



# Editorial Style Guide



government  
communications

Department:  
Government Communication and Information System  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

## 1. GOLDEN RULES FOR GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATORS

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- Government publications should provide a balanced presentation without bias, distortion, undue emphasis or omission. Any defamatory information based on hearsay or unsubstantiated allegations or claims is prohibited.
- In reporting and commenting, all government publications should be fair, honest and considerate.
- Produce well-researched information based on facts.
- Check all facts, figures, dates, citations, titles, initials and the spelling of names.
- All sources of information, unless stated otherwise, must always be acknowledged.
- Do not copy text from other sources without acknowledging the source. Always acknowledge the source or original report you are referring to.
- In any piece of writing, bear in mind the five *Ws* and an *H* (*what, where, who, when, why and how*). Answer these questions to make sure you have covered everything.
- Defamatory, racist, gender-insensitive, blasphemous or offensive material is prohibited.
- Avoid using gender-sensitive words. Use *Ms* instead of *Miss* and *Mrs*, *chairperson* instead of *chairman* and *chairwoman/lady*, and *spokesperson* instead of *spokesman*, also *police officer, fire officer and staff nurse* (instead of *sister*).
- The introduction must be brief and logical – and less than 30 words.
- Your writing should be brief and clear:
  - » Use direct expressions and avoid unnecessary words and phrases.
  - » Use the correct word order to avoid ambiguity.
  - » Punctuate sentences correctly.
  - » Use short sentences and simple language that everybody can understand.
  - » Use simple vocabulary: *often* not *frequently*, use not *utilise, put into operation, not operationalise*.
  - » Avoid redundant words that repeat what the initial words stand for: *ATM machine, HIV virus, PIN numbers, ID document, ISBN number*, etc.
  - » Avoid redundant phrases or words such as *begin to be seen to, basically, in terms of, essentially, in accordance with, in regards to, on a ... basis*, etc.
  - » Every sentence must have a verb. Sentences can be either active or passive, e.g. *The professor teaches the students* (active); *The students are taught by the professor* (passive). Try to use active verbs where possible. Avoid nounisms (nouns derived from verbs) wherever possible: *inform* not *information, govern* not *government, invest* not *make an investment in*. (See sections 3 and 6.3 below.)
- Use *the* to precede a noun when referring to a specific or known instance: *the former President of South Africa, Mr Nelson Mandela*. Use *a* or *an* when referring generally: *a former president, a commuter, an ATM. I'm looking for an ATM; the ATM you need is around the corner* illustrates the difference in usage between *a* and *an* in direct speech.
- In formal or official writing, write out words in full: *was not* instead of *wasn't*.
- Double-check your work for correct spelling and punctuation.
- Use double quotation marks. "..." For quotes within a quote, use double outer quotation marks and single inner quotes.
- Spell out all abbreviations the first time you use them, with the abbreviation in parentheses; and abbreviate thereafter. Use capital letters for abbreviations (e.g. *CSIR, HSRC*), but upper and lower case for acronyms (e.g. *Nepad, Cosatu*) ("If it's spoken like a word, use the lower-case acronym form; if one letter at a time is pronounced, use upper case"). Note that there are exceptions to this rule (e.g. *AsgiSA, dplg, AIDS*, etc.).
- Use stops in abbreviations such as e.g., i.e., etc., Adm., Brig., Col., Gen.
- Spell out numbers from one to nine; use figures from 10 upward. Exception: when there's a string of three or more numerals in a single paragraph, then, to make comparison easier, make them all figures.
- Write decimal and negative numbers as numerals: 3,3 and -4. Use the decimal comma, not the decimal point: 17,4 million.
- Do not begin a sentence with a numeral: either spell out the number or rewrite the sentence to move the number from the beginning. Hyphenate written-out numbers from *twenty-one* to *ninety-nine*. Do not hyphenate *one hundred, two hundred*, etc. Hyphenate ages in the form of *four-year-old, 16-year-olds*, etc. Note: two hyphens, not one.
- Use numerals with *million* (*The deal was worth R4 million*), but use a hyphen when it is used adjectivally (*It was a R4-million deal*).
- No space between number and %, e.g. 5% or between number and °, e.g. 16°.
- The SI (metric) system requires a space to be inserted between numerals and symbols: 5 kg, 150 km, 60 s and 18 °C. Only symbols derived from proper nouns (names) should be upper case: *K* (the kelvin), *Pa* (the pascal), etc.
- Use a space, not commas, to indicate thousands: 3 000, 20 000.
- Date format: 19 November 2010.
- Reported speech is written in the past tense: *The minister said that she was considering amending the Act ...*

- Avoid using too many adjectives and adverbs. These may be used to a limited extent in subjective stories or essays, usually published under a byline (e.g. in internal newsletters), but not in official brochures, posters, etc.
- All titles (e.g. *Dr, Mr, Ms, Rev.*, etc.) must be acknowledged at all times.
- *Mr, Mrs, Miss* and *Dr* do not take a full stop because the last letter is also the last letter of the title. Titles such as *Prof.* and *Rev.* do take a full stop because the word is cut off in the middle.
- Words from languages other than South Africa's 11 official languages must be written in italics.
- Use British, not American, spelling (e.g. *apologise* not *apologize*, *programme* not *program* (except for *computer program*), *centre* not *center*, *colour* not *color*).

