CIB House Style Guide: A to Z Section

Contents

[Section A 1](#_Toc528923334)

[Section B 5](#_Toc528923335)

[Section C 7](#_Toc528923336)

[Section D 13](#_Toc528923337)

[Section E 16](#_Toc528923338)

[Section F 18](#_Toc528923339)

[Section G 20](#_Toc528923340)

[Section H 21](#_Toc528923341)

[Section I 23](#_Toc528923342)

[Section J 25](#_Toc528923343)

[Section K 26](#_Toc528923344)

[Section L 26](#_Toc528923345)

[Section M 30](#_Toc528923346)

[Section N 32](#_Toc528923347)

[Section O 34](#_Toc528923348)

[Section P 34](#_Toc528923349)

[Section Q 37](#_Toc528923350)

[Section R 38](#_Toc528923351)

[Section S 40](#_Toc528923352)

[Section T 44](#_Toc528923353)

[Section U 47](#_Toc528923354)

[Section V 48](#_Toc528923355)

[Section W 48](#_Toc528923356)

[Section X 49](#_Toc528923357)

[Section Y 49](#_Toc528923358)

Section Z ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..50

# 

# Section A

**A/An** If you’re not sure which to use, say the words aloud.

* If the word sounds like it starts with a vowel, use *an*:

*an MEP, an hour, an FSAI regulation*

* If the word sounds like it starts with a consonant, use *a*:

*a hotel, a UN resolution, a SEPA form*

**Abbreviations**

* In most cases, the first time you use an abbreviation or acronym in each section, write the words in full with the initials in brackets. For repeat references within the section, use the initials only.

 *Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI).* After that, use:  *AAI.*

 *One-Parent Family Payment (OFP). After that, use: OFP.*

 *Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). After that, use: WEEE*.

Exceptions to this pattern are shown in individual entries in this style guide.

* See individual entries for details of how to refer to CIB, CIS, CICs, CIPS, MABS, SLIS and NAS.
* You do not need to write in full any familiar abbreviations such as *RTÉ, EU, VAT, US*.
* If you feel some abbreviations are better known than the names in full, then write like this on first use:

 *PRSI (Pay Related Social Insurance), NSAI (National Standards Authority of Ireland), USC (Universal Social Charge)*

* Do not insert full stops in abbreviations:

*Co Mayo, PhD, MEP, TD*

* Do not use Latin abbreviations when writing for the web as they can confuse readers. They can be used in formal writing.

If you do use them, add full stops: *e.g.* and *i.e.* and *etc.* If *etc.* comes at the end of a sentence, use only one full stop:

*Rules cover food hygiene standards in supermarkets, restaurants, etc.*

Note that explaining (or using) two abbreviations, or more, in the same sentence may be confusing. Use your judgement about what’s appropriate for your target audiences.

**Acronyms** These are abbreviations that you can pronounce as words. They follow the rules shown above for abbreviations:

*AIDS, the DART, HAP, MABS*

Note that two acronyms, or more, in the same sentence may be confusing. Use your judgement about what’s appropriate for your target audiences.

**Abovementioned/the above** Both sound over-formal.

Please see the table above.

Details are in Table 2.

Please see the above table.

**Accents**

* Check that fadas are used correctly in names of people, places and organisations – such as *Dún Laoghaire, RTÉ.*
* You don’t need to show the accents in foreign words that have been adopted into everyday English, such as *cafe, creche*, *elite.*

Avoid foreign terms that are not in everyday use.

Also see ‘Foreign words’ under F.

**Accordingly** A plainer alternative is *so* or *therefore.*

**Acknowledge**  Note that the noun is spelt *acknowledgment*.

**Acquire** Plainer alternatives include *gain* or *get*.

**Active/passive voice** Use the active voice rather than the passive as much as possible. This means you start with the person, organisation or thing that is ‘doing’ the verb:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Active voice** | **Passive voice** |
| Jane wrote the email. | The email was written by Jane. |
| CIB published its annual report. | The annual report was published by CIB. |

* Active verbs are generally clearer and more direct, and make the sentence easier to understand at first glance.

USE *You can apply for a dog licence online.*

USE *When you register the birth of your baby, the DEASP will begin a Child Benefit claim for your child and send you a claim form.*

AVOID *A dog licence may be applied for online.*

AVOID *When a baby’s birth is registered, a Child Benefit claim will be initiated by the DEASP and a claim form will be sent to you.*

* Use the passive when the tone needs to be impersonal, or when the person or organisation doing the action is not important, not relevant or not known.

USE *The Child Benefit scheme is run by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP).*

USE *You may be entitled to an increase in your One-Parent Family Payment if your pay is reduced.*

Also see Section 2: Writing in plain English.

**Acts, Bills, Regulations**

* Use initial capitals for *Act, Bill, Article, Regulation, Directive* and *Statutory Instrument*, even in non-specific contexts:

*The Data Protection Act 2018 has transposed the law enforcement Directive into national law.*

* Do not use commas in Acts (for example, before the year).
* Use lower case for general references to sections of the Acts, but upper case when naming a specific section:

*different sections of the* *Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2018*

*See Section 2 of the Act*

Also see ‘Capital letters’ under C.

**Addresses** See ‘Contact details’ under C.

**Advice/advise**

* *Advice* is the noun:

*We provide information and do not give advice.*

* *Advise* is the verb and means ‘to give advice’. Do not use it to mean ‘inform’:

*Your solicitor can advise you on making an Enduring Power of Attorney.*

*The HSE advises older people to get the flu vaccine.*

*Your bank may write to advise you that your account is overdrawn.*

* *Advise* can often sound over-formal:

*Please contact MABS for more information.*

*I advise you to contact MABS for further information.*

**Adviser** Spelt with an ‘e’ butthe adjective is *advisory*:

*The advisory group meets monthly.*

*Contact a money adviser.*

The exception is the *Live Advisor service*, which is spelt differently.

**Affect/effect** Frequently confused words. See ‘Effect/affect’ under E.

**Age ranges** Use any of the three formats below but do not mix them:

* USE *Pensioners aged from 65 to 70*
* USE *Pensioners between the ages of 65 and 70*
* USE *Pensioners aged 65-70*
* AVOID *Pensioners aged between 65-70*
* AVOID *Pensioners aged from 65-70.*

**Ageing** Note that *ageing* has an ‘e’.

**Aggregate** Financial jargon that means combining several separate elements. If you use it, make sure that it’s clearly explained:

USE *If your aggregate income for the year is less than €60,000, you pay a reduced rate of USC. Aggregate income is your total income from all sources.*USE *If your aggregate income (your total income) for the year is less than €60,000, you pay a reduced rate of USC.*

**Agreement (singular/plural)** Organisations are referred to as singular (it is, it has), not plural (they are, they have):

USE *Arklow Citizens Information Centre is wheelchair accessible.*

USE *The DEASP provides an online service.*

**Alternate/alternative**

* *Alternate* means ‘in turn’ or ‘every other one’:

USE *In job-sharing, you and your co-worker may arrange to work alternate weeks.*

* *Alternative* means ‘choosing between two options’, or ‘other’:

USE *If you cannot attend your local polling station, you can make an alternative arrangement for voting.*

**am/pm** See ‘Time of day’ under T.

**Among/between**

* *Between* is used to refer to two people, groups or things – and may also be used to indicate an equal relationship:

USE *This document discusses the Common Travel Area between Ireland and the UK.*

USE *In many cases, disputes between landlords and tenants can be resolved informally between both parties.*

USE *The treaty was negotiated between the governments of the 27 members of the EU.*

* *Among* suggests a more general relationship between three or more people or things:

USE *Ireland has the second highest usage of cheques among major European countries.*

USE *The Mental Health Commission, has, among other things, overall responsibility for the standards of mental health services.*

AVOID *amongst*

**Amount/number** Use *amount* for non-specific quantities, and use *number* for things or people you can count. If you could use the question ‘how much’, use *amount*. If you could use the question ‘how many’, use *number*:

USE *The amount of debt involved will affect your credit rating / How much debt is involved?*

USE *We deal with a large number of email queries / How many email queries do you deal with?*

**Ampersand** Use *and* rather than *&* – unless it is in part of an organisation’s name.

**and/or** Avoid ambiguity by specifying one or the other where possible:

* USE *You should send either your student number or your name and address.*
* AVOID *You should send your name and address and/or your student number.*

**Annual leave** Annual leave is the legal entitlement to time off work:

USE *The job contract specifies 25 days’ annual leave.*

Also see CIB’s online Glossary of employment terms.

**Apostrophe** The main uses are to indicate:

* A missing letter, as in *don’t* or *we’ve.* Contractions like these are not used in formal writing (such as reports) but may be used in less formal writing such as emails, leaflets and guides (when you want to use a conversational tone of voice).
* Possession – with **’s**. To decide where to put a possessive, ask who or what is the possessor and place **’s** at the end of that word:

USE *the Minister’s responsibilities, individuals’ rights, the three departments’ budgetary forecasts*

Also see the Punctuation section.

**As/because/since**

* Use *as* to mean *at the same time*:

USE *As you enter the interview room, have your passport ready for inspection*

* Use *because* to explain reasons:

USE *Because you have applied to two departments, you may be invited to interviews at both.*

* In formal writing, *because* may be seen as too informal. In these cases, use *as* to mean *because*.
* Use *since* to mean *from that* *time*:

USE *Smoking has been banned in government offices since March.*

**As of** Use *since* or *from* instead:

USE *Since July, the Information Centre has closed at 3.30pm.*

USE *From 1 January, a new timetable will operate.*

**Assist** Prefer *help* as it sounds less formal and more helpful:

USE *We can help you to fill in the forms.*

**Asterisk** Use in tables (and also sparingly in text) to point readers to a footnote.

See ‘Tables’ under T for examples.

**Asylum seekers** It is not hyphenated.

See CIB’s online [Glossary of immigration terms](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/reference/checklists/checklist_glossary_of_immigration_terms_a_checklist.html).

**Attorney General** Useinitial capitals when referring to the current Attorney General, and lower case for former attorneys general.

**Average** Use average in a numerical sense, not as a stereotype to describe people:

* USE *The average age for getting married has risen significantly.*
* USE *On average, children start school at age four*.
* AVOID *The average child starts school at age four.*

# Section B

**BAME**  An increasingly common term for black, Asian and minority ethnic people.

**Biannual and biennial**  *Biannual* means twice a year and *biennial* means once every two years, but they are often confused. Avoid the risk:

* USE *The domiciliary care committee organises a meeting once every six months.*
* USE *We review information centre staffing levels every two years.*
* AVOID *The tenancy committee assembles at its biannual meeting.*
* AVOID *We hold a biennial review of library staffing levels.*

**Bibliography** This lists all the publications or other sources you have consulted when writing a publication or report, even if you have not quoted from or referenced them in your text. Place it at the end of a publication, after any appendices or glossary and before the index (if there is one).

Also see ‘References’ under R. The reference list shows sources you have actually named or quoted from in your text.

**Billion** One thousand million. Spell it out:

USE The total social protection budget in 2019 will be €20.5 billion.

**BME** An increasingly common term for black and minority ethnic people (or use **BAME:**  black, Asian and minority ethnic people).

**Board** Lower case except when part of a specific title:

* USE You could c*onsult board members on the demand for online training among CIB staff.*
* USE *The Legal Aid Board and the Citizens Information Board work together.*

**Bold**  Put headings in bold. Otherwise, use bold sparingly to emphasise particular words or phrases. When used in an email or online, a word in bold could be interpreted as a link to further information.

**Both** Can be ambiguous. Take care with word order or leave it out:

* USE *Registration is open to men and women.*
* USE *Men and women may both register.*
* AVOID *Registration is open to both men and women.* [Only two men?]

**Brackets** Use round brackets for:

* Extra information – *The benefit-in-kind relief for battery electric vehicles has been extended for three years (subject to a cap of €50,000 on the value of the vehicle).*
* Abbreviations – *Working Family Payment (WFP)* *Short-Term Enterprise Allowance (STEA)*
* Translations – *Garda Síochána (Irish police force)*.
* Explaining special terms – *Groundwater (water from springs and boreholes) may have to be treated.*
* Cross-references – *Contact the Health and Safety**Authority (see ‘Useful addresses’).*
* Supplying extra details – *tax at the standard rate (20%).*

Punctuating brackets:

* If a complete sentence is put in brackets, the full stop (or question mark) goes inside the brackets too:

USE *Return the forms. (Remember to sign sections A and B.)*

* Otherwise, the punctuation mark goes outside the brackets:

USE *Return the forms (and all supporting documents).*

Square brackets: Use square brackets to make editorial points:

USE *They [the committee members]* *decided* *to refer the matter to the advisory panel on equal pay.*

Also see the Punctuation Section.

