



APC house style guide¹ v 2.0

Please take into account the following recommendations when writing and editing for APC.

For easier reference you will find them in alphabetical order. Cross-referencing has been included when deemed necessary.

1. Abbreviations, initials and acronyms

Abbreviations

No full stops for "Dr David Samuels" or "Andrea Smith MP".

Full stops for "e.g." and "i.e.".

Initials

Full stops for "J. A. Peterson".

Acronyms

As a general rule, try to minimise the use of acronyms that do not add to the reader's understanding of the text.

Spell out the name in full the first time it appears and provide the abbreviation in brackets: "International Telecommunication Union (ITU)". After that, you can use the abbreviation only.

Well-known acronyms which are recognised internationally do not require explanation. Examples include: EU, US, UN, UNESCO, UNICEF, HIV/AIDS.

Abbreviations that are "word-like" do not usually require the definite article, such as UNESCO. Others do, such as "the EU". One important exception is APC, which generally appears without "the".

No full stops for APC, UNESCO, ITU, etc.

¹ This style guide is adapted from the Social Watch House Style Guide. Permission kindly provided by ITeM (host of the Social Watch international secretariat) to APC to adapt to our own purposes.

Use of acronyms and organisation names in translation

When there is an official translation of the organisation name/acronym, there is no need to translate it yourself. Use the official version. Example: [ES] Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) > [EN] World Health Organization (WHO).

When dealing with an organisation that is only known in a region or country, translate its name, keep the acronym in the original language, and include the entire name in the original language too. The original language acronym goes first in the parentheses, so it will be easier for the reader to remember. Example: "National Women's Institute (INAMU - Instituto Nacional de la Mujer)".

2. Bullets and lists²

Use dots or small bullets. There must be parallelism in the construction of the lists. All items in the list must begin with a capital letter. If the bullet points are full sentences or long phrases (25 words or longer), use full stops after each. If the bullet points are short (less than 25 words) and are not full sentences, do not use full stops except for the last item.

3. Capitalisation

Shortening commonly used terms

In general, the shortened form of a phrase is capitalised but the full phrase itself should *not* be capitalised, e.g. "information and communications technology (ICT)" but never "Information and Communications Technology (ICT)" unless it is part of a title. Other common examples include internet service provider (ISP) and free/libre and open source software (FLOSS). Note the unusual acronym for voice over internet protocol (VoIP) and distributed denial of services (DDoS), which each have a lower case "o" in the middle.

Words beginning with a single letter and a hyphen (usually e-something)

When these words appear at the beginning of a sentence or in a title, capitalise the "e" rather than the first letter after the hyphen, i.e. "E-government" rather than "e-Government".

Job titles

Job titles should be given in lower case except when used as titles, e.g. "Anriette Esterhuysen, executive director of APC, said ..." but "APC Executive Director Anriette Esterhuysen announces new programme."

State, government, ministers and ministries

Do not capitalise "state" or "government" except in titles or proper nouns. Minister is capitalised when it is used as a title (e.g., Communications Minister Jane Doe) but otherwise not, e.g. "The minister of communications is responsible for these decisions, although the minister of education is usually consulted." Ministry is capitalised when referring to a specific ministry (almost always the

² This item is based on the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (www.gsdr.org) Style Guide and is reproduced with permission.

case). Where it is a general article it is not capitalised, for example, when referring to the number of countries that have a ministry of communications.

Titles and subtitles of publications

See the separate entry below.

4. Commas

Use the minimum number that permits an unambiguous reading. In “Eventually the law was passed” a comma is unnecessary after “eventually”.

“However” at the beginning of a sentence takes a comma when it is used to mean “nevertheless”. However, it does not take a comma when used in phrases such as “However long it takes”.

Do not put a comma before “and” or “or” in a series of three or more short items, e.g. “economic, cultural and social” rather than “economic, cultural, and social”.

5. Compound words

In cases where a compound word has not been universally accepted as a single word and various versions are used, e.g. policy makers, policy-makers, policymakers, use the version with two separate words – in this case, policy makers. The same rule applies to terms including the word “cyber”: cyberspace, but cyber crime, cyber security, etc.

6. Contractions

APC strives to write in a style that is less formal, but contractions (e.g. don’t, I’ll, isn’t) *should generally be avoided* because they are not used frequently in other languages and might confuse non-native English speakers.

7. Currency

An approximate equivalent should be given in US dollars whenever a different currency amount is given. If the currency fluctuates a lot, give the date of the exchange rate. The format for US dollars is USD (not US\$, or U\$S or \$). When citing another local currency give the dollar equivalent in brackets, e.g. EUR 1,000 (USD 1,118).

8. Dashes

Use a short dash (–), also known as an en-dash or n-dash, with a space on each side. Note the difference between a short dash (–), a long dash (—) and a hyphen (-). In LibreOffice and OpenOffice, you can achieve the en-dash by typing a space, then two consecutive hyphens and then another space.³

9. Dates

Days: “1 July 1989” (not July 1, 1989, nor 1st, 15th or 23rd). Decades: “throughout the 1960s and 1970s” (not the 60s and 70s). Centuries: “the 19th century” (no capitals).