#### Standard reference tools:

*Butcher's Copy-editing (4th edition, 2008)*

*G.V. Carey Mind the Stop: A Brief Guide to Punctuation (Penguin, 1980)*

*Martin Manser Collins Dictionary for Writers and Editors (2007)*

*New Hart's Rules (2005)*

*New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors (2005)*

*Oxford Manual of Style (2002)*

*South African Concise Oxford Dictionary (2002; 2nd edition, 2010)*

## 2. CHECKLISTS FOR VARIOUS FORMS OF WRITING

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### 2.1 Writing a communication strategy

The following is the official format for writing a communication strategy:

- background
- objectives
- environment
- communication challenges
- messages and themes
- messengers, audiences and channels, types of event
- a phased communication programme
- structures and processes
- action plan, including budget implications.
- Use decimal numbering. Indent subcategories such as *1.1*, with a further indentation for subsequent subcategories, such as *1.1.2*. After this level, use *a, b, c* or *bullets*. This allows for easier reference.

1

1.1

1.2

1.2.1

1.2.2

1.2.3

a

b

c

1.3

2

- The complete guideline on strategising for communication is available from the GCIS Project Desk.

### 2.2 Writing articles

A successful article includes:

- a title
- author's byline
- abstract (maximum of 100 words)
- a clear introductory paragraph that answers the five *Ws* and an *H* (*what, where, who, when, why* and *how*). Keep it short. It should contain the thesis statement
- a coherent and logical development of ideas
- subheadings that act as "signposts" to the reader, indicating the content to follow

- the correct facts and details
- simple language and sentences
- a powerful concluding paragraph that draws together the main ideas (it must *conclude*, not just summarise)
- a readable layout
- perfect grammar and spelling
- footnotes or endnotes, where necessary.

### 2.3 Writing reports

A report is always written for a specific audience and has a definite purpose. Reports are often used to help in decision-making. Reports:

- have clearly defined sections
- are clearly and logically written and organised
- are objective and use a formal, impersonal style
- are based on careful research and facts
- do not use:
  - abbreviated grammar (*can't, shouldn't*, or sentences without subjects or finite verbs)
  - first-person reporting (*I, me, we*)
  - colloquialisms or slang
  - jargon that any potential readers will not understand
  - opinions.

The traditional format of reports is as follows:

- title page
- terms of reference (brief)
- summary of the report ("executive summary"), which must comprise one sentence per section of the report
- table of contents
- introduction giving the background and listing the aims
- main text of the report, subdivided into sections, if the report is long
- finding(s)
- conclusion(s)
- recommendation(s) (if appropriate)
- list of sources consulted
- appendices.

Each of these should be the subheading for each section of a report.

### 2.4 Writing proposals

A proposal is similar to a report, but it is a document intended to motivate or persuade the reader. The format of a preliminary proposal is usually:

- a statement of the problem and objectives
- methods to be used and recommendations
- projected costs.

The traditional format of a full proposal is the following:

- title page
- table of contents
- summary of the proposal (one sentence per section)
- background to the research
- proposed action to be taken
- project budget
- schedule of work with time frames and deadlines
- evaluation of the anticipated success of the project
- appendices (as necessary).

Each of these should be the subheading for each section of a report.

## 2.5 Writing minutes

Minutes are not a verbatim account of proceedings, but a written record of decisions taken.

They may serve as a legal document and should therefore be accurate.

Minutes ensure that proposed actions and responsibilities are recorded and therefore they should have an action and deadline column in which the person responsible for an agreed action and the deadline are recorded.

Minutes should:

- be governed in their form by the agenda for the meeting
- be concise (without being too brief)
- indicate the date, time and place of the meeting, list the names of those present and who absented themselves, and indicate who presided over the meeting
- cover all the major points discussed
- be objective, factual and not contain opinions about matters or people
- be accurate, so that there can be no argument or misinterpretation
- be detailed regarding all contracts and financial matters, appointments to positions, authorised actions and resolutions passed
- be written in the past tense (*The matter was raised, debated, noted on, passed unanimously*)
- contain a list of actions to be taken and by whom and when, as well as decisions made, at the end of the minutes.

## 2.6 Writing business correspondence

Business correspondence is often the only communication people have with an organisation. Any written communication serves as a legal document. Correspondence includes business letters, memos and e-mails.

### 2.6.1 Business letters

- Must always be written on a letterhead.
- They follow a fixed format: writer's address; recipient's address; date; greeting (Dear ...), subject line, body of letter, salutation, signature and name of writer.
- Use simple language and short sentences and paragraphs.
- Ideas must flow logically, stating the main point of the letter up front, followed by supporting statements.
- Use link words (first, second; therefore; conversely; in addition; consequently; however, etc.) to connect ideas and statements between sentences and paragraphs.
- Write a clear, brief and meaningful subject line and put the most important information first.
- Never use jargon, clichés or abbreviations.
- Do not rely on your spellchecker (trail, trial; may, many; it's, its are all legitimate, but could be a misspelling) – always read the documents through and check for errors, especially spelling errors.
- End off with a pleasant, positive final paragraph, if possible.

### 2.6.2 Memos

- Memos are used internally between colleagues and departments to pass on information and request action, or they serve as a record or reminder.
- They follow a fixed format.
- Memos use brief, clear writing and a friendly tone, without being colloquial.

### 2.6.3 E-mails

- Give a suitable, clear subject line so that the recipient knows immediately what it's about.
- Use full sentences, short, logical paragraphs and correct punctuation.
- Preferably limit the message to one idea per paragraph, otherwise some ideas might not be read.
- Confirm with recipients beforehand whether they want an attachment e-mailed.
- Print and file all messages that contain instructions or policy decisions.
- Double-check whether recipients have received their e-mails by following up with an e-mail request.