**Bullets**  Use round black bullets for vertical lists, with dashes for sub-lists.

*Discrimination is prohibited within employment. This applies to:*

* *Conditions of employment, including dismissal*
* *Pay, where two people are doing like work. Like work occurs where:*
* *People perform the same work*
* *Their work is of similar nature*
* *Their work is different but of equal value*

Also see ‘Lists’ under L – for how to use correct punctuation and grammar in bullet-point lists.

**Bye-law** A ruling made by a local authority. It is not spelled *by-law.*

# Section C

**Can/could**  See ‘May/might/could/can’ under M.

**Capital letter issues** (Also see individual entries)

* **Acts, Bills, Regulations** See ‘Acts’ under A.
* **Courts** Use lower case for courts in general, but upper case for specific types of court:

USE *The Irish courts system includes the District Courts, Circuit Court, Commercial Court and High Court.*

USE *The court clerk in the local District Court will help you.*

* **Government, State and Constitution**
* Use capital ‘G’ if you are referring to the current Irish Government. Use lower case ‘g’ for foreign governments, past Irish governments, general references and government departments:

USE *The committee made recommendations to the Government. Every government in the EU has signed up*.

* Note: capital ‘G’ in *eGovernment*.
* Use capital ‘C’ in *Cabinet* and *Constitution* for the Irish Cabinet and Irish Constitution only.
* Use capital ‘D’ for named departments of current or former Irish governments:

USE *the Department of Finance, the former head of the Department of Defence.*

* Use capital ‘S’ in State only when using the State as a synonym for Ireland:

USE *schools established by the State, dignitaries of the State*

* For EU and foreign states – use initial capitals when referring to a specific institution but not in a general sense:

USE *This will affect the constitutions in several member states.*

* For Government officials – use initial capitals for certain roles in the current Irish Government, such as Ministers:

USE *President*, *Taoiseach, Tánaiste, Attorney General*, *Minister for Finance*

Use lower case for general references to these roles and for former office-holders:

USE *previous taoisigh, former attorney general*

* **Job titles** See ‘Job title’ under J.
* **National, ethnic and religious groups** Use initial capitals for nationalities, languages and religions:

USE *Irish, English, Nigerian, Polish, Travellers, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism*

* **Place names**
* Use initial capitals for place names, also for terms such as s*treet, bridge and airport* when these form part of the name:

USE ***Airlink:****This*[*airport service*](http://www.dublinbus.ie/en/Your-Journey1/Timetables/Airport-Services/)*connects Dublin Airport to a number of city centre locations as well as the*[*Luas Red Line*](http://www.luas.ie/luas-red-line-stops/)*,*[*Busáras (Central Bus Station)*](http://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=373)*,*[*Connolly Station*](http://www.irishrail.ie/travel-information/dublin-connolly)*and*[*Heuston Station*](http://www.irishrail.ie/travel-information/dublin-heuston).

* Use lower case when these terms occur independently of the name:

*USE If you are travelling by air this summer, being prepared can help you avoid delays while passing through airport security.*

* Use capitals for compass points such as north, south, east and west only if they are part of an established place name:

USE *Northern Ireland* but *north Co Dublin, west coast of Ireland*

**Care home** Do not use.Use *nursing home* and never use *old people’s home.*

**Carers** Carers may qualify for a range of payments and schemes. The Home Support Service has replaced Home Care Packages (2018).

Note the use of capitals and apostrophes in these examples:

USE *Since 1 September 2018, all carers getting full-rate or half-rate Carer’s Benefit or Carer’s Allowance can get a GP visit card.*

USE *The HomeCaring Periods Scheme makes it easier for people who take time out of their working life to care for children or adults to qualify for a*[*State Pension (Contributory)*](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social_welfare/social_welfare_payments/older_and_retired_people/state_pension_contributory.html)*.*

USE *The Homemaker's Scheme makes it easier for a homemaker to qualify for the*[*State Pension (Contributory)*](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social_welfare/social_welfare_payments/older_and_retired_people/state_pension_contributory.html).

USE *The Home Support Service is available to people aged 65 or over who may need support to continue living at home or to return home following a hospital stay.*

USE *Carer's leave from employment is unpaid but the Carer’s Leave Act ensures that people who want to take carer's leave will have their jobs kept open for them while they are on carer's leave.*

Carers’ payments include:

* *Carer’s Allowance*
* *Carer’s Benefit*
* *Carer’s Support Grant*
* *Domiciliary Care Allowance*
* *Half-rate Carer’s Allowance*

Other supports for carers include:

* *Carer’s leave*
* *Dependent Relative Tax Credit*
* *Home Carer Tax Credit*
* *HomeCaring Periods Scheme*
* *Homemaker’s Scheme (due to be replaced)*
* *Home Support Service*
* *Incapacitated Child Tax Credit*

**CFA** Referto it as:*Tusla* – *the Child and Family Agency.* Note the dash (not a hyphen).

**Chairperson**  Use the usual term for the organisation and person you are referring to: *chair/chairman/chairwoman/chairperson*. If you do not know, use *chairperson:*

USE *The Cathaoirleach (or chairperson) of the Seanad has a number of powers and responsibilities.*

USE *A club needs a number of officials to run it. The minimum requirement is a chairperson, a secretary and a treasurer.*

**Child**  Legally, a minor under 18. Use *child* for anyone under 16 but *young person or young people* for anyone aged 16 or 17.

**Childcare** It is one word, unless you are referring to the *Child Care Act 1991*.

**Childminder**  A person supervising or caring for minors. One word.

**Christian name** Use first name or forename instead of Christian name:

USE *first name, forename* or *given name*

USE *Write your surname followed by your first name.*

AVOID *Write your surname and Christian name in the space provided.*

**Church**  Use lower case for churches in general, but upper case for specific denominations or buildings:

USE *There is a long tradition of church blessings in Ireland.*

USE *The majority of national schools are under the management of one church.*

USE  *the Episcopalian Church*, *St Mary’s Church*

**CIB** The Citizens Information Board

* Use the full name on its first occurrence in each section, with the abbreviation *CIB* in brackets. For repeat references within the section, use *CIB* only.

USE the *Citizens Information Board (CIB).* After that, use: *CIB.*

USE *The Citizens Information Board has published a report on this matter. The committee will consider the data collected by CIB for the report.*

* Use *the* with the full name but not with the abbreviation:

USE *The report by the Citizens Information Board includes data collected by CIB last year.*

AVOID *The report by Citizens Information Board includes data collected by the CIB last year.*

* Do not refer to CIB as *the Board*:

AVOID *CIB is run by a Board of Management. The Board’s responsibilities include . . .*

AVOID *CI Board / CIB Board*

**CIC**  Citizens Information Centre

* CIB delivers information through a nationwide network of Citizens Information Centres (CICs).
* Use the full name on its first occurrence in each paragraph or section, with the abbreviation in brackets, then *CIC* after that:

USE *Citizens Information Centres (CICs) offer a range of information, advice and advocacy services. CICs are not open at weekends. Nenagh CIC runs regular information sessions.*

* Use an apostrophe after *CIC* to show possession, but never to show the plural:

USE *Galway CIC’s information providers are ready to help.*

USE *You can get advice from CICs in most major towns.*

AVOID *People use their CIC’s for advice and information.*

Note that explaining (or using) two abbreviations, or more, in the same sentence may be confusing. Use your judgement about what’s appropriate for your target audiences.

**CIPS** The Citizens Information Phone Service

* Use the full name on its first occurrence in each paragraph or section, with the abbreviation in brackets, then *CIPS* after that:

USE *The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) is available from 8am to 8pm. A CIPS adviser will ring you back if they cannot answer your query immediately.*

* Use *the* with the full name but not with the abbreviation:

USE *Try calling the Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS). Ask CIPS how to apply for this benefit.*

AVOID *Ask the CIPS how to apply.*

Explaining (or using) two abbreviations, or more, in the same sentence may be confusing. Use your judgement about what’s appropriate for your target audiences.

**CIS** Citizens Information Service

* Citizens Information Services are regional organisations responsible for providing face-to-face services to the public through their local CICs.
* Use *Citizens Information Service* only in the context of these regional organisations:

USE *North Munster Citizens Information Service (CIS) held a training day for CIC staff.*

* Use the full name on first occurrence, with the abbreviation in brackets, then *CIS* after that:

USE *Each regional Citizens Information Service (CIS) company runs a network of CICs, which are funded by the Citizens Information Board.*

* Use *the* with *the Citizens Information Service* or *the CIS* when referring to the CIS as a whole, but not when referring to a specific CIS:

USE *The CIS must remain within budget.*

USE *South Connacht CIS runs a network of Citizens Information Centres.*

AVOID *The South Munster CIS runs a network of CICs.*

Note that explaining (or using) two abbreviations, or more, in the same sentence may be confusing. Use your judgement about what’s appropriate for your target audiences.

**Citizens Information** *Citizens Information* is how we refer to the information services that we offer.

* Use *Citizens Information* for the range of services offered by CISs, CIPS and the website *citizensinformation.ie*
* Use initial capitals and no apostrophe:

USE *You can access Citizens Information in various ways.*

AVOID *You can access Citizens’ Information in various ways.*

AVOID *You can access citizens information from our network of CICs.*

* Use *citizens’ information* in other contexts or countries:

USE *While you are abroad, you may be able to access free, independent citizens’ information.*

* Use *citizensinformation.ie* (omitting *www.*) for the Citizens Information website:

USE *See our website, citizensinformation.ie, for comprehensive information.*

**Cliches**  Do not use trendy but overused phrases like *back burner, massive, stepchange, raft of measures, going forward, at this moment in time, bottom line, ballpark figure* . . . and many more.

**Click here** When writing online or in an email, do not use the instruction ‘click here’ or provide the complete URL (the web address). Instead, make the destination the link.

Try to place the link at the end of the sentence, because it is useful for people who are using screen readers (that is, they are listening to the content, rather than reading it):

USE *You can get more details from* [*revenue*](http://www.revenue)*.ie.*

AVOID *To get more details from Revenue, click here.*

AVOID *To get more details, go to* [*revenue*](http://www.revenue)*.ie*

**cm** Centimetre:

USE *centimetre* [for occasional occurrence]

USE *cm* as in *25cm* [in tables and lists]

**Cohabiting**  Living together as cohabitants in an intimate and committed relationship but not married or in a civil partnership. One word.

USE *Cohabitants (cohabiting couples) do not possess the same legal rights and obligations as married couples or civil partnerships.*

USE *Cohabiting couples in Ireland may foster children.*

**Colon**  Colons convey a sense of consequence. They lead to an explanation, example, quotation or list:

USE *Stay safe: don’t drink and drive*.

USE *Read our booklet ‘Moving in: your guide to student accommodation’.*

USE *You have three options: school, college or apprenticeship.*

Also see the Punctuation Section.

**Commas** Commas make sentences easier to read by dividing them into manageable portions.

Use commas to:

* Separate the words in a list:

USE *Problems with odours, litter and vermin are greatly reduced by the careful management of the site.*

USE *Environmental noise includes noise from transport, road traffic, rail traffic, air traffic and sites of industrial activity.*

* Present introductory phrases:

USE *In September, your child will start school.*

USE *Under the Directive, local authorities are required to make action plans to reduce ambient noise.*

* Add extra information – but don’t enclose words in commas where they are essential to the meaning or definition.

For example:

*Non-fee-paying schools, which participate in the free education scheme, get a range of grants and subsidies from the State.* If we delete the clause between commas, we still understand the subject: non-fee-paying schools.

Compare this with *Non-fee-paying schools which participate in the free education scheme get a range of grants and subsidies from the State*.This implies that only the schools that participate in the scheme get the grants and subsidies.

Compare *They are managed by boards of management, which are representative of local interests* with *They are managed by boards of management which are representative of local interests.* In the first sentence, what the boards represent is incidental; in the second it defines them.

Also see the Punctuation Section.

**Committees and councils** Use singular or plural verbs depending on whether the group members are acting as a unit or as individuals:

* USE *The Management Board meets once a month* [as a unit]*.*
* USE *The council are meeting the Taoiseach* [as individual members, not as a formal body]*.*

Other collective nouns treated the same way include *board, company, firm, majority, public, staff,* and *team.*

**Communicate** It is preferable to specify how you do it:

USE *write, phone, email, tell*

AVOID *communicate*

**Community Welfare Officer** This term is no longer used – but it may be helpful to explain this:

USE *Each case is decided on its merits by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection's representative (formerly known as the Community Welfare Officer) at your*[*local office*](https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/otheroffice/community-welfare-office-contact.aspx)*.*

**Complement, compliment, complimentary**

* *To complement* means ‘to complete’ or ‘to supplement’:

USE *Your right to carer's leave from employment complements the Carer's Benefit Scheme.*

* *To compliment* means ‘to express admiration or respect’:

USE *The chairperson complimented the trainee on the speech*.

