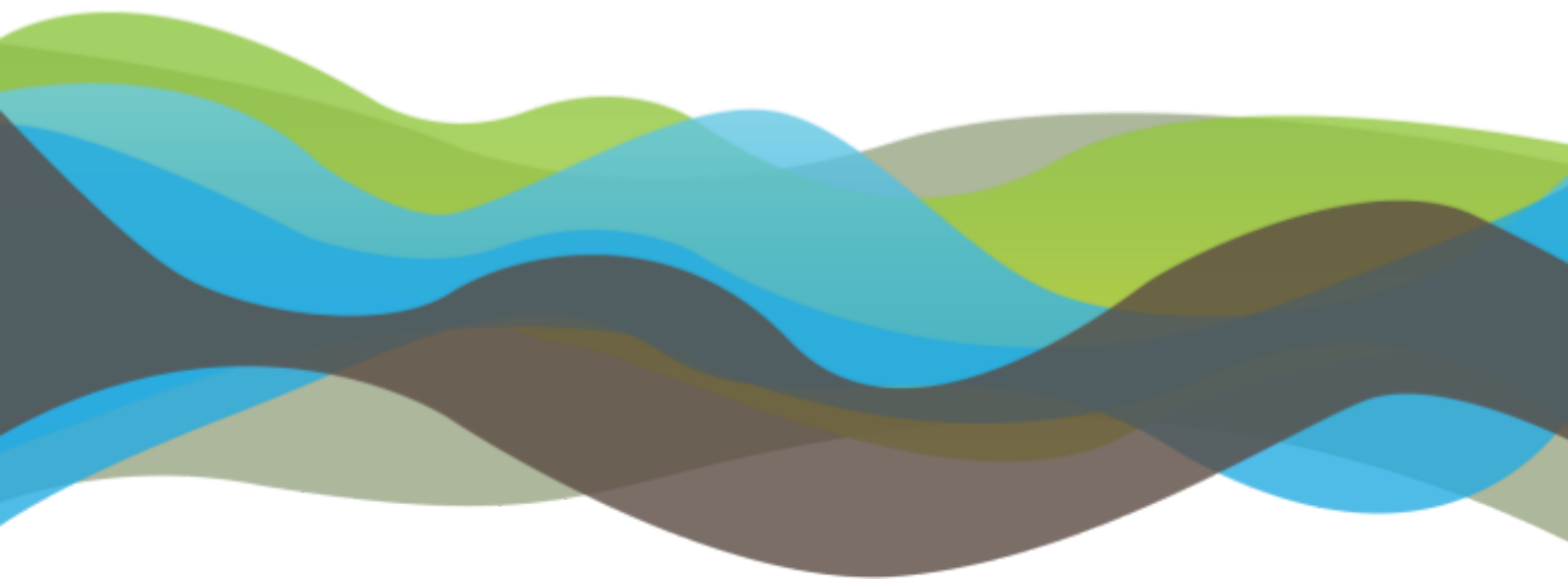




**European  
Citizen Science  
Association**

## Style guidelines for English text



# Table of Contents

1. <a href="#">Why do we need a style guide?</a> .....	2
2. <a href="#">Formatting and grammar guidelines</a> .....	3
a. <a href="#">General points</a> .....	3
b. <a href="#">Lists</a> .....	3
c. <a href="#">Quotation marks</a> .....	4
d. <a href="#">Italics, bold and underlining</a> .....	4
e. <a href="#">Numbers</a> .....	4
f. <a href="#">Date and times</a> .....	4
g. <a href="#">Units</a> .....	5
h. <a href="#">Currencies</a> .....	5
i. <a href="#">Capitalisation</a> .....	5
j. <a href="#">Acronyms</a> .....	5
3. <a href="#">Referencing</a> .....	6
a. <a href="#">Citations</a> .....	6
b. <a href="#">References</a> .....	6
c. <a href="#">Footnotes</a> .....	6
4. <a href="#">Inclusive language</a> .....	7
a. <a href="#">Gender-neutral language</a> .....	7
b. <a href="#">Disabilities</a> .....	7
c. <a href="#">Race, ethnicity and nationality</a> .....	8
d. <a href="#">Indigenous and First Nations peoples</a> .....	8
e. <a href="#">References and further reading</a> .....	8