### 3. USING PLAIN LANGUAGE

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It is important to follow plain language principles when writing documents and corresponding. These are set out in the section below.

#### 3.1 Do not assume your reader will understand what you know

In fact, accept that they will not understand what you will be conveying. This way, you'll explain or describe it simply and clearly and make sure that all technical or difficult terms and concepts are explained or glossed. Whenever possible, use simpler words and shorter sentences, because these make it easier for readers to access information.

#### 3.2 Write as you speak

- This does not mean you should use slang, bad grammar or poor English, but you can use a more personal tone to address your readers.
- By using personal references such as *we* and *you*, readers will feel that you are talking to them personally: not "Your letter of 3 May refers" but "I write in response to your letter of 3 May".
- If you use words that are too difficult for or not familiar to your readers, you will frighten them off or make them feel inadequate: not "remuneration" but "pay"; not "take cognisance of" but "consider".
- If you use over-long sentences, you will either intimidate them or frighten them off, because long sentences not only look daunting but are also difficult to access. (On average, your sentences should be between 10 and 13 words long for Grade 12 and first year university students.)

#### 3.3 Plan before you write

- Plan what you are going to write before you start. The more you plan, the more organised and effective your writing will be.
- Write a skeleton outline or a mind-map of the main points you know you must cover. Get them in the correct order first, then flesh them out into logically arranged sentences and paragraphs.
- Asking questions is a good way to plan. For example:

*Who am I writing for? (reader-centredness)*

- Who are my readers? Look at factors such as age, gender, culture and education. Your answer to this question will determine your word choice, sentence length and level of abstraction.
- What do they need to know?
- Do I need to address problems they might have with the information?
- Will they understand the technical terms I use? If not, and if I can't avoid them, should I gloss them somehow?
- What is their attitude to the topic? Favourable or hostile?
- Have I answered all their questions?

*Why am I writing?*

- What am I trying to achieve with my writing? Describe? Explain? Justify? Convince? Defend? Or simply respond to a question or a set of questions?
- Will I be able to achieve my aim with the information I have or do I need to gather more information?
- What response do I want from my readers once they finish reading my document?
- Will my readers be clear about what I want once they finish reading my document?

*What is the most important point?*

- What is the most important thing I want my readers to know? How do I ensure it is communicated clearly and strongly?
- Am I clear about the central issue of my document? Have I given it sufficient prominence?
- Am I going to overload my readers if I give them all the details of my research? If yes, then either summarise the salient points briefly or relegate it to an appendix or eliminate the detail completely.
- Can I cut out some of the information? Identify information that can be deleted (and be ruthless in doing so).
- What is the one thing I want my readers to remember? What technique do I employ to ensure that this happens?

#### 3.4 Principles of writing in plain language

- Write informative headings and subheadings to guide your reader and to whet their appetite.
- Use plain (i.e. simpler) words: "try", not "endeavour"; "place side by side", not "juxtapose".
- Avoid jargon and clichés: they often contain "hidden" meaning that not everyone can access. For example, what does "as the crow flies" mean literally? And "to leave no stone unturned"? Phrases such as "in terms of" and "over and above" are also

clichés that should be avoided.

- Minimise the use of acronyms (Unisa) and abbreviations (SADC). If you want to use an abbreviation or an acronym, write out the word in full and put the contracted term in brackets after it, or use a glossary to give their meanings.
- Get rid of needless words: “a necessary prerequisite” should be reduced to “a prerequisite”; “set up and established” should be reduced to either “set up” or “established”; use “about” or “of” instead of “in terms of”.
- Use the active voice: “I will repair your watch.”, not “Your watch will be repaired by me.”
- Use strong verbs: “I’d like to cooperate with you”, not “Cooperation with you will be good”; “He wants an assistant.”, not “An assistant is wanted by him.”
- Write short sentences and paragraphs: for example, at Grade 12 and first year university level, sentence length should average between 10 and 13 words! Place a limit of one main thought per paragraph.
- Use vertical lists and tables. These make text visually appealing and much clearer.
- Give texts a clear layout and display features on a page that give clues to the content and encourage further reading.

## 4. ENGLISH GRAMMAR TROUBLE-SHOOTING

### 4.1 Parts of speech

In this section, we cover aspects of the usage of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and articles – particularly those aspects that typically give writers and editors trouble. Typical problem areas are highlighted, where necessary, and correct forms given.

#### 4.1.1 Nouns

A noun is a word used for naming objects such as people, animals, places or things: Harry, cat, Pofadder, store, ladder, Prime Minister.

Problem areas: mass vs count nouns; classical vs modern plurals; group nouns: singular or plural?; nouns in apposition; capital letters or not?

- *Mass vs count nouns*

Nouns such as water, sugar and sand are known as mass nouns – you can’t count any of them. When we ask questions about them, we ask, for example, “How much ...?” And we also use “less” when comparing one mass to another: “There is less sand in this bucket than in that bucket.” Similarly, we talk about the “amount” of a mass noun: “They’ve delivered a large amount of sand to the building site.” And we also use “much” in connection with mass nouns: “How much water do you drink every day?”