* *Complimentary* means ‘free’:

USE *a complimentary copy*

**Comprise** Prefer *consist of*, *include* or *contain*, which sound less formal. *Comprise of* is incorrect.

**ComReg** Commission for Communications Regulation:

USE *Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg)* and after that, use *ComReg*

AVOID *COMREG, Comreg*

**Contact details**

* Postal addresses are set out vertically where space allows, with minimal punctuation:

*Office of the Revenue Commissioners*

*Revenue House*

*Assumption Road*

*Blackpool*

*Cork*

*T23 W922*

* If an address has to fit along one line, insert commas:

*Office of the Ombudsman, 18 Leeson Street Lower, Dublin, D02 HE97*

* + Provide the Eircode where possible. Note that we use ‘postcode’ to explain Eircode on first use, if required. After that, use Eircode (initial capital).

USE *A national postcode system known as Eircode has been introduced.*

* Abbreviate *Saint* to *St* and *County* to *Co*, with no full stop. Don’t abbreviate *Street* or *Road*:

USE *41 St Mary’s Street, Bray, Co Wicklow*

AVOID *41 St. Mary’s St., Bray, Co. Wicklow*

* Phone numbers– use these formats:
* (01) 809 0600
* (071) 402 5500
* 087 166 1835
* Lo-call 1890 773 462 (Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm)
* +353 1 284 1166 (when calling from outside Ireland)
* Freephone: 1800 252 524
* For contact details, use these prefixes:
* Tel:
* Fax:
* Email:
* Web:

**Continually and continuously**

* *Continually* means ‘happening frequently and repeatedly but not without a break’:

USE *Fair grounds for dismissal may include continually arriving late*.

* *Continuously* means ‘without a break’:

USE *You must have been working continuously for the same employer for at least one year.*

**Contractions**

* Use contractions like *you’re, don’t* or *we’ll* only when you want to set an informal tone.
* Avoid longer contractions such as *wouldn’t* or *haven’t* as they can look difficult to read.

**Co-operate, co-opt** but **coordinate, coexist, cohabit** If in doubt about inserting a hyphen, check current conventions in the Oxford English Dictionary.

* USE *Money Advice Coordinators.*

**Councillor / counsellor** A *councillor* serves on a council, a *counsellor* offers support.

**Country** Use *country* in an international context, but use *nationwide* when you mean all of Ireland:

* USE *People from certain countries need a valid Irish entry visa.*
* *USE As a European Union (EU) citizen, you have the right to live and work in any other EU member state.*
* USE *MABS has a nationwide network of offices.*
* AVOID *MABS has offices around the country.*

**County** Abbreviate to *Co*, with no full stop: *Co Westmeath*, *Co Offaly.*

**Creche** A service providing supervised childcare during the day. Don’t add an accent.

**Cross-referencing** Cross-references direct readers to further information. They can be distracting, so do not use them for essential information or where you can repeat the details quickly and clearly on the current page. The simplest solution may be to give a summary of the main points then insert a cross-reference to the source of further detail:

USE *See Appendix A for scheme details.*

USE *See pages 41–43 for details on how to apply.*

USE *Paternity Benefit is paid for two weeks. For up-to-date information on payment rates, see the Citizens Information leaflet ‘Benefits and Taxes’.*

# Section D

**DA** Disability Allowance. Prefer *Disability Allowance* rather than *DA.*

**Dáil Éireann**  The lower house of the Oireachtas. Use *Dáil Éireann* on first mention, and *the* *Dáil* after that. Explain the term in English if you think it may be unfamiliar to some readers.

**Dangling modifiers**  Try not to puzzle your readers by separating a phrase from the thing it is meant to refer to:

* AVOID *Having filled in the application form, an eyesight test will be arranged.*
* USE *An eyesight test will be arranged after you have filled in the application form*.
* AVOID *When parking in a restricted area, a traffic warden may issue you with a fixed-charge notice.*
* USE *If you park in a restricted area, a traffic warden may issue you with a fixed-charge notice.*

**Dashes** Dashes – like this – should be en dashes and have a space on each side. Do not confuse them with hyphens (-) which are smaller and do not have a space on either side.

* Dashes highlight an aside or explanation with greater emphasis than commas or brackets. They can also be used to give a more conversational tone:

USE *We try to keep our resources relevant to you – helping you learn the skills that will make it easier for you to help yourself.*

* To create a dash in Word, type the hyphen and a space and another letter – then the hyphen will automatically become a dash.
* Use dashes sparingly – too many can be distracting.

Also see the Punctuation Section.

**Data**  Although the word ‘data’ is grammatically plural, it is treated as singular:

* USE *Data is stored on the magnetic strip on your card.*
* AVOID *Data are stored on your card.*

**Dates** Use these formats (and note the hyphen):

* *14 September 2018*
* Date ranges: *14-19 September, 30 June-2 July*
* *21st century, 19th-century bye-laws*
* *the 1970s, swinging 60s, people in their 80s*

But use the contracted format *DD/MM/YYYY* to fit dates into a table.

* USE *14/09/2018, 25/12/2019*
* AVOID *14th Sept 2018, December 25th 2019*

**Day by day, day to day** Hyphenate the phrase only when you use it as an adjective:

USE *day-by-day negotiations, day-to-day activities*

USE *improving day by day, caring for a relative day to day*

AVOID *day by day improvement, going to work day-to-day*

**Day care** Daytime childcare or social and rehabilitative services for older people or people with disabilities. It is two words.

**Debt** See CIB’s online [Glossary of debt terms](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/money_and_tax/personal_finance/debt/glossary_of_debt_terms.html).

**Deaf** Take care with your terminology:

USE *going deaf*

USE *in the Deaf community, working with Deaf people*

AVOID *deaf and dumb, mute, hearing impairment*

**Dementia** Take care with your terminology:

* USE *person with dementia*
* AVOID *dementia sufferer* or *dementia victim*

**Departments** Use initial capital letters for departments of current or former Irish governments, but lower case for general references to departments:

USE *Department of Finance*

USE *the previous government’s Department of Defence*

USE *a list of government departments*

Check citizensinformation.ie for up-to-date information on titles of departments.

**Dependant /dependent**  A *dependant* is a person. *Dependent* is an adjective or can be part of a verb (and is the opposite of independent):

* *USE You can get an increase in your social welfare payment for a child dependant.*
* *USE Your child does not have to be financially dependent on you.*

Also see ‘Qualified adult/child’ under Q.

**Different** Use *different from* instead of *different to* or *different than.*

**Disability**  When writing about people with disabilities, it is important to avoid words that might label people in groups or imply a value judgement. The list below is from the National Disability Authority’s ‘Appropriate Terms to Use’.

*USE: people with disabilities, disabled people*

*AVOID: the disabled*

*USE: persons who uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user*

*AVOID: wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair*

*USE: disabled person, person with a disability*

*AVOID: cripple, spastic, victim*

*USE: disabled person, person with a disability*

*AVOID: the handicapped*

*USE: intellectual disability*

*AVOID: mental handicap*

*USE: intellectually disabled*

*AVOID: mentally handicapped*

*USE: non-disabled*

*AVOID: normal*

*USE: person with a mental health disability*

*AVOID: schizo, mad*

*USE: has (for example, asthma)*

*AVOID: suffers from (for example, asthma)*

**Doctor** Use *doctor* for a hospital doctor. Use*GP* for a family doctor.

**Drug use**

* USE *drug use, drug user*
* AVOID *drug abuse, drug abuser*

**DPS** Drugs Payment Scheme (note the ‘s’ on ‘Drugs’):

*USE In order to qualify for the Drugs Payment Scheme (DPS), you must be ordinarily resident in Ireland.*

# Section E

**e** and **e-** Short forelectronic (sometimes hyphenated, sometimes not):

USE e-banking, e-bulletin, e-book, e-business, e-cigarette e-commerce, e-learning, e-ticket, e-Visa, e-voting

USE eGovernment, ePassport, email, epub, econtent

If you’re not sure, check the Oxford English Dictionary.

**Education system** The education system consists of primary education, post-primary or secondary education, third-level education and further education.

Further education is education and training that takes place after post-primary education but is not part of the third-level system.

Also see ‘Primary’ and ‘Post-primary’ under P and ‘Third level’ under T.

**EEA** AnEEA national is from the European Economic Area.

See CIB’s online Glossary of immigration terms.

**Effect/affect**  Frequently confused words.

* *Effect* means ‘result’ and it usually occurs as a noun:

USE *Disclosing a criminal conviction is likely to have a negative effect on the person's employment prospects.*

* *Effect* can also be a rather formal verb, meaning ‘to bring about’. In general, try to choose plainer words:

USE *We aim to bring about change.*

AVOID *We aim to effect change.*

* *With effect from* just means ‘from’ and can sound too formal, so try to avoid it:

USE *From 1 January, you can apply online.*

AVOID *With effect from 1 January, you can apply online.*

* *Affect* means ‘change’ or ‘influence’ and it usually occurs as a verb:

*USE A change in your circumstances can affect your entitlement to a social welfare payment.*

**e.g.** Our style is to try to avoid *e.g.* as it may cause confusion. However, it may be used in formal writing such as reports. In general, it’s better to write *for example* or *such as*.

USE  *Voluntary public hospitals are sometimes owned by private bodies, for example, religious orders.*

**Elderly**  Write *older people* and do not write *the elderly* or *old people.*

**Ellipsis ( . . . )**  A row of three full stops indicating an omission from quoted text. Add a single space on each side of each full stop.

USE ‘*The State, as guardian of the common good, shall require . . . that children receive a certain minimum education.’*

**Email** It no longer has a hyphen:

USE *email*

AVOID *e-mail, E-mail, EMAIL*

**Emigrant/emigration** See CIB’s online Glossary of immigration terms.

**Employment terms** See CIB’s online Glossary of employment terms.

**Employment permit** A generic term for *General Employment Permits*, *Critical Skills Employment Permits* and others. Use *employment permit* in general references but the permit name for specific type of permit.

**Enquire/inquire** *Enquire* means ‘ask about’, *inquire* means ‘formally investigate’:

USE *You can enquire whether the court has set a date for the inquiry.*

**Ensure/insure/assure** You *ensure* thatsomething happens, but *insure* against risk and *assure* someone it will turn out well.

USE *The CIC assured the caller that by insuring her house she could ensure that any damage would be paid for.*

**Etc.**

* It means ‘and the rest’: *They study French, maths, geography, etc.*
* Our style is to try to avoid *etc*. as it may cause confusion.
* If you must use it, don’t add another full stop when *etc.* falls at the end of a sentence.
* Never use *etc.* with phrases that introduce a limited list, such as *include, such as* and *for example*:

USE *Short-term advocacy work with clients generally involves one or two engagements (for example, writing a letter of complaint or negotiating a product refund).*

USE *These grounds include health and safety concerns, and inadequate travel documents.*

AVOID *These grounds include health and safety concerns, inadequate travel documents, etc.*

**Ethnic groups**  Always use the official terms when referring to the nationality, language or cultural background of people from other countries or ethnic groups. For example:

* USE *Roma*
* AVOID *gypsy*
* USE *Chinese, Japanese, Malaysian, Thai*
* AVOID *Asian*
* USE *Ethiopian, Nigerian, Sudanese*
* AVOID *African*

**EU nationals** And non-EU nationals. Do not capitalise member states:

USE You may receive your Irish contributory pension in any EU member state.

**Euro**  Use the € symbol in front of the figure and avoid the word euro.

Also see ‘Money’ under M.

**Everyday/every day** Frequently confused words. *Everyday* is used in the sense of ordinary, typical or common and *every day* means daily:

USE *A basic bank account is free of charge for**everyday banking for at least the first 12 months.*

USE *Value Added Tax (VAT) is included in the price of most products and services that we use every day.*

**Exclamation mark (!)**  Use only when it occurs in a quotation or brand name.

# Section F

**Fewer/less**  *Fewer* means a smaller number and *less* means a smaller quantity. You might have noticed that f*ewer* is becoming less common in spoken English, with *less* used instead – but we are continuing to follow this rule.