## Why do we need a style guide?

A style guide establishes standard style requirements across the European Citizen Science Association (ECSA) for all text in English. The ultimate aim is to enhance our communication, with each other and the public, in a number of ways:

- ensuring consistency, both within a document and across multiple documents

- setting out agreed standards in areas such as punctuation, capitalisation, spelling, formatting
- providing guidance for ECSA
- being professional, which increases the reader's confidence in what we are writing; typos, grammatical errors and inconsistency make a publication look unprofessional, rushed or unedited.

Overall, our style guide aims to ensure that our written outputs communicate as clearly and directly as possible.

If there is a conflict of interest (*i.e.* a publication jointly written with another organisation that uses a different style), then we do not need to insist on our style to the point that it causes an issue. The most important goal is consistency within a document.

## Formatting and grammar guidelines

### General points

- Use UK spelling, with ~is- (*i.e.* organisation, specialisation).
- For all spelling queries, refer to the [Cambridge Online Dictionary](#).
- When writing a list of three or more items, use a serial comma before the final 'and' (e.g. eggs, beans, and chips - not eggs, beans and chips).
- When using the abbreviation for ECSA, simply write 'ECSA' rather than 'the ECSA'.
  - For example, 'Today, ECSA held an event on...'
- Use the template provided by the communications team to format your documents. In general our preferred typeface/fonts are defined in the [visual and brand identity guidelines](#); we use Lato 11pt for running text in Word and/or in printed materials.

### Lists

- Use bullets unless there is a specific number of points/order to be followed.
  - Sub-bullets should be a white dot.
- Use a capital letter at the beginning and a full stop at the end if the point is a complete sentence.
- If the points are not a full sentence, you should:
  - use a lower case letter to start, as it is a continuation of the same sentence (not the start of a new one)
  - not use a semicolon at the end, as it is not needed
  - use a full stop for the last point only, as that is the 'end' of the sentence.
- If a point extends over more than one sentence, you can do two things:
  - split it into two separate points, or
  - make it part of the main text (*i.e.* not a bullet), as bullets should be brief and punchy.

## Quotation marks

- Use “double quotes” for directly quoted speech only.
- Use ‘single quotes’ for:
  - defined words
  - newly introduced terms.

## Italics, bold and underlining

Use italics for:

- scientific names of organisms
- foreign words and phrases (e.g. only if they don’t appear in the preferred English dictionary)
- book and journal titles (when used in text and in reference lists).

Use bold for:

- emphasis

Never use both together and never underline text or use CAPITALS for emphasis because it makes the text harder to read, and underlined text is commonly assumed to be a hyperlink. And never use excessive punctuation either!!!!

## Numbers

- Spell out one to nine, unless there is a mix of numbers in the same sentence (e.g. there were 9 members and 23 non-members).
- Use digits if they are accompanied by a unit (i.e. six people, but 6mm) or part of a range (e.g. 8–10).
- Use a comma as a thousand separator in 4-digit numbers, i.e. 1,000, 2,000.
  - Note: German uses a decimal point, but English uses a comma (1,000, not 1.000).
- For number ranges, use an en-dash (e.g. 2,000–5,000, 8–10).
- For decimal points use the full point (.) not a comma (,) as in German.

