if you would if you were talking to the reader and use words such as you and your.
- Avoid generalising about schools and headteachers, talk about their school.

Write about benefits to the reader and not you
- Remember that the reader is only interested in themselves.
- Avoid writing how pleased or delighted you are with something and write about how it will benefit them and their school.

Switch on and use spelling, grammar and readability tools
- Readability gives you a percentage score of how easy to read your document is.
- Plain English starts at 60%, so aim for something above that.

Sentences
- Where possible, write in sentence case.
- Sentence case is when only the first word starts with a capital, unless a word is a proper noun, such as the company name.
- Title case is where all words begin with a capital letter and is mostly used for headings only.
- Title case is harder to read than sentence case and is useful for headings as it slows the reader down to absorb the subject.
- Within the main body of writing, title case is a distraction and sentence case should be used.

Sentence length
Short sentences are easier to read and you should aim for fewer than 20 words and to only make one point per sentence. To reduce sentence length, you can occasionally start a sentence with and, but or so.

Starting sentences
Use one single space after a full stop and before the start of the next sentence. Do not use double spaces.

Adding emphasis to a sentence
Placing the most important point at the end of a sentence gives it more impact. Do not use capitals, bold, underline or speech marks (unless it is a quote) to emphasise words. Write in a way that emphasises the point.

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Typical School Terms
Most school terms and phrases are always written in sentence case:
- Ofsted judgments, such as good or outstanding are always written in lowercase and never with speech marks;
- Ofsted – not OFSTED;
- headteacher – one word;
- the teachers' standards – always with an apostrophe as they are the teachers' standards;
- teaching school and free school;
- newly qualified teacher;
- GCSEs and A levels – no apostrophes and lowercase l, EBacc – uppercase E and B;
- baseline – one word;
- chair of governors, the governing body and governor;
- inset day;
- initial teacher training;
- Progress 8 measure – uppercase P, number 8 and lowercase m;
- pupil premium;
- Subjects, if the subject is not a language such as maths, science or geography, use lowercase;
- Languages such as English and French are title case. When writing English and maths, maths is in lower case;
- Key stages, when the key stage number is written such as Key Stage 1, use title case. Without the number use lowercase. For example, 'Standards are high in Key Stage 1 but low in other key stages;'
- School years use title case. For example, Reception Year, Year 1 and Year 2; and
- Write key stages and school years as numbers and not words.

Academy or school?
- It is correct to use the term school when writing about an academy because an academy is a type of school.
- Using schools and academies can stress a point but avoid it if it becomes too wordy.

Job titles
- When writing about groups of people such as headteachers, teachers or governors, always write in sentence case.
- When the the name of the person is included, eg 'John Smith the Headteacher.' Use title case.

Other Guidance
Abbreviations and acronyms
- Avoid shortening words or using acronyms without explanation as they can confuse your reader.
- Never assume the reader understands your acronyms, schools and regions often use different acronyms.
- Write the term in full and in title case the first time it is used with the acronym in brackets. After this, the acronym is used. The exception can be in a heading when adding the acronym looks messy.

Dates, academic years and time
- The correct order is day, month, year, for example 'Monday 4th January 2016.'
- Academic years use a forward slash, 'in the academic year 2015/16'.
- The 12-hour system, with am and pm, is easier to understand than the 24-hour clock. For example, 9.30am and 3.20pm and not 09.30 and 15.20, with no space before am or pm.
- Timetables presented as tables may look more precise in the 24-hour form.
- 12.00noon or midday is 12.00pm and not 12.00am which is the middle of the night.

And or &
- Use 'and' and not '&' other than in tables or graphs where space is tight and in school names where they use '&.'

Fewer or less?
- In the main, fewer is for things that can be counted and less is for things that cannot.

Writing numbers
- Numbers one to nine are written in words and 10 or more in figures.
- When writing two numbers in the same sentence, be consistent, eg 'The school has nine teachers and twelve TAs' or 'The school has 9 teachers and 12 TAs.'

Apostrophes and plurals
- Used to signify where letters have been removed, eg 'you're' and 'don't.' If possible, always write words in full, 'you are' and 'do not.'
- Used for possession, eg 'The school's playground...' In this example, the school owns the playground.
- Do not use apostrophes after decades, eg the 1990s and after the plural of an abbreviation, eg LAs, UTCs unless they are possessive, eg Ofsted's new inspection regime.
- Plurals not ending in an 's', the apostrophe is before the 's', eg 'children's.'
- Plurals ending in an 's', the apostrophe is after the 's', eg teachers' and schools'.

Apostrophes in school names
- Boys' and girls' schools are always written with an apostrophe after the 's.'
- Schools named after a saint should always have an apostrophe, although always check how the school writes its name.

Commas
- Use commas at both ends of part of a sentence that could be removed, or could be placed within brackets, and the sentence would still make sense. For example, 'the monthly newsletter, issued in July, sets out the timetable for all staff.' In contrast, 'the monthly newsletter sets out the timetable for all staff,' or 'the monthly newsletter (issued in July) sets out the timetable for all staff.'
- Use commas before and after words such as 'however', 'therefore', and 'consequently' when they are within in a sentence, and after where the word starts a sentence.

Punctuation marks
- These include exclamation marks, commas, full stops and question marks.
- Type these as you would if you were handwriting them, with no space before and one space after.
- Avoid using exclamation marks in any official documentation.

Ellipsis…
- An ellipsis consists of three dots (...) and marks an omission of one or more words from a sentence.
- It may be used at the end of a sentence to indicate that one or more sentences have been missed out.
- An ellipsis should have no space before it and one space after it.
- Do not use a full stop with an ellipsis.
- Do not use an ellipsis for effect or to emphasise a point.

Lists
- Lists are useful for breaking up text, but do not overuse them.
- If a list contains a number of complex items, use a lead-in line followed by a colon, with a semicolon to follow each point. For example, 'This year we are developing our software in the following ways: introducing colour reports; reducing the number of clicks; and adding upgrade information for all staff.'

Bulleted lists

Where lists do not need to be numbered, use bullet points. This implies that there is no priority or other meaning in the order of appearance.

The three types of bulleted list
As recommended by the Plain English Campaign. Within one document, use the same style for all lists.

Each bullet is part of a continuous sentence
This type uses a colon, lower case initial letters and a full stop at the end of the last item of the list. This style suits shorter lists and can look messy on longer lists.

Ways to implement our software can include to:
- begin with one element;
- choose a pilot group; and
- go for a full implementation.

Each bullet is a complete sentence
The second type of bulleted list uses bullets that are full sentences and use sentence case.

There are several ways to implement our software in your school.
- Choose the most relevant element to start with.
- Decide on a pilot group of staff to trial the software. `
- Go the whole hog and implement the total solution to everyone.

When one bullet point has more than one sentence within it (including a full stop) then always use sentence case.

The bullets form a simple list
The third type of bulleted list is a simple list and there are two ways to set these out.

Our software can.
- Save time
- Reduce paper
- Simplify processes

Our software can:
- Save time;
- Reduce paper; and
- Simplify processes.