If you could use the question ‘how much’, use *less*. If you could use the question ‘how many’, use *fewer*:

USE *Less revenue from fewer taxpayers*

USE *Less traffic and fewer cars*

USE *How much income tax was collected? Less than last year.*

USE *How many people filed self-employed income tax? Fewer than last year.*

**Focus**  Take care with the ‘s’:

USE *focused, focusing*

AVOID *focussed, focussing*

**FOI** The abbreviation ofFreedom of Information has all capitals: FOI.

**Footnotes**  Use sparingly and only for notes that are too long to put in brackets instead. Use footnotes at the bottom of the page rather than endnotes after a chapter.

**For the purpose of**  It’s sometimes required – but alternatives are *for* or *to*:

*USE  Ireland is divided into eight circuits for the purpose of the Special Criminal Court.*

*USE If your information is being held for the purposes of direct marketing, you can have your details removed.*

*USE Visit the office to register.*

*USE Visit the office for the registration ceremony.*

*USE This section outlines the notification procedure which both parties to a marriage must fulfil to be legally entitled to marry.*

*AVOID Visit the office for the purpose of registration.*

**For example**  Write it out in full instead of *e.g.* In formal reports, *e.g*. may sometimes be appropriate (and use full stops).

Do not use *and so on* with phrases that introduce a limited list, such as *for example*,

*such as* and *include*.

**Foreign nationals**  Never use non-nationals:

USE *foreign nationals, EEA nationals, non-EEA nationals, migrant workers etc.* [as appropriate]

AVOID *non-national, foreigner*

**Foreign words** Use English terms where possible. Sometimes, you might need to use foreign terms because they are commonly used. If you cannot replace them with an English equivalent, explain them in plain English. Write them in italics and use the appropriate accents.

Example: *in lieu*

USE: If you get payment *in lieu* of notice (instead of working out your notice) you are considered to be unemployed and available for work during this period.

Example: *force majeure*

USE: The law gives an employee a limited right to leave from work in time of family crisis (known as *force majeure*).

USE: The P[arental Leave (Amendment) Act 2006](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2006/en/act/pub/0013/index.html) amends the [Parental Leave Act 1998](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0030/index.html) which provides for a period of unpaid [parental leave](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment_rights_and_conditions/leave_and_holidays/parental_leave.html) for parents to care for their children and for a limited right to paid leave in circumstances of serious family illness (known as [*force majeure*](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment_rights_and_conditions/leave_and_holidays/types_of_leave_from_work.html)).

Example: *habeas corpus*

USE: If the person or institution detaining you cannot justify your detention or prove that it is lawful, the High Court may order that you be released. This is called a habeas corpus order.

Do not use accents with or italicise words that are now mainstream English, such as: alumni, cafe, creche, elite, per, via, vice versa. Prefer an English equivalent where possible, as that’s easier for people who don’t have English as their first language.

Also see ‘Irish’ under I.

**Formal writing** Although we always write in plain English, some reports and publications (such as *Relate*) may use a slightly more formal style than the website, information guides and leaflets. Letters and emails may also use a more formal style, depending on what is appropriate for the recipients.

A formal style means that the writing may be less personal, sentences may be longer and the passive voice may be used a little more frequently. It may also mean that the result in the Flesch reading ease scale may be lower than for other communications.

**Fractions**

* Spell out fractions and note the hyphen:

USE *one-third, three-quarters*

AVOID *1/3, 3/4*

* Percentages can often be easier to read than fractions: 33%, 75%
* If a fraction is used with a whole number, use decimals instead as they are easier to read:

USE *6.75*

AVOID *six and three-quarters*

* Do not mix fractions and percentages:

*USE Over 25% of applicants have been on the housing list for three years and 15% have been on it for over five years.*

*AVOID Over one-quarter of applicants have been on the housing list for three years and 15% have been on it for over five years.*

Also see ‘Numbers’ under N.

**Force majeure** See ‘Foreign words’ under F.

**FSAI** Food Safety Authority of Ireland. Note that *safe*foodis a separate organisation.

**Full stop**  Do not add full stops after initials, abbreviations or headings:

USE FOI, HSE*, CIB, MABS, Co Wicklow*

Also see the PunctuationSection.

# Section G

**Garda, Gardaí** Members of An GardaSíochána:

USE *An Garda Sióchána* for the official title.

USE *the Gardaí* for the collective group.

USE *Garda* with upper case ‘G’ in terms such as *Garda station*, but lower case ‘g’ where listing *garda* alongside other professions:

USE *Your passport form may be signed by a garda, lawyer or medical doctor.*

AVOID *guard*

**Gender-neutral terms**

* Avoid job titles that assume a certain gender.

USE *firefighter, postal worker, head teacher, business people*

AVOID *fireman, postman, headmistress, businessmen*

* Pronouns

It is not easy to read *he/she* and *his/her*. Using *they* and *their* is widely accepted, even for singular references. But where appropriate, try to rewrite using the plural.

USE *they, their*

AVOID *he or she, he/she, s/he, his or her, his/her,*

For example:

USE *Enrol your child in their first school.*

USE *Parents may visit at their convenience.*

AVOID *A parent may visit at his/her convenience.*

AVOID *Enrol your child in his or her first school.*

**Geography**  Use lower case for compass points such as *north, south, east, west, south-west, eastern* or *northerly*, except when they are part of a place name or organisation name:

USE *Northern Ireland,*

USE *south Dublin, westerly wind,*

USE *South Connacht MABS*

**Government** This isthe body authorised to exercise power on behalf of the State:

USE *Government* for the current Irish Government

USE *government* for general references, government departments, foreign and past governments

AVOID *Govt, gov, GOV*

See the next entry for related references.

**Government, State and Constitution** Use capital ‘G’ if you are referring to the current Irish Government. Use lower case ‘g’ for foreign governments, past Irish governments, general references and government departments:

USE *The committee made recommendations to the Government. Every government in the EU has signed up*.

* Note: capital ‘G’ in *eGovernment*.
* Use capital ‘C’ in *Cabinet* and *Constitution* for the Irish Cabinet and Irish Constitution only.
* Use capital ‘D’ for departments of current and former Irish governments, but lower case ‘d’ for general references:

USE *the Department of Finance*

USE *officials from all departments*

* Capital S in *State* only when using the State as a synonym for Ireland:

USE *The State provides free primary education.*

USE The State Examinations Commission administers the State examinations.

* For EU and foreign states – use initial capitals when referring to a specific institution but not in a general sense:

USE *This will affect the constitutions in several states.*

* For Government officials – use initial capitals for certain roles in the current Irish Government:

USE *The Taoiseach, President*, *Minister for Finance, Attorney General*.

Use lower case for general references to these roles and for former office holders:

USE *previous taoisigh, the former attorney general*

**GP visit card** is written like this (without capitals in *visit card*). GP is not written in full.

**Great Britain/Britain** It comprises England, Wales and Scotland. To include Northern Ireland, use *the UK*.

# Section H

**Habeas corpus** See ‘Foreign words’ under F.

**He/she** and **his/hers**

* Where possible, address the reader directly as *you* rather than in the third person:

USE *If you are unable to travel alone, you may get a Free Travel Companion Card.*

AVOID *If someone is unable to travel alone, he or she may get a Free Travel Companion Card.*

* Prefer *they* and *their* where the sentence could apply to any gender:

USE *When your child reaches 16, they may be entitled to a Disability Allowance.*

* Alternatively, rewrite in the plural:

USE *Children over 16 may be entitled to a Disability Allowance.*

Also see ‘Gender-neutral terms’ under G.

**Healthcare**  All one word: *healthcare.*

**Health centre** Healthcentres delivera wide range of primary and community care services including GPs, social work, public health nursing, child health and home help:

USE *health centre*

AVOID *centre, hc, Health Centre, dispensary, healthcentre*

Also see ‘Local Health Office’ under L.

**Health Service Executive/HSE** The statutory organisation that provides health and personal social services through a network of Local Health Offices and local health centres:

USE Health Service Executive (HSE) for the first reference. Use HSE after this. Or, use Local Health Office where it is appropriate.

AVOID Health Services Executive

**Headings**

* Put headings in bold, with no full stop.
* Capitalise only the first letter of the first word.
* Use up to three levels: chapter heading (Rules, Rates, H2), section heading (H3), paragraph heading (bold).
* Use embedded headings in bold for clarity or emphasis:

USE Documents required include:

• **Passport** – This must be valid for at least the duration of your proposed stay.

• **Visa** – If you are a citizen of a visa-required country.

Also see the Layout Section.

**Holidays** Use for recreational time off work or a national day such as a public holiday.

Also see CIB’s online Glossary of employment terms.

**HomeCaring Periods Scheme**  Under this scheme, periods of time spent caring for children or adults can count towards a State Pension (Contributory).

Also see ‘Carers’ under C.

**Hyphens**  Use hyphens to:

* Link two or more words to make one adjectival expression, when it is placed before the noun (but usually not afterwards):

USE *A 15-minute break, a four-year-old child, buy-to-let property, well-established rules, two-bedroomed house, up-to-date figures*

USE *the break lasted 15 minutes, the child is four years old, the house has two bedrooms, the figures are up to date*

USE *MABS is a one-stop shop for mortgage debt advice and renewal.*

USE  *The face-to-face service is by appointment only* – but *Talk to an adviser face to face*

USE *A 16-year-old student* – buta *student aged 16*

USE *A child attending full-time education* – but *You must attend school full time*

USE *Subsequent off-the-job training phases* – but *Part of the training will be off the job*

* Add prefixes: *anti-dogmatic, ex-husband, pre-budget, post-war, self-financing, over-react.* However, hyphens are now increasingly dropped from familiar expressions such as *micromanagement, multitaski*ng
* Add prefixes: *ex-spouse, pre-budget, pre-school year, self-financing, multi-unit.* However, hyphens are now increasingly dropped from familiar expressions such as *micromanagement, multitasking, wellbeing, underestimate.* Check current conventions with the Oxford English Dictionary.
* Avoid ambiguity. For example:

*Re-sign the lease* but *Resign the role as chairperson.*

Also see the Punctuation Section.

# Section I

**ICT** Information and communications technologies. Use *ICT (information communications technology)* for the first reference and *ICT* after this. You can also use *IT (information technology)*.

**Illness**  A condition impairing normal physical or mental function:

USE *claiming* *Illness Benefit*

USE *when illness keeps you off work.*

USE *taking sick leave from work*

AVOID *illness leave, sick benefits*

**Immigrants/immigration**

See the CIB online Glossary of immigration terms.

**In accordance with**  Use a plainer alternative such as *by, as* or *under*:

USE *Under the rules on social welfare payments, your claim may be backdated.*

USE *As you* *requested, we have contacted your creditors.*

AVOID *In accordance with the rules on housing assistance, your claim may be backdated.*

AVOID *In accordance with your request, we have contacted your creditors.*

**In a position to**  Write it more simply as *able to* or *can*:

USE *When you are able to sign the contract.*

AVOID *When you are in a position to sign the contract.*

**In excess of**  Write it more simply as *more than* or *over*:

*USE If your only income is from social welfare payments or HSE allowances, you should be granted a medical card – even though your payment may be ~~in excess of~~ more than the income guidelines for your age and situation.*

**In order to** Sometimes *in order to* is useful as it clearly shows the link between facts:

*USE: If you have exhausted all the options open to you, the lender can repossess your home in order to recover the amount you owe.*

*USE This section outlines the notification procedure which both parties to a marriage must fulfil in order to be legally entitled to marry.*

*USE The children of parents who are not married to each other may have to prove paternity in order to get their maintenance or inheritance.*

Sometimes, *in order to* can sound unnecessarily formal or wordy:

*USE Citizens of certain countries need a visa ~~in order~~ to come to Ireland.*

*USE If you have to take time off work ~~in order~~ to attend court, you are not entitled to be paid while away from work.*

*USE ~~In order to~~ To apply for a learner permit, you must be normally resident in Ireland.*

**Initials** Do not insert full stops or spaces between initials, whether of people, schemes or organisations:

USE  *HAP, WFP, CIÉ, FOI, Regina Doherty TD*

**Inquiry/enquiry**  An *inquiry* is a formal investigation and an *enquiry* is a question:

USE *You may enquire about when the inquiry will take place.*

**Intellectual disability** The World Health Organization defines intellectual disability as ‘a significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information and to learn and apply new skills (impaired intelligence). This results in a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning), and begins before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development.’ Where possible, refer to the specific disability:

USE *intellectual disability* in general references

USE *special educational needs* when referring to education

AVOID *handicapped, mentally handicapped*

Also see ‘Learning difficulty’ under L and ‘Special educational needs’ under S.