Nouns such as marbles, coins, bottles and people are known as count nouns – you can count individual items. When we ask questions about them, we ask “How many ...?” And we also use “fewer” when comparing one mass to another: “There are fewer people here today than there were yesterday.” Similarly, we talk about the “number” of a count noun: “A large number of people attended her funeral.” And we also use “many” in connection with count nouns: “How many bottles of water should I put out?”

**Tip:** Make sure whether a noun is mass or count before you use it in these contexts. A common error, for example, is to write of “A large amount of people” and “I have fewer water than you” and “There are less pens in that box than in this one.”

- *Classical vs modern plurals*

English has inherited many nouns from classical Latin and Greek. While such words have retained their classical spellings (including plural forms), a large number have acquired “modern” spellings over time. Unless we know the roots of some words, we’re likely to get their singular and plural forms wrong. Nowadays, we’ll find both stadia (classical) and stadiums (modern) as plural forms of stadium, for instance. We must be careful, however, not to apply this convention to ALL nouns of classical origin.

Singular	Classical plural	Modern plural
stadium	stadia	stadiums
forum	fora	forums
criterion	criteria	criteria (not criterias)
phenomenon	phenomena	phenomena (not phenomenas)
virus	virī	viruses
bacterium	bacteria	bacteria (not bacterias)
medium	media	media/mediums*

datum	data	data+
formula	formulae (in science)	formulas (generally)
stigma	stigmata	stigmata/stigmas

- \* Mediums are people who communicate between the dead and the living. Media are things like newspapers, magazines, radio, television and billboards. Media should always be used as a plural noun: *The media are going to be present at the launch of the project.* (not “media is”)
- \* Generally, data is plural (data are); in IT, though, data is singular (data has).

**Tip:** Memorise the correct modern singular and plural forms. For more about plurals, see also section 6.2 Plurals.

- *Group nouns: singular or plural?*

Are nouns such as board, committee, company, province, team and university singular or plural? Well, they can be either depending upon the context. Context determines whether the entity as a whole or the individual components are being described. For example, on two newspaper posters we read:

*Province gets clean audit* (singular)  
*Province take on Blue Bulls* (plural)

In the first sentence, “province” is singular because it refers to an entity, the provincial government. In the second sentence, “province” is plural because all the individual members are being referred to. Now consider these two sentences:

*England expects every man to do his duty.*  
*England are playing well at present.*

The first sentence refers to “England” the country (an entity; or it is symbolical of the English people). In the second sentence, “England” refers to the individual players who comprise the team. But we could also read, quite correctly, “England is top of the league this season.” Here the team, the entity, is meant.

**Tip:** To test for singular or plural, insert “the members of (the)” before the noun. If the insertion reads correctly, then the plural form is intended in that context.

- *Nouns in apposition*

When we place two nouns that refer to the same person or thing side by side, we call this arrangement “appositional”:

*Mr Jones, the baker, is our neighbour.*  
*Novelist Susan Rees is our friend.*

In both sentences, we have two descriptions of the same person – their name and their title or job description – side by side. Jones and baker, and novelist and Susan Rees are nouns, and by placing them this close together (either with or without a pair of commas – a pair, note) writers create what is called “nouns in apposition”. It’s a useful way of writing briefly.

Note that an appositional structure is different from a structure such as *Mr Jones, who is a baker, is our neighbour.* “who is our baker” is called an adjectival clause (which tells us more about Jones), rather than two nouns side by side.

- *Titles: Initial capital letter or not?*

It’s helpful to apply this general rule: if the title precedes a person’s name, or if it is the full or official title of someone or something, then use initial capital letters; if none of these, then use a lowercase initial letter:

*President Smith; but: the president chaired the meeting.*  
*Queen Elizabeth II; but: there is currently a queen on the throne, not a king.*  
*Director-General Phuri; but: the director-general addressed us.*

Often the use of “a” before a title is a clue to using a lowercase initial letter for the title, because “a” indicates general, not a specific instance.



### 4.1.2 Pronouns

A pronoun is a word taking the place of a noun and used to refer to a person or thing without giving a name.

Problem areas: using reflexive pronouns as personal pronouns; using possessive pronouns with an apostrophe; using *that* instead of *who/whom* when referring to people; confusing *who* and *whom*; when to use *that* and *which*; when and how to use “one”.

There are five main types of pronoun:

- **Personal pronouns:** *he, she, we, they, us, them, him, her, it.*

- **Reflexive pronouns:** *himself, herself, themselves, itself, oneself.*

Do not use reflexive pronouns as personal pronouns: Incorrect: *My friend and myself went to the party.* Correct: *My friend and I went to the party.*

- **Possessive pronouns:** *his; her/hers; their/theirs; my/mine; our/ours; its*

Do not use a possessive pronoun with an apostrophe: Incorrect:  
*The baby drank it's bottle. (its) That ring is her's. (hers)*

- **Interrogative pronouns:** *Why? Where? When? Who? How? How much?*

They always occur at the beginning of questions.