## Dates and times

- Write dates as: 3 February 2023. This avoids confusion over the order (e.g. 3/2/2023, is that the third of January or the second of March?).
- There is no need for a superscripted ‘th’ after the date (i.e. not 12th April).
- For time, use the 24-hour clock, i.e. 9:00, 14:00.
  - There is no need for an initial 0 (i.e. 09:00).
  - Particularly for events or meetings joined by people from different time zones, include the times zone in brackets after the time for clarity – e.g. 14:00 (CET).
- For fiscal or academic years, use: 2014/15.
- For ranges, use: 2014–15.
- Avoid using seasons if possible, as these vary depending on location (i.e. summer in Europe is winter in Australasia).

- If a season is important to the text, clarify if it is not referring to European seasons (e.g. Austral winter).
- Use months as well for clarification, as these are the same worldwide.

## Units

- Use percent in text (but % in tables).
- No space between the number and the units, e.g. 6km, 3kgs.

## Currencies

- Use the [ISO currency code](#) at the first instance [for all currencies](#) (e.g. USD, AUD, GBP, EUR).
- You can use a standard symbol thereafter, but remember that more than one country uses \$ for its currency — so make sure it is clear which one is being referred to (e.g. US\$, A\$, NZ\$).
- No space is needed between the symbol and the digits (e.g. €50, US\$60).

## Capitalisation

In English, you only need to capitalise:

- proper nouns (e.g. place names)
- organisations, associations and institutions (e.g. European Citizen Science Association, Berlin High School, Natural History Museum)
- official positions, but not job titles
  - Executive Chair is capitalised, scientist is not
- publications (e.g. The Guardian, The Economist, Bild).

## Acronyms

Avoid acronyms in general, as they can make communication and understanding difficult. The same acronyms can have different meanings even in the same context, and letters on their own can mean a lot of different things. By avoiding the use of acronyms, and avoiding abbreviating words, the context of the term itself or phrase becomes much clearer and easier to understand. Acronyms also make life harder for newcomers and can make people feel excluded.

If you do use an acronym, such as for an organisation, always write the name in full the first time it is mentioned in the document, and include the acronym in brackets – e.g. the World Health Organization (WHO). This is not necessary if the abbreviation is very well known and spelling it out would complicate things (e.g. DNA).

# Referencing

## Citations

- Use the Harvard system for in-text citations, e.g. Gold, Rüfenacht and Riemenschneider (2018) state that ...; sausages are best eaten with beans and chips (Mazzonetto, 2018).
- If there are more than three authors, use et al., e.g. (Woods et al., 2018).

## References

These should be kept as clean as possible, and largely based on the [Harvard style](#) (check this if unsure).

### Book

Neville, C. 2010. *The complete guide to referencing and avoiding plagiarism*. Open University Press, New York.

Dym, C.L., Little, P., Orwin, E.J. and Spjut, R.E. 2009. *Engineering design: a project-based introduction*. 3rd edition. Wiley, Hoboken, NJ.

### Chapter in a book

Franklin, A.W. 2012. 'Management of the problem', pp. 83-95 in Smith, S.M. (ed.) *The maltreatment of children*. MTP, Lancaster.

### Journal

Ruxton, C. 2016. 'Tea: hydration and other health benefits', *Primary Health Care* 26(8): 34-42. doi:10.7748/phc.2016.e1162

Geraghty, S., Lauva, M. and Oliver, K. 2016. 'Reconstructing compassion: should it be taught as part of the curriculum?', *British Journal of Nursing* 25(15): 836-839. doi:10.12968/bjon.2016.25.15.836

### Newspaper article

Lewis, S. 2015. 'Rainbow support for York pride', *The Press*, York, 18 June, p.6.

### Website

Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821). 2015. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic\\_figures/bonaparte\\_napoleon.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/bonaparte_napoleon.shtml) (accessed 18 July 2015).

## Footnotes

- Use superscript numbers in the main text (not a, b, c, or i, ii, iii).
- Do not mix footnotes and endnotes in a document.

# Inclusive language<sup>1</sup>

As a general rule, when writing about someone it is best to ask how they would like to be referred to. Always write with care, respect and sensitivity, and consult those you are writing about.

