

WaterRA Quick Style Guide

The purpose of this guide is to promote readable and high quality papers, reports, articles, and written material in general. The guide presents suggestions for improving the appeal and content of published information.

Benchmark for Australia

In Australia the authoritative reference for all aspects of writing is the *Style manual for authors, editors and printers*, produced by the Australian Government and currently in its sixth edition (2002). Spelling conventions in the *Style manual* are based on the Macquarie and Australian Oxford dictionaries.

Who is responsible?

It is the primary author's responsibility to ensure the manuscript is in the best possible condition before submitting it to the WaterRA editorial process. This includes thorough checking of spelling, grammar, consistency of abbreviations and captions, scientific units and references. Each of these elements is discussed below. It is also important that:

- all authors of a paper or report are given the opportunity to review the finished publication before submission, and
- the primary author checks that individual idiosyncrasies (including differences in spellings, style, use of abbreviations, etc.) are minimised to ensure an integrated and seamless final product.

Acknowledgments and WaterRA logo

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Acknowledgement of WaterRA: "The author acknowledges (authors acknowledge) Water Research Australia Limited for support of this project."

Writing clearly

Whether you are writing for a technical or general audience, basic strategies can help to make papers easier to read and understand.

Long paragraphs and sentences can be very confusing. "The paragraph", according to Fowler, "is essentially a unit of thought, not of length; it must be homogeneous in subject matter and sequential in treatment." One-sentence paragraphs should be used only occasionally (*The Economist* online style guide).

If you are stuck trying to explain a complex idea, outcome or procedure ask yourself:

What am I trying to say?
What words will express it best?
What image or style of expression will make it clearer?
Can I say it more succinctly?
Have I mixed the ideas in any paragraphs?
Have I said anything that is avoidably clumsy or ambiguous?"

The most important goal in writing WaterRA reports is to impart useful information to those personnel in the water industry who will benefit most from the knowledge and who are able to help their organisation to make best use of the knowledge.

Templates

Templates are provided for most WaterRA documents, including application forms and final reports. There are many good reasons for using templates – they reinforce the WaterRA brand and ensure that information is presented in a consistent way.

If you cannot find a suitable template, contact the MarComms Manager, who will organise for a MS Word template to be produced.

Spelling

Those submitting papers to journals or for book chapters will be required to conform to the style of that publication. They are usually quite proscriptive and rigid, and depending on the country of origin, may insist on American spelling conventions.

The language preference in new WaterRA documents should be checked and set as English (Australia). This will automatically correct Americanised spellings, for example analyse is preferred rather than analyze.

Using spell checker can be an enormous help in picking up typographical errors, however it will not necessarily pick up the wrong word spelled correctly, for example the research team was lead (led) by... When you have been reading and re-reading the same piece of writing, it is easy to miss errors, so a fresh pair of eyes will often spot mistakes so far undetected.

Your document will be checked carefully before being e-published; however the job of proof reading is much more time consuming if there are numerous inconsistencies throughout. If the document has more than one author please ensure each of the people involved have had the opportunity to read it through.

Apostrophes are commonly found in the wrong place! Only use apostrophes for possession ie the CEO's briefcase (possession – one CEO), CEOs like briefcases (no apostrophe).

Acronyms

Some terms have well established acronyms, e.g. HPSEC, WWTP, PAC etc. Others are specific to a particular field, and this can lead to confusion. As always, consistency in usage is important.

Abbreviating organisation names is a good example. It is understandable that you might not want to spell out a long name such as Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Corporation each time, but it is important that, if shortened, it is the same each time and can't be confused with another acronym.

The report template includes a table for acronyms and abbreviations. Please ensure this has been compiled when you submit the report.

The convention for using acronyms is to use the full title/name in the first instance, followed by the acronym in brackets. From that point onwards the acronym can be used.

Acronyms are without full stops (CSIRO not C.S.I.R.O).

Graphics, photos, images

The overall impact of a good publication can be significantly diminished by poor visual material such as graphs, diagrams and photos. Experience suggests that many images are scanned or copied from other publications or sources, and sometimes the quality suffers.

Specific things to watch out for and avoid are:

- Changes in formatting when copying into a new document;
- Graphs that don't display information on the axes clearly;
- Confusing or unreadable diagrams – consider redrawing or simplifying;
- Photos with resolution that is too low – keep or obtain original photo material if possible in jpeg or tiff format.

If your publication is likely to be printed in hard copy the images need to be at higher resolution than for web publication. If this is to be the case, seek advice from the MarComms Manager.

Bullet points

For the use of bullet points, see pages 141-144 of the *Style Manual*.