- **Relative pronouns:** *that, which, who, where, when, why*

They introduce descriptions that relate back to a noun or a pronoun:

*The place where we will meet is my study.*

Use *who* or *whom* to refer to people; use *that* and *which* to refer to animals and things. Incorrect: *He is a person that I admire.* (whom I admire)

*Who or whom?* Consider:

*People who hold public office must be honest.*

*He is a person who/whom I admire.*

In the first sentence, the pronoun comes before the verb “hold” (ie it is its subject), so *who* is the correct form. In the second example, try this quick test: isolate the group of words “who/whom I admire” and express it as a statement: “I admire who/whom”. Then replace “who/whom” with “he/him” and say the sentence out loud: *I admire he; I admire him.* The second version sounds more correct, because it is correct! (*Him* is the object in that sentence.) So if you replace “him” with “whom” in the original sentence: *He is a person whom I admire.*

- *That or which?* In general, use *that* to define something, *which* to describe, not define; *that* for essential information, *which* for incidental information. Consider these sentences:

*The house that is painted green is mine.*  
*My house, which is painted green, is No 14.*

In the first sentence, the house is identified or defined (or set apart from all the other houses in the street) by “that is painted green”. “That” is correctly used here; there is no punctuation around the defining information, “that is painted green”. In the second sentence, the more important, defining information is “No 14”; incidentally, the house is painted green. “Which” is correctly used here; note that the incidental information is placed between a pair of commas.

- *When and how to use “one”*

“One” is used for generalisations, especially when the speaker or writer wants to avoid making reference to a particular individual:

*One should be grateful that one has received a good education.*

If a speaker or writer begins to generalise in this way, the generalisation must be sustained by using *one's* and *oneself*. Avoid constructions such as:

*One should be grateful that you have been able to educate yourself.*

(See also Pronoun as object of preposition, under 4.1.6 Prepositions.)

### 4.1.3 Adjectives

An adjective is a word used to describe a noun or a pronoun: *beautiful, old-fashioned, oily, tall, big-hearted, fast, lonely*.

Problem areas: when to hyphenate (or compound) adjectives and when not to; using commas (or not) between adjectives; using adjectives as adverbs; forming comparatives and superlatives. (See also 4.1.5 Adverbs.)

- *When to hyphenate (compound) adjectives and when not to*

Consider these two sentences:

*A well-known author will be addressing us.*

*He is well known for his work on malaria.*

In the first sentence, “well-known” appears before a noun (“author”) and to avoid ambiguity we hyphenate the adverb to the adjective to form a compound adjective (we call this the “attributive form”). In the second sentence, “well known” appears after the verb (“is”), so they are left as two words (we call this the “predicative form”). Both the adjectives in sentences above are correct therefore.

An adverb ending in -ly should never be hyphenated to the adjective that follows it:

*A richly rewarded act of kindness.*

*The heavily overbearing personality.*

*A perfectly honed performance.*

- *When to use commas between adjectives*

There are two kinds of adjective: classifying (French, geometric, green (ie enviro-friendly) and qualitative (tall, handsome, yellow, rough). When adjectives of the same kind are listed, insert commas between them:

*She's wearing a long, blue skirt. (two qualifying adjectives)*

When the list includes both classifying and qualitative adjectives, no commas are required between them:

*She's wearing a blue silk blouse.*

*That's a typical Spanish dance.*

Notice that the qualitative adjective usually precedes the classifying adjective. It sounds unnatural to write or say “That’s a Spanish typical dance.”

- *Do not use adjectives as adverbs*

Incorrect: *You write so beautiful.* (You write so beautifully.)

- *Forming comparative and superlative degrees*

To form the comparatives and superlatives of adjectives, you can do three things:

- » add -er or -est as a suffix: *faster, slower, healthier, smoothest, cleanest, happiest*
- » place “more” or “most” in front of the word: *more resilient, most trustworthy*
- » change the word entirely: *good, better, best; bad, worse, worst.*

In general, the shorter the word (monosyllabic or bisyllabic), the more likely one is to use the -er or -est suffix (*taller, happier, redder*); some bisyllabic and all polysyllabic words take more and most (*more wholesome; most beautiful; most reliable*).  
Incorrect: *more happier; most worst*.

#### 4.1.4 Adverbs

Words used to describe or tell you more about a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. In doing so, they act as intensifiers (strengthening or weakening the adjective further):

*Adverb and verb: He runs faster than she does. The truck is moving slowly.*  
*Adverb and adjective: That's the most intelligent answer of all. It's all so exciting.*  
*Adverb and adverb: He runs much faster than she does. The truck is moving very slowly.*

Problem areas: using adjectives as adverbs; hyphenating adverbs ending in -ly to the adjective that follows them; placing an adverb in the incorrect position in relation to a verb; order of adverbs in a string.

- *Using adjectives as adverbs*

In most cases, though not in all, the adverb form ending in -ly should be used when a verb, an adjective or another adverb is being intensified:

*He behaves so respectful toward his elders. (respectfully)*  
*The cars moved so slow along the highway. (slowly)*  
*I'm going direct to my office now. (directly)*

- *Hyphenating adverbs ending in -ly to the adjective that follows them*

Avoid this practice:

*My house is fully-covered by insurance. (fully covered)*  
*I'd like the lightly-battered fish, please. (lightly battered)*  
*His house is heavily-subsidised. (heavily subsidised)*

- *Placing the adverb in the incorrect position in relation to a verb*

This decision usually needs to be made in the case of verb phrases:

I would have been early had it not been for the traffic.

Where would you insert "normally" in this sentence?

*I normally would have been ...*  
*I would normally have been ...*  
*I would have normally been ...*  
*I would have been normally ...*

In the case of a three-word verb phrase, the most "natural" position to have placed it would be as in example 2 above, that is, between the two auxiliary (or helping) verbs (see 4.1.5 Verbs and tenses). (Second choice would be example 1.)