**Instructions**

* Address the reader directly:

USE *You can pay for your television licence at any post office.*

USE *You should send in the form as soon as you can.*

USE *Please send in the form as soon as you can.*

USE *Phone 999 or 112 for an emergency ambulance.*

AVOID *A television licence can be paid for at any post office.*

AVOID *All applicants should send in the form as soon as possible.*

AVOID *Emergency ambulance services can be contacted by telephoning 999 or 112.*

* You can break a task into steps and list them in chronological order, if appropriate. For example:

*Try filling in this budget sheet using the following tips.*

*1. Is your budget weekly or monthly? Choose one and convert all figures to that basis.*

*2. On the left column, insert your income from all sources.*

*3. On the right, fill in your expenses. These are your rent, electricity, heat and food*

*4. When you’ve completed the first draft, add up the income and add up the expenditure.*

* Use short sentences, active-voice verbs and vertical lists. For example:

*If you wish to attend your family doctor (GP) as a result of an emergency you can:*

* *Attend at a surgery operated by your GP during specific hours*
* *Phone your GP and ask for them to visit you during the time set aside for house calls*
* *Phone your GP outside normal hours – the answering machine will usually indicate the number to ring in emergencies*

**Insure/ensure/assure**  See ‘Ensure’ under E.

**In the event** Try to use *if* instead – but it’s not always possible.

*USE: You and your landlord can refer to the terms of the agreement if there is any confusion or disagreement.*

*USE: International laws protect air passengers in the event of death, injury or loss or damage to luggage.*

**Intreo** ADepartment of Employment Affairs and Social Protection service providing a single point of contact for all employment and income supports:

USE *Intreo Centre*

Also see ‘Social Welfare Branch Office’ under S.

**IQA** Increase for Qualified Adult. Don’t use Adult Dependant Allowance.

**IQC** Increase for Qualified Child. Don’t use Child Dependant Allowance.

**Ireland**

USE *Ireland* or *the State*

AVOID *Éire, Republic of Ireland*, *Irish Republic*

USE *Northern Ireland*

AVOID *Ulster, the Six Counties*

**Irish**  Do not write Irish words and names in italics. Be aware that some readers may have no familiarity with Irish. Take care with fadas.

* Use Irish terms where this is the normal practice:

USE *the Taoiseach, Gardaí*

* Where terms may be less common, explain them in brackets on first use. Choose the most common term to go first:

USE G*aelscoileanna (Irish-speaking schools)*

USE *the Irish Constitution (Bunreacht na hÉireann)*

* Use *An* if it is part of the official name, otherwise *the*:

USE *An Garda* *Síochána, the Taoiseach*

* Give Irish and English names where both are commonly used:

USE *Tusla* – *the Child and Family Agency*

**In lieu** See ‘Foreign words’ under F.

**-ise/-ize**  Use -ise:

USE *realise, recognise, organise*

Exceptions: *World Health Organization* *(WHO)* and *International Labour Organization (ILO)* use the ‘z’.

**Italics**  Use italics for:

* Legal, technical or foreign terms the first time you mention them, adding an explanation if required:

USE Under GDPR, personal data is information that relates to or can identify a living person.

USE The GDPR specifies 16 years as the *digital age of consent.*

USE Transport for Ireland (TFI) has launched a new *Baby on Board* badge campaign.

* Titles of publications:

USE *Information for School Leavers* (a CIB leaflet)

* Examples of lawsuits and case law:

USE A European Court of Justice ruling (*Case C-549/07 Wallentin-Hermann*) found that . . .

Also see ‘References’ under R.

**It’s/its**

* *It’s* is short for ‘it is’. This is called a contraction – when an apostrophe replaces a missing letter. You use contractions when want to create a conversational tone of voice (for example, in informal emails and leaflets). They are not used in formal writing.

USE *It’s useful to work out a family budget.*

*USE It’s your responsibility to pay the rent on time.*

* *Its* indicates ownership or possession:

USE *Each centre sets its own budget.*

USE *The training course served its purpose.*

USE *The Department has moved its offices to Longford.*

# Section J

**Jargon**  Jargon should be avoided. It is defined as: ‘Special words or expressions used by a profession or group that are difficult for others to understand’ by the Oxford English Dictionary.

You sometimes need to use *technical terms* that are not easy to understand (except by experts in a particular field, such as law). In these cases, ensure you explain the meaning in plain English.

See ‘Technical terms’ under T for examples. Also see Section 2: Writing in plain English.

**Jobseeker** An unemployed person who is available for work. Use lower case for *jobseekers* and *jobseekers’ payments* in general, but initial capitals for the names of specific benefits:

USE *jobseeker*

USE T*o qualify for a jobseeker’s payment, you must be under 66.*

USE *You must be 18 or over to claim Jobseeker’s Allowance. People under 18 do not qualify for Jobseeker’s Benefit.*

AVOID *Job Seeker, job-seeker*

**Job titles**  Use lower case for all job roles except where they form part of someone’s personal title and go before their name.

USE *the judge, the clerk of court, the duty solicitor, the prosecuting barrister*

USE *Write to Chairperson Lydia Smith.*

USE *The decision was made by Mr Justice Frank Clark.*

USE *Contact Liam Kelly, the deputy chairperson.*

USE *a DEASP case officer*

AVOID *Miss White is our Operations Manager.*

AVOID *Ask the Senior Information Officer or the Receptionist.*

**Judge**  An appointed official who presides before a court:

USE *judge*

USE *Judge Smith* [when naming the individual]

**Judgment/judgement**  A *judgment* is a formal legal decision. A *judgement* is a deduction or opinion anyone can form about an issue:

USE *The tribunal gave its judgment after a day of deliberation.*

USE *MABS advisers use their judgement to assess how much a client can afford to pay back.*

# Section K

**Kilogrammes, kilometres, kilometres per hour** Spell out units of measurement in full on first occurrence. Abbreviate as **kg, km, km/h,** on repeated use or in tables. Write without spacing or punctuation:

USE 60km/h

USE 12kg

Also see ‘Numbers’ under N.

# Section L

**Layout (in summary)**  These are the main principles of clear layout:

* Comfortable spacing:
* Plenty of white space
* Short well-spaced paragraphs
* Short sections (three or four paragraphs)
* Vertical lists – bulleted or numbered
* Tables, charts and lists to break up dense blocks of text
* Footnotes for extra information that would otherwise overcrowd the text or would be too lengthy to put in brackets
* An easily legible typeface:
* Consistent type, size and style of sans serif font
* Only occasional use of bold and italic in text
* Headings and sub-headings:
* Up to three main levels covering chapter, section and paragraph headings
* Use embedded headings (where you pick out key words in bold) for clarity or emphasis within paragraphs
* In bold and in lower case, with no full stop
* Page numbering:
* In page numbers for reports, the preliminary section uses Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv). Standard page numbering (1, 2, 3) is used from the beginning of the main content of the report.

For more details, see the Layout Section and individual A to Z entries on bold, footnotes, headings, italics, lists and tables.

**LEADER programme** Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Économie Rurale (an EU-funded grant programme supporting sustainable economic and community development in rural areas). Use the acronym only – it is never written in French.

**Learning difficulty** ‘A condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from someone without that condition or malfunction’ (Section 2, Equal Status Act 2000).

USEthe particular difficulty where possible (for example, *children with dyslexia, people with autism*). Prefer *learning difficulty* to *learning disability*.

**Leave to remain** See CIB’s online Glossary of immigration terms.

**Legal terms – capitalisation issues**

* Use lower-case ‘c’ with *court* unless specifying a particular court:

USE *Court of Appeal, Circuit Court*

USE *It lists a number of factors which the Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) or a court should refer to, when deciding what is in the best interests of the child.*

* Use lower case ‘j’ with *judge* unless using title + name:

USE *according to Judge Humphreys*

* Use initial capitals for *Act, Bill* and *Statutory Instrument* even in general references:

USE *consider amendments to the above Acts*

* Use capitals for other terms such as *code of practice* or *article* only if they are linked to a specific piece of legislation:

USE *All citizens shall be held equal before the law (Article 40 of the Constitution).*

**Legislation in references or bibliographies**

* Give the short title of an Act or Regulations as follows:

USE the [*Employment Permits (Amendment) Regulations 2018*](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/70/made/en/pdf) *make changes to the Highly Skilled Eligible Occupations List (HSEOL) and Ineligible Categories of Employment List (ICEL).*

USE *Under the*[*General Data Protection Regulation*](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government_in_ireland/data_protection/overview_of_general_data_protection_regulation.html)*(GDPR) and the*[*Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2018*](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/7/enacted/en/html)*, you have the*[*right to access the personal data held about you*](https://www.garda.ie/en/information-centre/data-protection/)*by An Garda Sióchána.*

* Use initial capitals for *Act, Bill, Article, Regulation, Directive* and *Statutory Instrument* in references, even in non-specific contexts.

*USE: Under the Act, employees can only work on one or more fixed-term contracts for a continuous period of four years.*

* Use lower case ‘s’ for *sections* in general references but upper case ‘S’ when specifying particular sections:

USE *See Section 3 of the* [*Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977-2015*](http://www.lawreform.ie/_fileupload/RevisedActs/WithAnnotations/HTML/EN_ACT_1977_0010.htm)*.*

* When citing EU directives, provide the full reference number:

USE *To date, Directive (EU) 2015/2302 has not been transposed into Irish legislation.*

*When car rental is NOT part of a package or the issue is not covered by Directive (EU) 2015/2302, consumers are protected by other instruments with more general scope, such as Unfair Commercial Practices Directive 2005/29/EC and Directive 93/13/EC on Unfair Terms in Consumer Contracts.*

* Refer to sections of Acts and Statutory Instruments in brackets:

USE *the Immigration Act 2004 (Visas) Order 2014, the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 (Section 33)*

**Less/fewer** See ‘Fewer’ under F .

**LHO** Local Health Office

AVOID *health office, health centre*

**Licence/license** Frequently confused words.*Licence* is a noun, *license* is a verb and adjective:

*USE When your driving licence expires you must renew it if you still want to drive.*

*USE Public Service broadcasting in Ireland is funded by the fee from your television licence.*

*USE Young people under the age of 18 are not allowed in licensed premises during extended hours (except in certain circumstances).*

*USE The Road Safety Authority has responsibility for driver licensing*

**Links**

**Lists**  There are two main types: within sentences and vertical.

Use a **list within the sentence** for a short series of words or brief phrases. In short lists, separate the items with commas; in wordy lists, separate the items with semicolons. Only put a comma or semicolon before the final *and* if it will help with clarity.

**USE *Cash assets****include savings, stocks, shares and securities.*

USE *Further education includes programmes such as:*[*Post-Leaving Certificate*](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational_education_and_training/post_leaving_certificate_courses.html) *courses; the*[*Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme*](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/returning_to_education/vocational_training_opportunities_scheme.html)*(second-chance education for the unemployed); programmes in*[*Youthreach*](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational_education_and_training/youthreach.html)*for early school-leavers; other literacy and basic education; and self-funded evening adult programmes in second-level schools*.

(In this example, a vertical list would be much easier to read, but it might need to be displayed in a sentence for reasons of space.)

Use a **vertical list** to present a longer, more wordy or more complex series of items.

Type 1: Layout guidelines for bullet-point lists that contain complete sentences.

* Start with an introductory phrase or sentence.
* Ensure each item in the list contains one or more full sentences.
* Do not put a line of space before the bullets or numbers begin.
* Use an initial capital at the start of each list item.
* Add a full stop at the end of each sentence in the list.
* Indent the bullets, as in this example.

Example

*If your flight is delayed, the Regulation provides for certain entitlements depending on the length of the delay:*

* *When the flight is delayed for two or more hours (depending on the distance of the flight), passengers must be offered care and assistance free of charge.*
* *When the flight is delayed for more than five hours, passengers may opt for reimbursement of the full cost of the ticket for the part (or parts) of the journey not made.*

Type 2: Layout guidelines for bullet-point lists that do not contain complete sentences. You should:

* Start with an introductory word or phrase
* Ensure each item reads on correctly from the introductory phrase (which is before the colon)
* Not put a line of space before the bullets begin
* Ensure each item uses the same grammatical structure (such as, all phrases or all one-word nouns)
* Use an initial capital at the start of each list item
* Not add any punctuation at the end of the items in the list
* Indent the bullets

Examples:

*A safety order is a court order prohibiting a violent person from:*

* *Using, or threatening to use, violence against you or a dependant*
* *Molesting or frightening you or a dependant*
* *Watching a place where you or a dependant live*

*The cost of driving licences:*

* *Ten-year driving licence — €55*
* *Five-year bus or truck driving licence — €55*
* *Three-year driving licence — €35*
* *One-year driving licence — €25*

Type 3: Use numbers instead of bullets where the order matters. Follow the punctuation rules for bullet-point lists.