As a general guide:

- Lead in with colon,
- Each point starts in upper case
- Commas, not semis, after each bullet point,
- 'and' follows comma after penultimate point, and
- Use full stop after last point.

Scientific Names

For the use of scientific names (eg questions of capitalisation and italicisation), see pages 130-132 of the *Style Manual*. You do not need to capitalise chemicals. Examples include:

cyanobacterial – because it is not part of a species name, but the following are.

Cryptosporidium

Anabaena cylindrospermopsis

Microcystis

Giardia

Project numbers

Should be six digits, with a dash before the final two, which represent the year of commencement/approval (ie 2003-11). The first digit represents the program area.

A or Ae?

Use the Latin/English form for words with an ae (eg paediatrics not paediatics, anaemia not anemia)

Collective Words & nouns of multitude

'The Committee *are* meeting' or the 'Committee *is* meeting?' The singular (*The committee is meeting*) is preferred.

Compound adjectives

Generally take a hyphen ('four-point program', 'well-known', 'full-time') though not in set phrases ('an environment department ruling').

Website

Website (one word) not 'web site'

Singular/plural

Collective nouns take singular verbs

Punctuation

Organisations take no punctuation (Inc, Ltd, Pty). Nor do initials, eg G Roeszler. Nor do measures (kg, mm, km).

Numbers

Use words for numbers one to nine, numerical for 10 and upwards, except at start of sentences.

'Between five and 35 people were treated for...'. 'Thirty-five people were treated for...'

Italics

Titles of publications should be italicised

Indigenous

The term 'Indigenous' is a useful generic reference covering all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Hyphens

Pre- and post- take a hyphen ('pre-GST'). So do prefixes or suffixes ('pre-eminent', 'post-2006')

References

The purpose of any reference is to provide unambiguous information about the source of information, whether it is a journal paper, web site, conference proceeding, book or other medium. There are a number of formats for citing references in publications.

An article in *Library Journal* (Tenopir, 2004) quoted a figure of 180,000 journals worldwide with around 43,000 of these refereed or academic/scholarly journals. Ulrich's website in 2010 states it is the "authoritative source of bibliographic and publisher information on more than 300,000 periodicals of all types" – nearly twice as many publications within six years.

Abbreviating journal titles incorrectly introduces the high probability of errors and confusion as many journals have very similar titles. The bottom line is: please use full titles in your references.

The format preferred in WaterRA publications is:

Leusch FDL, van den Heuvel MR, Chapman HF, Gooneratne SR, Eriksson AME, Tremblay LA (2006) Development of methods for extraction and *in vitro* quantification of oestrogen and androgen activity of wastewater samples. *Comparative Biochemistry and Physiology Part C: Toxicology and Pharmacology*, **143**: 117-126.

Equally important, however, is consistency. If you decide an alternative format is more suitable, or if you are copying references from a list with different formatting, please ensure they all follow the same format.

Formulae

Mathematical formulae that have been created in other programs, or that are pasted-in objects, can cause problems in documents when converting to PDF. Microsoft Office Word 2007 includes a built-in function for writing and editing equations. Please use this facility where possible.

Scientific units

Once again, consistency is important to minimise confusion and ambiguity. It is not unusual to see the same units expressed in a couple of ways in publications, e.g. m/s and ms^{-1} .

The *Style manual* has a very useful chapter on numbers and measurement, but as emphasised previously, please be consistent. Use of the International System of Units (SI) is preferred.

The following table, despite using US spellings, is quite a useful reference:

<http://www.ebyte.it/library/educards/siunits/TablesOfSiUnitsAndPrefixes.html>

Use of italics

It is up to you to choose whether to use italics for Latin abbreviations and other foreign terms. Once again – be consistent. If you decide to cite references as ...Bloggs *et al.* then do so throughout your document. Sometimes using italics can be useful to avoid ambiguity.

Further Reading:

Style manual; for authors, editors and printers, 6th edition (2002)

Carol Tenopir, *Library Journal*, 2/1/2004, <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA374956.html>

LIST OF SOURCES

1. *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers* (Sixth Ed), John Wiley & Sons Australia Ltd, Canberra, 2002
2. *Style: The Essential Guide for Journalists and Professional Writers* (Third Ed), Kim Lockwood, News Custom Publishing, Southbank, 2005
3. *The Complete Plain Words*, Sir Ernest Gowers (revised by Sidney Greenbaum and Janet Whitcut), Penguin Books, 1986
4. *The Elements of Style* (Third Ed), William Strunk and EB White, MacMillan, New York, 1979
5. *Writing, Researching, Communication: Communication Skills for the Information Age*, Keith Windschuttle and Elizabeth Elliott, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Sydney, 1997
6. *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors and Publishers* (Fourteenth Ed), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993