In the case of a two-word verb phrase, the most "natural" position to place the adverb is between the auxiliary and the main verb ("have been"):

*I have always been honest with you.*

- *Order of adverbs in a string*

There are adverbs that tell us about time, place, manner, reason, cause and condition. We'll focus on the first three here. Consider this sentence:

*He arrived at 11 o'clock by car at the office. (time, manner, place)*

And then this one:

*He arrived at the office at 11 o'clock by car. (place, time, manner)*

The more “natural”-sounding order for adverbs of time, place and manner is illustrated in the second example.

#### 4.1.5 Verbs and tenses

A word used to describe an action or existence: *is, are, can, was, kicked, running, have*. A verb is a doing word.

Problem areas: verb tense formation (normal, continuous and mixed verbs); reported speech (used in minutes and reports, for example); “can” vs “may”; “may” vs “might”; subjunctive mood (vs indicative mood); hyphenating prefixes and verb roots; splitting the infinitive; subject–verb agreement.

We investigate these problem areas after covering some fundamental aspects of verbs.

There are different types of verb: normal, non-continuous and mixed. Investigate each of these:

##### 4.1.5.1 Normal verbs

Most verbs are “normal verbs”. These are usually physical actions that you can see somebody doing. They can be used in all tenses.

Examples: *to run, to walk, to eat, to fly, to go, to say, to touch*.

- Simple present tense for a fact or a habit: I **eat** dinner every day.
- Present continuous tense for currently occurring activity: I **am eating** dinner now.
- Simple past tense for an activity completed in the recent past: I **ate** dinner at 6 pm yesterday.
- Past continuous for an activity that was happening when another activity occurred: I **was eating** dinner when there was a knock at the door.
- Present perfect for an activity recently completed in the present: I **have eaten** too much today.
- Past perfect for an activity that was completed before another activity: He **had** already **eaten** his meal by the time I arrived.
- Future perfect for an activity that will be completed by a certain time in the future: By this time tomorrow, I **shall have eaten** my dinner.

##### 4.1.5.2 Non-continuous verbs

These verbs are about things you cannot see somebody doing. For example, *to be, to want, to cost, to feel, to seem, to need, to care, to contain, to owe, to exist, to have, to own, to belong, to like*.

- *Using non-continuous verbs correctly:*

For statements of fact, it is correct to use the simple present tense, not the present continuous:

- » He is needing help now. **Incorrect.**
- » He needs help now. **Correct.**
  
- » He is wanting a drink now. **Incorrect.**
- » He wants a drink now. **Correct.**
  
- » I am thinking that he is right. **Incorrect.**
- » I think that he is right. **Correct.**

##### 4.1.5.3 Mixed verbs

Mixed verbs have more than one meaning, depending on whether they are used as non-continuous or as normal verbs. For example:

*to have:*

- I have a lot of things to do. (non-continuous verb)  
*There are many things I need to do.*
- I am having fun now. (normal verb)  
*I am experiencing pain.*

to look:

- The minister looks tired. (non-continuous verb)  
*The minister appears tired.*
- Faraaz is looking at the pictures. (normal verb)  
*She is looking at the pictures with her eyes.*

to see:

- I see her. (non-continuous verb)  
*I see her with my eyes.*
- I am seeing a lawyer. (normal verb)  
*I am visiting or consulting a lawyer. (Also used with dentist and doctor)*
- I am seeing her. (normal verb)  
*I am having a relationship with her.*
- He is seeing ghosts. (normal verb)  
*He sees something others cannot see. for example, ghosts, auras, a vision of the future, etc.*

to think:

- He thinks the test is easy. (non-continuous verb)  
*He thinks the test is easy.*
- She is thinking about the question. (normal verb)  
*She is pondering the question.*

#### 4.1.5.3 Reported speech (used in minutes and reports, for example)

Direct speech reflects what a person actually says:

*"This is the correct procedure to follow."  
"We will order two more fighter jets."  
"I did that yesterday."  
"Sit down here!"*

Note the underlined words in the example sentences carefully.

But when we report what someone said, for example during an interview or at a meeting, we have to change certain words to indicate that. Compare the underlined words below with those above:

*She said that that was the correct procedure to follow.  
The captain said that they would order two more fighter jets.  
He claimed that he had done that the previous day.  
She commanded him to sit down there.*

Some pronouns changed: *this* became *that*; *we* became *they*; *I* became *he* (or *she*).

Adverbs changed: *yesterday* became *the previous day*; *here* became *there*.

The verbs all changed, from the present to the past (*is* became *was*; *will order* became *would order*); or from the near-past to further in the past (*did* became *had done*).

These are typical ways in which report writers and minute takers will write, because they are describing events that occurred in the past; or because they are writing about people and times and places at a distance (or removed from) from the writer's present.

#### 4.1.5.4 Can vs may; may vs might

*Can* conveys the sense of ability; *may* conveys the meaning of permission:

*You can swim, I know; but today you may not.*

The past tense of *can* is *could*.

*In the past you could swim, but now you're out of practice and cannot.*

The past tense of *may* is *might*.