*The procedure is designed to deal with claims up to €2,000 and can be summarised as follows:*

1. *The claimant completes the application form and sends it to the*[*Small Claims Registrar*](http://www.courts.ie/Courts.ie/Library3.nsf/pagecurrent/1CB37D1F4D12562B8025810D0037EFDC?opendocument&l=en)*with the relevant fee or applies online.*
2. *The application is registered by the Registrar.*
3. *The Registrar sends a copy of the claim and a Notice of Claim to the respondent.*

**Sub-lists:** Use dashes instead of round bullets to distinguish sub-lists.

Example:

*A customised/dynamic package must include either:*

* *A single contract for all services, or*
* *Separate contracts with different travel service providers, where:*
  + *All the contracts are purchased from a single point of sale (for example, the website/app of one travel organiser).*
  + *All services are selected before the customer signs the agreement to pay.*
  + *There is an inclusive or total price.*

See the Layout Section for more details on using lists.

**Local authority** An administrative branch of local government, such as county and city councils:

USE *local authority housing*

AVOID *county council* (unless referring to a specific council), *CoCo, LA*

**Local Health Office** One of the national network of Health Service Executive (HSE) Local Health Offices:

USE *Local**Health Office (LHO)* when referring to any of the Local Health Offices. Use *Health Service Executive (HSE)* when referring to the national organisation.

Note: do not confuse with *health centre*.

**Lo-call**  Telephone calls charged at local rates from anywhere in the State:

USE *Lo-call 0123 456 7899*

USE *a lo-call phone conversation*

AVOID *Lo call, Locall, LoCall*

**Login**  Write this as one word:

USE *You will receive login details by email.*

USE *Login to your account with your new user name.*

**Long-term** Insert the hyphen when using *long-term* as an adjective, but not when it is a noun:

USE *a long-term project, a long-term arrangement, jobseekers who are long-term unemployed*

USE *recovery over the long term, planning for the long term*

Exception: *Long Term Illness Scheme* does not use the hyphen.

# Section M

**MABS**

* Because the acronym has become better known than the title in full: write the acronym first and the full title in brackets, on the first mention. After that, use the acronym only. Use *the* with the full term but not with the acronym:

USE *MABS (the Money Advice and Budgeting Service) is a free, confidential service. MABS has a national network of offices.*

AVOID *Contact the MABS for advice.*

* Use capitals: *MABS* not *Mabs.*
* Use *money advisers* when referring to the staff of MABS.
* Do not use *the MABS service* because *service* is part of the acronym.

**Maternity Benefit/leave** Use upper case for Maternity Benefit but not for maternity leave.

See also ‘Parental Benefit/parental leave’ under P.

Also see CIB’s online Glossary of employment terms.

**May/might /could/can**

* *May* and *might* are often used interchangeably to suggest possibility. You can use *may* to show something is more likely and *might* when it is not so likely:  
   USE *Delay in payment may result in higher interest charges.*

*USE You should claim a payment as soon as you think you might be entitled to it.*

* *Could* is also used for possibility:

*USE You could be entitled to an extra or a different social welfare payment.*

* *May* is also used to also imply permission but *can* is often better:  
  USE *You can apply online or by post.*
* *Can* in the sense of *able to* often sounds less ambiguous than *may*:

USE *You can choose to live at home but you may prefer to rent accommodation near the college.*

*USE Your employer can refuse your request for time off.*

*USE You can find information on our website.*

* *Might have* and *could have* suggest that the possibility is no longer open:   
  USE *You might have succeeded if you had applied before the closing date.*

**Measurements**

* In tables always write numbers as digits and abbreviate the measurements:

USE 50mm, *10cm, 5kg, 35°C*

* In printed text, write the full form of a unit of measurement the first time you use it, and:
* Spell out the numbers one to nine:   
  USE *three metres, nine kilowatts*
* Use digits for 10 and above:   
  USE *11 millimetres, 160 square metres*
* Use digits for decimals:   
  USE *4.25 miles, 16.3 hectares*
* Note: in scientific terms, *m* stands for ‘milli’ (one-thousandth) while *M* means ‘mega’.

**Media**  *Media* is the plural of *medium*:

USE *Social media are widely used to communicate with customers.*

**Medical card** This is written as lower case:

*USE You may be entitled to a medical card.*

**Memorandum**  The plural is *memorandums* not *memoranda*.

**Mental health** Take care not to use terms that may stigmatise or imply a value judgement.

AVOID *the mentally ill, suffering from mental health problems, afflicted by depression*

USE *people with a mental illness, people with mental health problems, people with depression*

**Mid-**  Use the hyphen except in *midday* or *midnight:*

*USE Christmas, Easter and mid-term breaks are standardised in Irish schools.*

*USE Custom and practice in the workplace can also constitute a term of employment, for example, a mid-morning break of 10 minutes.*

*USE Enrolment takes place around mid-September and again in mid-January.*

**Million and billion** In printed text:

USE *nine million, 10 billion, 6.75 million*

AVOID *9m, ten billion, 10 bn*

USE *millions of litres*

AVOID *1,000,000s of litres*

**Minister**  A politician at the head of a government department. Use capital M when referring to a member of the current Irish Government, but lower-case ‘m’ for former ministers and general references to ministers:

*USE: The Taoiseach and all the ministers collectively are*[*answerable to Dáil Éireann*](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government_in_ireland/national_government/houses_of_the_oireachtas/question_time.html)*.*

*USE: The Government, the Minister for Health and the Department of Health are at the head of the health service.*

**Money**  Use the currency symbol followed by digits. Notice the spacing:

USE *€100, €20.85*

AVOID *100 euros, EUR 20.85*

**Mrs/Miss/Ms**  Use *Ms* unless you are writing to someone who you know prefers *Miss* or *Mrs* (for example, because they signed an email that way).

# Section N

**N/a** Write in lower case: n*/a* means‘not applicable’. Use in tables only.

**Nationality** The legal relationship between a person and a state. Use initial capitals:

USE *Irish, English, French*

**No-one**  has a hyphen.

**Numbers**

The general rules for printed text are:

* Spell out numbers from zero to nine and use digits for 10 and above:   
   USE *seven days’ supply, 11 forms, after six weeks*
* Do not start a sentence with digits. Write it out in full or re-work the sentence:

USE *Twenty students were homeless in 2018.*

USE *In 2018, 20 students were homeless.*

AVOID *20 students were homeless in 2018.*

Online: All numbers are written as digits except the number one. This is because digits are easier to read online. It’s preferable not to begin a sentence with a number in digits:

*USE Your child's sessional service cannot open for 5 days a week. The normal pattern for the free pre-school year is 3.5 hours a day.*

*USE If you are getting maintenance from more than one person, it will be added together and the total will be assessed as means.*

* Ordinal numbers – spell out:

USE *fourth child, thirtieth anniversary*

But use digits in addresses and centuries:

USE *4th floor, 21st century*

AVOID *fourth floor, twenty-first century*

* Use digits with:
* Abbreviated units of measurement in tables or lists:   
  USE *5mm, 60kW, 40mph*
* Dates and times:   
  USE *11 November 1918 at 11am, 3.30pm on 4 July, 12 noon*
* Decimals:   
  USE *5.95, 0.43*
* Money:   
  USE *€65, €5.99*
* USE *57 cent*AVOID *€0.57, .57 euro*
* Page references:   
  USE *See pages 7, 8, 9/See pages 61-63*
* Percentages:   
  USE *6%, a 25% increase*AVOID *6 per cent, six per cent*
* Tables Use digits with abbreviated units of measurement in tables and numerical lists. Also see ‘Tables' under T.
* Fractions – write in words:   
  USE *one-third, three-quarters*AVOID *1/3, 3/4*

Prefer decimals when the fraction includes a whole number:

* + - * + USE *5.75*
        + AVOID *five and three-quarters*
* Hyphens in numbers – use hyphens in numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine; twenty-first to ninety-ninth; and in fractions:

USE *fifty-third place, two-thirds of all claimants*

Also use hyphens when using numbers like this:

USE *a three-month wait, a 65-year-old man, a first-year student*

Also see ‘Hyphens’ under H.

* Measurements – in printed text spell out units of measurement in full on first use:

USE *five miles, 10 kilometres, 15 kilowatts*

In tables and online, use abbreviated forms with digits:

USE *3.8mm, 5cm, 10km, 15kW*

* Money – use the currency symbol and digits:

USE *€38, £50, €10.85*

But spell out cent when it’s used alone*.*

USE *Rounding means that the total amount of a bill will be rounded up or down to the nearest 5 cent.*

* + Number ranges – use the hyphen (not a dash) and do not mix formats.

USE *from 15 to 20, between three and five, aged 16-24 and 60-65*

AVOID *from 15*–*20, between 3–5, aged 16-24, 60 to 65*

* Plural numbers – add ‘s’ to digits but don’t use an apostrophe:

USE *in the 1960s, under 18s, over 50s*

AVOID *in the 1960’s, under 18’s, over 50’s*

* Thousand, million

USE *nine thousand, 15,000, three million* [specific numbers]

USE *3.35 million people*

USE: *thousands of times, millions of litres* [unspecific numbers]

AVOID *9,000, 15k, 3,000,000, three millions*

**Nursing home** Don’t use*old people’s home* or *care home.* The official title of the Fair Deal scheme is the *Nursing Homes Support*Scheme.

# Section O

**Older people**  In general, people over 65:

USE *older people, pensioners*

AVOID *the elderly, old people, old age pensioners, OAPs*

**Ombudsman** The statutory office or person that investigates complaints. It is not a sexist term; it comes from Swedish and means ‘representative’. The plural is ombudsmen (lower case).

USE *The ombudsmen represent the final stage in complaints procedures.*

USE *Contact the Ombudsman if you are not satisfied with the HSE’s response.*

**One-parent family** A person parenting alone with one or more dependent children:

USE *lone parents, parenting alone, solo parenting*

AVOID *one-parent family* except in reference to the *One-Parent Family Payment (OFP)*

**Online**  Write like this, without a hyphen.

**Only**  Take care to position *only* in front of the word or phrase it applies to. For example:

*Applicants must use only the printed form* has a different meaning from *Only applicants must use the printed form.*

**Organisations**

* Use the official name:

USE *Department of Education and Skills*

AVOID *Education Department*

Check citizensinformation.ie for up-to-date information on titles of departments.

* An organisation is a single entity (it) and takes a singular verb:

USE *The Board appoints a planning inspector to prepare a report on the appeal.*

*USE MABS has been guiding people through dealing with problem debt for more than 20 years.*

USE *The Government decides on policy.*

*AVOID The Board appoint a planning inspector to prepare a report on the appeal.*

*AVOID MABS have been guiding people through dealing with problem debt for more than 20 years.*

AVOID *The Government decide on policy*.

# Section P

**Paragraphs**  Keep paragraphs short and to the point: one topic and a maximum of five sentences per paragraph. Paragraphs in informal writing, such as leaflets and online, should generally be shorter.

It can be useful to start each paragraph with an introductory sentence – so readers understand the context from the start. For example:

*Emergency health services in Ireland provide medical attention for illnesses or injuries requiring immediate treatment. Typical examples of injuries that may require emergency health services include those resulting from accidents and heart attacks.*

**Parental Benefit/parental leave** Parental leave is statutory leave for a parent of a natural or adopted child. A [new Parental Benefit Scheme](http://www.welfare.ie/en/pressoffice/Pages/pr051118.aspx) will be introduced, paid at the same rate as Maternity Benefit and Paternity Benefit (from November 2019).

Also see CIB’s online Glossary of employment terms.

**Passive/active voice**

* Use the active voice rather than the passive for most writing. Active verbs can make a sentence shorter, clearer and more straightforward as they show who or what carries out the action:

USE *You can apply online or by post.*

USE *Talk to your GP before you start a new diet.*

AVOID *Applications can be made online or by post.*

AVOID *Your GP should be consulted before a new diet is started.*

* Use the passive voice where the person doing the action is unknown or irrelevant:

USE *Safety equipment is issued as required.*

USE *Food must be labelled at source.*

**Paternity leave**  See ‘Parental Benefit/leave’ under P.

**Pay** Wage or money given in exchange for goods or services. Prefer *pay* to *salary* or *wage.*

**PAYE** Write *PAYE (Pay As You Earn)* on the first mention, then *PAYE:*

*USE Most employees pay tax through the PAYE (Pay As You Earn) system. You can access your PAYE details at ros.ie.*

**Percentages**

* Use *percentage* when writing in general terms, otherwise use the symbol:

USE *A large percentage of homeowners have a mortgage.*

USE *A small percentage of traffic was not compliant.*

USE *Only 3% of homeowners had no mortgage.*

Grammar note on subject/verb agreement: if you can count the subject, treat it as plural (*homeowners are*); if you cannot count the subject, treat it as singular (*information is*).