³ See www.n-dash.net for key bindings in other applications and platforms.

10. Emphasis (bold, italic and upper-case text)

Bold text should only be used for titles and subtitles. Upper-case text, or “all caps”, should never be used, although some designs may incorporate special fonts that use capital letters for both upper-case and lower-case characters.

If you want to put particular emphasis on a word or phrase, use *italics*.

11. Footnotes and endnotes

The superscript number used to indicate the placement of a footnote comes after any punctuation marks, including commas, full stops and quotation marks. The only exception is when the punctuation mark is a dash, e.g. “The new website³ – launched in 2014 – provides a wide range of resources.”

When writing for the web, use numbers in square brackets, i.e. [1], for any references that need to come at the end of the text, rather than traditional footnotes or endnotes.

12. Hyphenated words

Online, email, website, audiovisual and multistakeholder are all spelled as one word, without spaces or hyphens (i.e. on-line, e-mail, web site, audio-visual and multi-stakeholder are wrong).

13. Internet, information society

APC uses internet with a lower-case “i” and information society with lower case “i” and “s”, unless in titles or organisation names.⁴

14. Italics

Use italics for sub-subtitles within a publication and the names of publications, but not for titles of instruments, plans of actions or declarations, and occasionally to give special emphasis to a word, phrase or key quotation. Italics are also used for non-English words; see *Emphasis* above and *Language and spelling* below.

15. Language and spelling

British English (of the -ise, -mme variety) will be used throughout. This will be more noticeable in the spelling, e.g. centre, not center; traveller, not traveler; colour, not color. The -ise verb ending will be preferred, thus realise, rather than realize.

Exceptions: If an organisation has an official name in English, use the official spelling, even if it does not comply with APC spelling rules, e.g. World Health Organization.

In direct quotations, use the spelling that is used in the original source, whether it complies with APC rules or not.

When using local terms that do not exist in English, please italicise the non-English term and write a definition or explanation in brackets after it.

⁴ Long, T. (2004, August 16). It's Just the 'internet' Now. *Wired*. archive.wired.com/culture/lifestyle/news/2004/08/64596

Non-English words do not need to be italicised if they have been absorbed into English, so no italics for “coup d’état” or “fait accompli”.

16. Numbers

In running text, write out the numbers one through nine and use figures for numbers larger than nine, e.g. one, five, nine, 10, 21, 156, 216,000. In fact charts use only figures.

Thousands should be rendered using a comma: 10,000 and 427,971 (but not in the case of years: 2006).

For large round numbers in running text use words if possible: one million, three million, but 375 million.

One billion = 1,000,000,000, i.e., one thousand million, not one million million.

Decimals are indicated by a point with a zero preceding: 0.75.

A number at the beginning of a sentence should be spelled out: “Fifty-four workers were fired as a result of the strike.” But the sentence can usually be reorganised so that the number is not at the start: “The strike resulted in 54 workers being fired.”

17. Paragraphing, indentation and spacing

Do not use indentation at the beginning of a paragraph. Do not use a double space after a full stop or colon; use single spaces only. Use double spacing between paragraphs (either with carriage returns or with paragraph styles).

18. Percentages

Write the figure followed by percentage symbol, e.g. 4%, 63%. There should be no space between the number and the percentage symbol.

19. Quotation marks

Double quotation marks are used for direct quotations, mini-quotations (i.e. a word or phrase as opposed to a full sentence) and to imply a word or phrase is being used ironically.

Use single quotation marks *only* for a quote within a quote. For example, “The authorities told us they would look into the matter ‘immediately’ but we have still received no reply,” said the activist.

Commas and periods are positioned before the closing quotation mark when used for quoting speech, e.g. “This programme,” she said, “will greatly increase computer literacy.”

However, when quotation marks are used to set off or quote a word or short phrase, the comma or period is positioned after, e.g. The stated goals of the programme included “computer literacy”, among others.

In print publications, longer quotations (over three lines) should be separated and indented, with no quotation marks used. In online texts, try not to quote as much as three lines in a row. If you need to quote more, do so interspersed by other context text.

20. References

For full details, see separate *Reference guidelines*.⁵

In references, translation is not necessary (except for names of cities for the place of publication, etc.) and only the name of the document in the source language should be provided, unless an English version of the same document exists, in which case the English version should be referenced.

21. Time

Use the 12-hour clock: 9:00 a.m., 8:30 p.m.

Span of years: write “between 1995 and 1999”, not “between 1995-1999”.

22. Titles and subtitles

For the titles of books, capitalise all main words, e.g. The ICT Policy Handbook.

For the titles of shorter publications such as reports, issue papers and articles, and for all subtitles, capitalise only the first word and any other word that is capitalised in its own right, plus the first letter of any word that follows a colon within a title.

23. Weights and measures

Use metric system only.

⁵ https://www.apc.org/en/system/files/APC_ReferenceGuide_2.0_0.pdf