We are aware that language is constantly evolving and there may not be overall consensus for some of the terms below. This is a general guide and a living document that we aim to update regularly.

Read ECSA's [Gender Equality Plan](#).

## Gender-neutral language

- Aim to use gender-neutral language where possible:
  - Avoid nouns that assume gender, e.g. 'chair' or 'chairperson' instead of 'chairman'
  - Avoid gender-specific pronouns (he, she) if you do not know the gender. We encourage you to ask people how they would like to be referred to.
  - It is best to use 'they/their/them' when the gender is unknown but a pronoun is necessary.
- If you are referring to a specific individual and you know the gender, then use the specific pronoun e.g. The Vice-President voiced her objectives.
- **This guidance is for English language text only. We appreciate that different languages have different rules and grammar around gender.**

## Disabilities

- Use person-first language, e.g. 'people with disabilities' rather than 'disabled people'.
- Avoid using language with negative connotations, such as 'suffering with a mental disorder', 'confined to a wheelchair'. Instead use 'person with a mental health condition' or 'wheelchair user', or 'person who has experienced' rather than 'victim, survivor'.
- Do not use 'disabled' as a collective noun ('the disabled').
- Avoid using language that suggests passivity or victimising, such as 'afflicted by', 'suffers from' and do not use any outdated language that may be offensive, such as 'mentally handicapped' or 'invalid'.

This guidance applies for writing in general; to respect people as individuals with their own agency, who aren't defined by characteristics or conditions. For example using 'older people/persons' or 'older adults' rather than 'the elderly' or 'senior citizens'.

Please also remember that different communities may have different preferences for terminology. For example, some Indigenous communities prefer 'elders in the community', rather than 'older people'.

---

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to the ECSA Empowerment, inclusivity and equity working group for their contributions to this section.

## Race, ethnicity and nationality

Only refer to someone's race, ethnicity or nationality if it is necessary to the information being communicated.

Guidance:

- Do not use broad geographical labels and be specific – say Ugandan rather than African, Vietnamese rather than Asian, German rather than European.
- Write 'Black' in upper case, 'white' (not Caucasian) in lower case.
- For countries, avoid using outdated terms such as 'third world' or 'underdeveloped'. To refer to the economic status of a country, it is best to use the [World Bank classification](#) (for example: low-income economies, lower-middle-income economies, high-income economies).
- Be as specific as possible when referring to a person or group's background or heritage. Remember that some people identify with more than one ethnic group or a mixed ethnic group.
- Avoid using broad terms such as 'minorities' or 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)'

## Indigenous and First Nations peoples

- Always capitalise 'Indigenous' and 'First Nations' when referring to a group of people.
- There is no single Indigenous identity. Use 'Indigenous peoples' (plural) when referring to more than one distinct community.
- Be specific and always consult the community that you are writing about.

## References and further reading

[European Commission Style Guide](#). 2020. (accessed 24 May 2023)

American Psychological Association. 2021. *Inclusive language guidelines*. Available at: <https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines> (accessed 24 May 2023)

University of Bristol. 2023. *Inclusive writing guide*. Available at: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/style-guides/writing/inclusive/> (accessed 24 May 2023)

The University of Edinburgh. 2022. *Editorial style guide: inclusive language*. Available at: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/editorial-style/language-tone/inclusive-language> (accessed 24 May 2023)

The University of British Columbia. 2021. *Indigenous Peoples: Language Guidelines*. Available at: [http://assets.brand.ubc.ca/downloads/ubc\\_indigenous\\_peoples\\_language\\_guide.pdf](http://assets.brand.ubc.ca/downloads/ubc_indigenous_peoples_language_guide.pdf) (accessed 24 May 2023)

Australian Government Style Manual. 2023. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. Available at: <https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/accessible-and-inclusive-content/inclusive-language/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples> (accessed 24 May 2023)