* Do not start a sentence with a digit – spell out the number or phrase it differently:

USE *Almost 70% pass the test at their first attempt.*

USE *Sixty-eight per cent pass the test at their first attempt.*

USE *At their first attempt, 68% pass their test.*

AVOID *68% pass the test at their first attempt.*

**Persons**  Prefer *people*:

USE *People applying for this payment must attend the office.*

USE *To apply for benefit, you must attend the office.*

AVOID *Persons applying for benefit must attend the office.*

**Phone numbers**  See ‘Contact details’ under C.

**PIN** Personal identification number:

USE *PIN*

AVOID *PIN number, pin number, pin*

**Plain English** Choose words that are short and familiar rather than long or fancy. For example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Avoid** | **Use** |
| expiration | end |
| in respect of  with regard to  regarding | about |
| in receipt of | getting |
| persons  those (who . . .) | people (who . . .) |
| prior to | before |
| remunerative employment | paid work |
| should (for possibility) | if |

Save readers’ time by cutting out unnecessary verbiage. For example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Instead of** | **Use** |
| with effect from | since/from |
| with regard to | about |
| in spite of the fact that | although/despite |
| prior to | before |
| subsequent to | after |
| until such time as | until |
| in a position to | able to/can |
| a number of | several |

Also see Section 2: Writing in plain English.

**PLC** *Post-Leaving Certificate*. Note that there is a hyphen between *Post* and *Leaving*, in our current style.

**Post-primary** Second-level education, following on from primary school:

USE *post-primary education, post-primary level*

AVOID *post-primary school*, *2nd level*

Also see ‘Education system’ under E.

**Post**  You can check the Oxford English Dictionary to see if you need a hyphen. The most common ones you may need are:

USE *postbox, postgraduate, postnatal*

USE *post-date,* *post-mortem, post-paid, post-primary*

**PPS number** Use *PPS number (Personal Public Service Number)* for the first reference in a section and then use *PPS number*.

**Practice/practise** Frequently confused words. *Practice* is a noun (the practice) and *practise* is a verb (she practises):

USE *The Consumer Protection Act put the EU Directive on unfair commercial practices into national law.*

USE *Every solicitor holding a current practising certificate is entitled to administer oaths and to use the title ‘Commissioner for Oaths’.*

USE *CORU handles complaints about the fitness to practise of registered health and social care professionals.*

**Pre**  Check with the Oxford English Dictionary to see if you need a hyphen, when *pre* is a prefix:

USE *preconception, predeceased, prefabricate, prejudge, prepaid, preselect*

USE *pre-budget, pre-contractual, pre-eminent, pre-empt, pre-exist, pre-order, pre-school*

**Precede/proceed** Both are quite formal, so it’s often better to use a plain English equivalent.

*Precede* means ‘come immediately before’:

USE *To be eligible, you must have practised farming in the preceding 10 years.*

*Proceed* means ‘begin’ or ‘carry on’:

USE *You may proceed to the next stage*.

**Pre-school** Nursery school for children under six. Use the hyphen.

**Primary**  Use *primary school* and avoid *first level, 1st level.*

**Principal/principle**

* *Principal* means ‘chief’ or ‘main’ or ‘chief person’:

USE *A notary may notarise documents in the county where their principal office is located and also in some adjoining counties*.

USE *If you think your child is being bullied, you should talk to the class teacher or the principal.*

* *Principle* means a moral standard:

USE *Respect the principles of fair play and free speech.*

**Prior to**  Use plain English instead: *before*.

**Prison**  Use *prison* and avoid *jail* and *gaol* unless it’s the name of a place (such as Kilmainham Gaol).

**Program/programme**  Use *program* only in connection with computing:

USE *computer program*

USE *programme of events, TV programme*

**Public holiday** Two words, both lower case:

USE *the August public holiday*

*Avoid Bank Holiday*

**Pupil** A pupil attendsprimary school. Otherwise, use *student*:

USE *a pupil in primary school*

USE *students in secondary school, college students*

# Section Q

**Qualified adult/child** A qualified adult or child is defined as a dependant when the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection is assessing a social welfare payment.

USE *You may also get an extra amount for your adult dependant (called a qualified adult) which is paid as an increase to your personal payment (called an Increase for a Qualified Adult or IQA).*

USE *You may also get an extra amount for your child called an Increase for a Qualified Child (IQC).*

**Quotations/quote marks**

* Use single quotation marks to enclose quotes from documents or speech:

USE *The guidelines define asbestos abatement as procedures ‘to control fibre release from ACMs in a building’.*

* Use double quotation marks for a quote within a quote:

USE *The judge explained, ‘The Code defines primary residence to include “the only residential property owned by the borrower”.’*

* Don’t put single quotation marks around a word or phrase with a special or technical meaning. Use italics instead:

USE The Department calls this an assessment of the *benefit and privilege* that you get from living with your parents.

USE Transport for Ireland (TFI) has launched a new *Baby on Board* badge campaign.

AVOID *The Department calls this an assessment of the 'benefit and privilege' that you get from living with your parents.*

In certain documents, you can make exceptions to avoid confusion. For example: in this A to Z, single quote marks are used to direct users to other entries because we use italics to give examples.

* Always give the source of quotations:

USE *Employers will not be required to pay if the lack of work was due to ‘unavoidable, exceptional or emergency circumstances’.[[1]](#footnote-1)* (S. 15 of the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017)

USE *A 2018 report considered the ‘liquidity’ of a household by asking ‘Can your household afford an unexpected expense of €985 without borrowing?’*

* A short quotation of up to four lines can be embedded in a paragraph.

USE *The Regulation specifies that the air carrier must display a notice at check-in which is clearly visible to passengers and states, ‘If you are denied boarding or if your flight is cancelled or delayed for at least two hours, ask at the check-in counter or boarding gate for the text stating your rights, particularly with regard to compensation and assistance.’*

* Try to avoid longer quotations but if you must use them, treat a quotation of five or more lines as an extract. Introduce it with a colon, insert a line space before and after, and enclose the whole passage in single quotation marks.

# Section R

**Racial terminology** Be sensitive to what groups of people prefer to be called.

See CIB’s online Glossary of immigration terms.

* **Re-**
* Use *re* with a hyphen when it’s followed by the vowel ‘e’:

USE *re-entry, re-examine*

Or to avoid ambiguity:

USE *re-form a queue, re-sign a form*

* Use *re* without a hyphen before consonants or vowels other than ‘e’ (provided there’s no ambiguity):

USE *rearrange, reiterate, reorder, reuse, reconsider*

**References**

* In a reference list, cite the sources you have consulted or quoted from in your writing. (By comparison, bibliographies list sources of further information, not necessarily ones you have used.)
* Use footnotes at the bottom of the page to give details of the publication referred to.
* Follow the formats shown in these examples:
* Citizens Information Board, *Guide to Entitlements for People with Disabilities* (Dublin, 2018).
* S. Jenkins and J. Rigg, ‘Disability and disadvantage: selection, onset and duration effects’, *Journal of Social Policy*, 35/3 (2013), 479–501.
* Cross-references show where to find further information:
* *See Appendix A*
* *See pages 15–18 for details.*
* For references to legal sources: See ‘Legal terms – capitalisation issues’ under L.

**Referendum** The plural is *referendums* not *referenda*.

**Refugee**  See CIB’s online Glossary of immigration terms.

**Revenue** The statutory body that collects taxes on behalf of the Government. It is not usually given its full title: Office of the Revenue Commissioners. It takes a singular verb:

*USE: Revenue offers a range of methods for paying the tax.*

**RTÉ** Always use the abbreviation with no explanation; do not write it in full. Remember the fada.

# Section S

**Saint**  Abbreviate to *St* (no full stop) in the names of churches and places:

USE *St Mary’s Road, St Stephen’s Green*

**Salary** Use *pay* instead of *salary* or *wages*.

**Schemes** The general rule is to use initial capitals when naming specific schemes, and to use lower case for general references. However, when schemes do not have *scheme* in their title, use lower case:

*USE The Rental Accommodation Scheme is run by local authorities for people getting Rent Supplement for more than 18 months.*

USE *The Rural Social Scheme is an income support scheme for farmers.*

*USE Under the HAP scheme, you can take up full-time employment and keep your housing support.*

**Schools**

USE *primary school, post-primary school*

AVOID *secondary school*

**Self-**  Hyphenate in most cases, but check with the Oxford English Dictionary when in doubt, as there are a few exceptions:

USE *self-assessment tax, self-employed, self-employment, self-defence, self-respect*

**Semicolon**

* Use a semicolon to join two or more related sentences into one, where you feel a full stop would be too abrupt or you want to emphasise a link between the two clauses. It’s viewed as quite a formal punctuation mark and so is useful mainly in reports.

USE *Many clients have more than one sort of debt; MABS advisers take each client’s case as a whole and try to find the right solution for their particular situation.*

* An alternative to a semicolon (for less formal writing) is a dash – or a linking word such as *and*, *but* or *because*:

USE *Open a basic payment account – it’s a convenient and safe way to keep your money.*

USE *Open a basic payment account because it’s a convenient and safe way to keep your money.*

* Use semicolons in place of commas in lists where items already include commas:

USE *These developments include house-building; the construction of roads, bridges or wastewater treatment works; and the use of land for waste disposal*.

USE *They have published reports* *in the areas of*[*retirement*](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/retirement/older_people_and_working/retirement_age_in_ireland.html)*and age discrimination; discrimination by religious, medical and educational institutions on religious grounds; and indirect discrimination.*

Also see the Punctuation Section.

**Sentence length**  Try to limit a sentence to one or two facts or ideas. Aim for an average of 15 words when you want to create a conversational tone, for example in some leaflets and informal emails. Stick to a maximum of 25 words in most writing (although sentences can be a little longer in formal reports, if required).

Two or three shorter sentences are clearer than one long one:

USE *The Government has adopted a national framework that aims to ensure that population growth is sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms. Within this framework, it has therefore set objectives to guide future development. These include creating a million new jobs and building half a million new homes.*

AVOID *The Government has adopted a national framework that aims to ensure that population growth is sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms, and within this framework has therefore set objectives to guide future development, which include creating a million new jobs and building half a million new homes.*

**Sentence lists**

* Use a list within a sentence for a short series of words or brief phrases. You can use a colon if you want to emphasise that it’s a list. Separate the items with commas:

**USE *Cash assets****include savings, stocks, shares and securities.*

USE *Essential documents to take: your passport, tickets and insurance certificate.*

* Use semicolons instead of commas where the listed items are phrases that already contain commas. Put a comma or semicolon before the final ‘and’ only if you need to avoid ambiguity or want to improve clarity:

USE *In 2017, for example, permissions were granted for: 6,268 new dwellings; 7,941 ‘other’ developments; 7,437 extensions; and 3,437 alterations and conversions.*

USE *The rules apply to parents and children; teachers; pupils and classroom assistants; and library staff.*

* Ensure that the list items have a matching grammatical structure (such as all nouns or all verbs). This makes them easy to take in on first reading. This rule is called parallelism:

USE *You will be required to bring your bank statements, the final response letter and photo ID.*

AVOID *You will be required to bring your bank statements and final response letter and don’t forget photo ID.*

**Short-term**  Written with a hyphen as an adjective, but without a hyphen as a noun:

*USE  A visit or holiday visa is for a short-term stay and will not exceed a maximum of 90 days.*

*USE Some arrangements are short term – this means that they have a specific duration that will expire at some point in the future.*

**Sick** Being unwell:

USE *sick leave, Illness Benefit*

AVOID *sick benefits, illness leave*

**Since/because**  *Since* can be ambiguous, so prefer *as* or *because*:

*USE Jobseeker’s Benefit is not taxable if you are getting it because your hours at work are temporarily reduced.*

*AVOID The dismissal is fair, since you have been given a chance to improve your conduct.*

**Since/from**  *Since* indicates something is still continuing. *From* is used for a future event or one that has been completed.

