Get it Write!
SERVICES FOR PROFESSIONALS WHO WRITE

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About editing and writing style

Editing is mostly a rules-based activity: the editor applies rules about the writing and presentation of the document, to ensure consistency and compliance with Australian and international standards. The publishing industry calls these rules 'style'.

We base ***Get It Write!***'s style rules on the Commonwealth of Australia's *Style manual For authors, editors and printers (Sixth edition)*. Where the manual is not clear, or provides guidance but not recommendations, we have developed our own rules.

You should tell us if:

- your organisation has its own style rules (and if so, send us a copy of them)
- there are other publications (such as in a series) with which the style of your document must be consistent
- you want us to make exceptions to our style rules.

Important note: *Get It Write!* editors will follow our style rules, unless you tell us otherwise before we start editing.

Below are some key aspects of ***Get It Write!***'s style rules.

Element	Issue	What we do
Tense of verbs	Authors sometimes use the past, present and future tenses interchangeably. *E.g.: Outputs funded by the program aim to provide support for schools **that will meet** local needs, and **will be** more accessible. Rural and remote school communities **have been** targeted, due to high needs.*	We use a sense of the present tense, as much as possible. *E.g.: Outputs funded by the program aim to provide support for schools **to meet** local needs, and **to be** more accessible. Rural and remote school communities **are** targeted, due to high needs.* We generally use future or past tense only if the future or past are clearly being referred to.
Second or third person; 'must', 'should' and 'could'	Instructions, recommendations and guidance are often unclear because they use passive voice, which disguises the subject. Also, they may not make clear if the requirement is a mandatory requirement, a recommendation or a suggestion. *E.g.: It is strongly recommended the regulations be followed.* *E.g.: It is strongly recommended students read the course outline.*	We direct instructions to the reader (as 'you') if they are logically the subject. If they are not, we direct instructions to the logical subject. We use 'must' (mandatory requirements), 'should' (recommendations) and 'could' (suggestions). *E.g.: You must follow the regulations. (This is a mandatory instruction to a reader.)* *E.g.: A student should read the course outline. (This is a recommendation to a teacher as a reader, to communicate to a student.)* *E.g.: You could share your experiences with*

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	E.g.: You will be able to share your experiences with other teachers.	*other teachers. (This is a suggestion to a teacher.)*
Singular or plural	Documents often inconsistently use both the singular and plural. *E.g.: A student should read the activity instructions. THEN* *E.g.: Students should then complete the activity.*	While both are correct, they are inconsistent. Generally, it is always correct to refer to 'a student', it is sometimes not correct to refer to 'students'. So we use the singular – 'a student'.
Gender-specific references	In most documents we edit, the gender of a person is irrelevant but we need to use a second person singular pronoun ('he', 'she', 'it', 'his', 'hers', 'its').	We rewrite a sentence to avoid the use of a second person singular pronoun. Where we cannot, we use 'they' and 'their'.
Degree of formality	Documents that provide instructions, recommendations and suggestions are sometimes uncertain about their use of contractions. *E.g.: A student should not use their phone in class. OR* *E.g.: A student shouldn't use their phone in class.*	We tend not to use contractions, but they may occasionally suggest themselves or improve the flow of a sentence. If so, we use them.
Capitals	The use of capital letters is the most-discussed style issue with our clients.	Full official names (for example, of organisations, bodies, titles, programs or strategies) have initial capitals. Abbreviated, generic or plural names do not. *E.g.: the Department of Finance, the department; Prime Minister Watson, six prime ministers; the National Strategy for Training 2010-2020, the national strategy.* Abbreviated official names that retain specific elements keep the capitals. *E.g.: the Reserve Bank of Australia, the Reserve Bank, the bank.* There are exceptions to the rules above. *E.g.: the Cabinet, Treasury, Crown, Budget, House, Acts, Regulations, Bills, Indigenous.*

We also have style rules for many other matters, including grammar, numbers, punctuation, acronyms and tables. For more information about any of our style rules, please email us at info@getitwrite.com.au.