But “might” can also suggest slight possibility (slighter than *may*):  
*There's a 30% chance of rain, they say, so do you think it might rain?*  
*Be careful, that rotten branch may fall on you!*

#### 4.1.5.5 Subjunctive mood (vs indicative mood)

Most of the statements we utter are in what we call the “indicative mood”. They are usually rooted in reality or fact:

*When I am 65, I will retire.*  
*It has rained all day today.*  
*She has trained as a musician.*

When we express a wish or speak about an imagined or hypothetical situation, or when something is conditional upon another thing, we can't use the indicative mood (which is associated with facts and reality); so we resort to the “subjunctive mood”:

*If only I were rich, I would retire immediately. (not *was* or *will*)*  
*I really should not eat chocolate. (not *shall*)*  
*The music student wishes she had learnt the piano instead of the violin. (not *has learnt*)*

#### 4.1.5.6 Hyphenating prefixes and verb roots

Why do we write “reopen” and “reiterate” and “reassess” when we write “re-edit”, “re-enter” and “re-educate”, on the one hand, and “re-bound”, “re-create” and “re-sort”, on the other?

When the last and first vowels of a prefix and a verb root are different (as in “reopen”), then there's no need to hyphenate the two components.

When the two vowels are identical, it is clearer to the reader to hyphenate them (eg “re-educate”). For this reason, we follow a general rule that two e's like this must be hyphenated.

The problem to avoid with “re-sort” and the other examples is different: resort, rebound and recreate all have distinct meanings from the root verbs with “re-” attached to them. So the hyphenated forms are very important in conveying different meanings from the unhyphenated forms.

#### 4.1.5.7 Splitting an infinitive verb

A verb preceded by *to*, as in *to like*, is called an infinitive verb. Do not split infinitives as splitting can cloud meaning and lead to awkward sentence constructions:

*He really seems to like it, not He seems to really like it.*

#### 4.1.5.8 Verb agreement (concord)

Singular subjects have singular verbs, and plural subjects have plural verbs:


*The man is resting, but The men are working.*

However, not all sentences are that simple. Fortunately, there are some straightforward rules to follow:

(i) Two nouns joined by *and* are followed by a plural verb: *The politician and the farmer **have** arrived*, i.e. two people have arrived. If you were to write: *The politician and farmer **has** arrived*, it implies that one person, who is both a politician and a farmer, has arrived. (If they are two distinct people, apart from a plural verb form, “the” would have to be inserted before “farmer” in the second example sentence.)

(ii) Collective nouns (*army, crew, herd, team, committee, group*) take a singular verb if the collection is thought of as a whole. It is not, however, wrong to use a plural verb. As a guide to deciding which form to use, decide whether you want to emphasise the unit or the individuals who make up the unit:

*The South African cricket team is going to Australia.*



Here we mean that one team is going to Australia. But consider this sentence:

*The South African team were unanimous in their condemnation of Australian umpiring.*

Here, all the members of the team agreed that the umpiring was bad, so the plural verb “were” is correct.

(iii) Two or more singular nouns joined by or or nor are followed by a singular verb:

*Either Peter or Bill is going to pay.*

(iv) When a singular and a plural noun are joined by “or” or “nor”, the verb takes its number from the noun nearer to it:

*Either the workers or the supervisor is wrong.  
(supervisor is singular, so you must use is).  
Neither Mr Jones nor the boys were there.  
(boys is plural, so you must use were).*

(v) *Each, every, either, neither, nobody, everything, anybody* and *everybody* all imply one thing and, as such, take singular verbs:

*Every worker receives his or her wages.  
Nobody is able to answer.*

(vi) *Much* and *little* are singular; *many* and *few* are plural:

*Much time is wasted on petty details.  
Only a few were willing to take the plunge.*

(vii) *Some* can be either singular or plural, depending on the context:

*Some money is missing. (money is a mass noun)  
Some of us are lazy. (us is a count noun)*

(viii) Plural nouns denoting a whole usually take singular verbs:

*R1 000 is a large sum of money. (not are)  
Four months' maternity leave is now standard. (not are)*

(ix) Fractions are regarded as singular:

*Three-quarters is larger than two-thirds.*

(x) *None* means *no one*, and is singular:

*No one is going to take responsibility. None of us is.*

(xi) Words that are plural in form but which are a label for a singular concept are regarded as singular:

*Mathematics is an essential subject for engineers.  
With globalisation, logistics goes to the core to many companies' business models.  
Today's news has been pretty shocking.*

(xii) When a singular subject is separated from its verb by a plural qualifier, the verb must be singular, not plural:

*The noise of the drills outside is deafening.*

The behaviour of the strikers was unacceptable.

The advent of democracy and a constitutional form of government is a breakthrough for our country.

#### 4.1.6 Prepositions

A preposition is a word used for showing what one person or thing has to do with another person or thing, or the position of one thing in relation to another: with, under, on, above, in, beside.

The book is on the table. She sat next to him. He conducts himself in accordance with the law.

Problem areas: using the incorrect pronoun form after a preposition; writing into or in to; onto or on to.

What follows a preposition is called its object. When a pronoun is an object, it usually takes a special form:

##### Pronoun as subject

*He* is my friend.  
*You* and *I* will help.  
*We* are friends.  
*They* went home.

But:  
But:  
But:  
But:

##### Pronoun as object of preposition

She sat next to *him* (not *he*).  
Between you and *me* (not *I*).  
He looks after *us* (not *we*).  
This is for *them* (not *they*).

- Prepositional (or phrasal) verbs

Verbs take on a special meaning when they become linked to (or associated with) particular prepositions. We call these prepositional (or phrasal) verbs: for example, the verb *tune*.