USE *Since 1 December 2017, self-employed people who have paid sufficient class S PRSI contributions are entitled to Invalidity Pension.*

USE *From 1 January 2019, the national minimum wage for an experienced adult employee will be €9.80 an hour.*

**Slash**

* Use the forward slashin certain well-established phrases and abbreviations: *c/o* [in addresses]*, n/a* [in forms or tables], *120 km/h*
* Do not use the slash to replace ‘*and*’ or ‘*or*’ as it can be ambiguous
* Don’t put spaces before/after slashes:
* USE *You are entitled to carer’s leave or parental leave or both.*
* AVOID *You are entitled to carer’s/parental leave.*

**Social assistance payment** The general term for means-tested social welfare payments for people without enough PRSI contributions for a social insurance payment, such as Jobseeker’s Allowance. Capitalise the title of a specific payment:

USE *social assistance payment* for general references

USE *Jobseeker’s Allowance, Carer’s Allowance, Supplementary Welfare Allowance*

**Social insurance payment** The general term for social welfare payments for people with a certain level of PRSI contributions. Capitalise the title of a specific payment:

USE *social insurance payment* for general references

USE *Jobseeker’s Benefit, Maternity Benefit, Carer’s Benefit*

**Social security payment** The general term for payments based on social insurance contributions made in another State. You will need to give an explanation.

**Social Welfare Branch Office** One ofthe national network of social welfare offices run by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP).

AVOID: *social welfare local office*

Also see ‘Intreo’ under I.

**Social welfare payment** The general term for any payment from the DEASP. Use *social welfare payment* for general references, otherwise name the specific type of payment.

**Spacing**  Insert one space after a full stop, not two.

**Special educational needs** Only use this term in describing the entitlements of people with intellectual disability under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 and the specific services provided by Department of Education and Skills covered by that Act.

USE *special educational needs*

AVOID *special needs, special education needs*

AVOID *handicapped, mentally handicapped*

Also see ‘Intellectual disability’ under I.

**Spell check** Make sure the Irish spell check is set as the default on your computer. To do this, click on the language listed on the status bar in the bottom of your screen, and choose English (Ireland) and then click ‘Set as default’:

**sq** square (a unit of area measurement):

USE *125sq m* in tables and lists

**State**  Give *State* a capital ‘S’ when it refers to Ireland but not when you use it for other countries:

USE throughout the State

USE State exams/State schemes

USE Minister of State

USE The [Irish Constitution](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government_in_ireland/irish_constitution_1/constitution_introduction.html) establishes and describes the main institutions of the State. The power to run the State is divided into three separate powers.

AVOID throughout the country

**Student** A person attending a post-primary school or third-level educational institution – also in further or community education:

USE *student in secondary school, college student*

USE *pupil in primary school*

See also ‘Pupil’ under P.

**Sub-lists**  Try to avoid nesting lists within lists as they can become difficult for readers to keep track of. If you do need to make a sub-list within a bulleted list, use dashes instead of bullets to differentiate it from the primary list.

USE *A customised travel package must include either:*

* *A single contract for all services, or*
* *Separate contracts with different travel service providers, where:*
  + *All the contracts are purchased from a single point of sale*
  + *All the services are selected before the customer signs the agreement to pay*

**Such as** Use *such as* when you want to give an example. Avoid *e.g.* as it may cause confusion. In general, it’s better to write *for example* or *such as*:

USE   *There will be a jury in some civil cases, such as defamation and assault cases.*

*USE Voluntary public hospitals are sometimes owned by private bodies (for example, religious orders).*

Do not use *and so on* with phrases that introduce a limited list, such as *include,* *such as* and *for example*.

**Suicide** Take care with the phrasing:

USE *died by suicide*

AVOID *committed suicide, killed themselves*

**Surviving civil partner** The civil partner of a deceased person:

USE *The surviving civil partner may claim certain social welfare payments.*

# Section T

**Tables**  Use tables to present numerical data more clearly and succinctly than would be possible in a list or in normal text. Tables should make sense to people who don’t read any accompanying text. Our style:

* Every table must have a clear, concise, explanatory heading. It can be placed above the table or in the first row.
* Put the table heading and column headings in bold.
* Use initial capitals only for the first word (except for proper nouns, such as DEASP payments, which all use initial capitals).
* All headings and text should be left-aligned.
* A column of payments in euro should be right-aligned. Other figures should be left-aligned.
* Only familiar abbreviations such as *n/a, min.* or *max.* may be used.Otherwise, write words in full.
* For numerical data, show units of currency or measurement as digits rather than words.
* Put any symbols, such as €, in the heading rather than with each digit.
* Put footnotes directly below the table.
* Try to fit a table onto one page. But if this proves impossible, repeat the column headings in the continuation.

For example:

| **State Pension (Contributory) rates from 30 March 2018 for people who qualified for pensions before 1 September 2012** | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Yearly average PRSI contributions** | **Personal rate per week, €** | **Increase for a qualified adult (under 66), €** | **Increase for a qualified adult (aged 66 and over), €** |
| 48 or over | 243.30 | 162.10 | 218.00 |
| 20-47 | 238.50 | 162.10 | 218.00 |
| 15-19 | 182.50 | 121.60**\*** | 163.50**\*** |
| 10-14 | 121.70 | 81.10**\*** | 109.00**\*** |

**\***These qualified adult rates apply to claims made from 6 April 2001.

**Technical terms** These are words with specific meanings which might not be easily understood by everyone. They are sometimes referred to as jargon. When using technical terms, ensure you provide an explanation in plain English.

USE *No legal aid is available for:*

* *Defamation claims (where a person's reputation has been damaged as a result of libel or slander)*
* *Land disputes (disputes concerning rights and interests in or over land)*
* *Licensing (publicans’ licences)*
* *Conveyancing (the legal transfer of a property from one party to another)*

Also see Section 2: Writing in plain English.

**Taoiseach** Head of the Irish Government. Use an initial capital:

USE *An Taoiseach (+ name)*

*USE The President has the power to dissolve the Dáil on the advice of the Taoiseach.*

**TD** Member of the lower house of the Oireachtas. The abbreviation is almost always used alone, with no full stops:

USE *TD* but explain the term in English if you think it may be unclear for some readers. USE *TD (Teachta Dála)* for the first reference in relevant articles on the Constitution.

**Telephone numbers** See ‘Contact details’ under C.

**That/which**To define what you are writing about, use *that*. To describe, or to add extra information, use *which.* Below, the first sentence defines which plans will be considered, the second describes (or tells you more about them).

Examples

1. *The manager will consider the plans that the team submitted last week.*
2. *The manager will consider the plans, which the team submitted last week.*

Note the punctuation. When you are using *which*, use a comma before it (and after it too, if the sentence continues):

USE *The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission, which replaced the National Consumer Agency, deals with consumer rights.*

*USE*  *Here we give general guidelines that may help you to avoid problems when you purchase a used car.*

USE *The following information describes the main organisations that can inform you of your rights as a consumer.*

When using *which*, check that the sentences will still make perfect sense if you delete the clause inside commas.

**Third level** The level of education provided by universities, institutes of technology and the equivalent. The hyphen is only used when *third level* is an adjective:

USE *third-level education, third-level institution*

USE *studying at third level*

AVOID *3rd level*

**Those who** Don’t use *those who;* use *people who*:

*USE: There are a number of social welfare payments for people who are sick or who have a disability.*

**Thousand**

* Use a comma:

USE Over *9,000 people applied for the new scheme.*

* In non-specific phrases, use words and treat *thousands* as plural:

USE *thousands of miles*

AVOID *1,000s of litres*

* Do not use the abbreviation *k*:

USE *a grant of €450,000*

AVOID *a grant of €450k*

**Time of day**

* Use digits with *am* and *pm* and no space.Do not use the 24-hour clock. For a time period, use a hyphen not a dash: *9am-1pm.*

USE *9am to 3.45pm*

USE *5-7pm*

AVOID *09.00-15.45*

AVOID *17:00 to 19:00*

* To avoid ambiguity:

USE *12 midnight, 12 noon*

AVOID *12am, 12pm*

**Titles of publications**

When referring to publications such as books, booklets, guides and leaflets, use this style:

* Italicise the entire title. Only italicise *the* if it’s part of the title:

USE The *Oxford Manual of Style* includes the *Dictionary for Writers and Editors.*

USE You can find information in Revenue's publication [*A Guide to Savings-Related Share Option Schemes.*](https://www.revenue.ie/en/additional-incomes/documents/guide-to-savings-related-share-option-schemes.pdf)

* Use initial capitals for the first word and all the main words of a title and subtitle, but lower case for words like *the, a, in, our, and.*
* Do not italicise if you are using the title as a link, when writing online or in an email.

Also see ‘Bibliographies’ under B and ‘References’ under R.

**Total Contributions Approach** Write it out in full on first mention and then use the abbreviation:

USE *This new way of calculating pension rates is called the Total Contributions Approach (TCA).*

**Travellers** Use capital T:

USE *the Traveller community, growing up among Traveller children*

AVOID *travellers – except when referring to passengers*

# Section U

**UK** United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland):

USE *UK*, when referring to the four countries above as a group

USE *trade with the UK, the UK government*

AVOID *The UK and Northern Ireland*

**Underlining**  Do not underline anything as it could be mistaken for a web link.

**US** United States of America:

USE the *US, the United States*

AVOID *The USA, America*

**Use/utilise** Always choose *use,* neve*r utilise***:**

USE *CIB may use this data in its report*.

AVOID *CIB may utilise this data in its report.*

# Section V

**Verbal/oral agreements** or **contracts** Do not use *verbal* agreement. For agreements made by speaking and not put into writing, use *spoken* agreement where possible. If you need to refer to an oral agreement or contract, explain that you mean it is spoken:

USE Contracts may be written or spoken (oral). It is easier to know what the terms are in a written contract but an oral contract is also enforceable in law.

**Vertical lists** Use vertical lists – with bullet points or numbers – to organise long, complex or repetitive information. They can help to make the information more accessible.

See ‘Lists’ under L for detailed information.

# Section W

**Web/website**  Both start with a lowercase *w*. When providing a website address in printed materials, such as guides, do not write www.

*USE You can apply online at revenue.ie*

USE In contact details – *Web: citizensinformation.ie*

*USE The Citizens Information Board provides the Citizens Information website, citizensinformation.ie, and supports the voluntary network of Citizens Information Centres and the Citizens Information Phone Service.*

In an email or online, make the word a link instead of writing the address (the URL):

*USE You can apply online at revenue.ie.* [and Revenue is the link]

**Whether/if**

* Use *whether*:
* To introduce an indirect question:

USE *Contact your money adviser to find out whether your bank has contacted them.*

* To imply an alternative:

USE *Consumer rights apply, whether you shop in a store or online.*

* Use *if* for a condition or possibility (and don’t use *should* because it’s over-formal):

USE *If you buy it in a shop, keep the receipt.*

USE *If your application is refused, you may be able to appeal the decision.*

AVOID *Should you have any difficulty, please contact your local Citizens Information Centre.*

**While/whereas**

* Use *while* to mean *at the same time as*:

USE *Fill in the form while you’re waiting for your appointment.*

* Use *whereas* to contrast situations:

USE *Alternative care with a family is sometimes available for children with disabilities, whereas institutional care is usually provided for older people.*

USE *A separation agreement is reached through agreement between the parties, whereas a court grants a judicial separation or a divorce.*

**Widow/widower** When you use*widowed person, widow* or *widower* – remember to include the *surviving civil partner:*

*USE The Widowed or Surviving Civil Partner Grant is available to widows, widowers or surviving civil partners who have one or more dependent children living with them at the date of death.*

**Wordiness**  See ‘Plain English’ under P and Section 2: Writing in plain English.

**Worldwide** It is one word with no hyphen. *International* is often used instead.

**Workplace** It is one word with no hyphen.

# Section Y

**You** Address the readers directly as *you,* whenever possible. This usually makes information sound clearer, simpler and easier to take in.

USE *You must be unemployed to get Jobseeker’s Allowance.*

USE *If you are self-employed, you may be entitled to Jobseeker’s Allowance, depending on your income from your business.*

USE *You may need a licence to keep a horse.*

AVOID *People claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance must be unemployed.*

AVOID *People who are self-employed may be entitled to Jobseeker’s Allowance, depending on their income from their business.*

AVOID *A licence may be required by people wishing to keep a horse.*

**Young *people*** Young people are 16 and 17 years old (and children are under 16):

*USE The maximum working week for young people aged 16 and 17 is 40 hours with a maximum of eight hours a day.*

*USE Children aged 15 may do eight hours a week of light work in school-term time.*

# Section Z

**Zero**  The plural is *zeros.*

1. S. 15 of the Bill [↑](#footnote-ref-1)