*I have to tune my guitar before every performance.*

*I need to have my car's engine tuned up.*

*I tune in to my favourite radio station every morning.*

Here, *tuned up* and *tune in* have different meanings from *tune*, thanks to the influence of the prepositions. Prepositional verbs are the reason why *in to* and *on to* are sometimes written separately:

*Tune in to Radio XYZ (not into).*

*Let's move on to the next topic (not onto).*

But:

*She dived into the swimming pool.*

*Pick up the bowl and put it onto that surface.*

#### 4.1.7 Conjunctions

A word used to join words and clauses: and, but, when, while, therefore, although.

Problem areas: punctuation around conjunctions; commas, semi-colons and lists of items; semi-colons vs conjunctions; *while* vs *whereas*.

There are two types of conjunction: coordinating and subordinating:

*Mike likes tea but Sue prefers coffee. (coordinating)*

*Whereas Mike drinks only tea, Sue prefers coffee. (subordinating)*

*Sue prefers coffee, although she drinks tea sometimes. (subordinating)*

Coordinating conjunctions create compound sentences from two or more simple sentences that carry equal weight (*Mike likes tea* and *Sue prefers coffee* in the first sentence above). Subordinating conjunctions (and relative pronouns) create complex sentences in which some parts are less important than others (and are usually bracketed off from the more important parts – as in *whereas Mike likes tea* above), and therefore labelled “subordinate”.

- Punctuation around conjunctions



There was a time when it was regarded as incorrect not to punctuate around conjunctions, but the convention has been relaxed. Some people prefer nowadays to have less rather than more punctuation. These sentences are all acceptable:

*She is clever, and she is also diligent.*  
*She is clever and she is also diligent.*  
*She is clever, but it is her diligence that makes her successful.*  
*She is clever but it is her diligence that makes her successful.*

The conjunction *however* must always have commas around it when it occurs inside a sentence, a comma after it when it starts a sentence, a comma before it when it ends a sentence:

*It is her diligence, however, that makes her successful.*  
*However, it is her diligence that makes her successful.*  
*It is her diligence that makes her successful, however.*

Where a writer positions *however* in a sentence is often a matter of where they want the emphasis of the contrary statement to fall: at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the sentence.

- *Commas, semi-colons and lists of items*

In a list of three or more items, House Style or the need for clarity will determine whether a comma is inserted before the final *and*:

*The colours on the flag are red, green and blue.*  
*On his breakfast plate were tomato, beans, toast, eggs, and bacon.*

In long lists, it is often wise to replace some of the commas with semi-colons to create sub-lists that the reader is better able to absorb. In such instances, it is usual to group like items together:

*In the toolbox you will find hammers, pliers and screwdrivers; nails, screws and tacks; masking tape, glue and other adhesives; and a selection of sandpapers.*

- *Semi-colons and conjunctions*

Usually, conjunctions are not used together with a semi-colon (the one exception is “however”):

*He is honest, but he is also stupid.*  
*He is honest; he is also stupid.*  
*He is scrupulously honest; however, his honesty often works to his disadvantage.*

Incorrect: *He is honest; but he is also stupid. He is honest; and he is also stupid.*

Note the semi-colon before *however* in the sentence above, and also the comma after it.

- *While vs whereas*

In general, the use of *while* should be limited to conveying a sense of time or timing; *whereas* should be used to indicate a contrary instance or situation:

*While I typed up the document, she proofread what I'd completed.*  
(one activity occurring at the same time as another)

*Simon prefers to work late at night, whereas Simone prefers early mornings.* (contrasting behaviour patterns)

Ambiguous: *James likes exercising at the gym, while Judy does aerobics at home.* (simultaneous or contrasting?)

#### 4.1.8 Articles

An article – the, a, and an – belongs to a group of words known as “determiners”: some, any, most, none, two, all, first, and so on. They usually appear before a noun; their purpose is to help specify, or narrow down, the noun:

*Some people are very kind; other people can be cruel.*

*None of the teachers appeared at the hearing; only two teachers were off sick; no teacher excused him- or herself.*

Problem areas: when to use *the* or *a/an*; when to use *a* as opposed to *an*; using *the* and *a/an* in a list.

- *When to use the or a/an*

Use the definite article *the* to precede a noun to suggest a specific or known instance, an indefinite article (*a* or *an*) to suggest a general or vague instance:

*"Do you know where I can find an ABC Bank ATM?"*

*"Yes, the ABC Bank ATM is over there."*

In the first sentence of this typical question-and-answer conversation, "an" is used because the speaker means any ABC Bank ATM; in the second, "the" is used because the person supplying the information is directing the speaker to a particular ATM.

*A* and *an* are also used for general statements:

*For most people, a sunny day is preferable to an inclement one.*

In contrast, *the* is used to refer to particular instances:

*The rainy day that preceded my birthday was followed by the sunniest day of the year.*

- *When to use a as opposed to an*

Use the indefinite article *a* or before a consonant sound:

*a lovely day, a hotel, a union, a eucalyptus tree.*

Use the indefinite article *an* before a vowel sound:

- to indicate in writing the breathing spaces and pauses that normally occur in speech;
- to convey or support meaning;
- to join or separate items in lists.

*an African trip, an heir, an FA Cup final, an SABC newsreader.*

- *Using the and a/an in a list*

In a string of items, remember to use the correct indefinite and definite articles before each:

*I've collected a pen, an antique watch, a set square, and an eraser to begin with.*

*The dog, the cat, the hamster and the parrot needed care while we were away.*

*The dog, cat, hamster and parrot needed care while we were away.*

Incorrect: *I need a banana, apple, pineapple and apricot for the salad, please.*

Incorrect: *The dog, cat, hamster and the parrot needed care while we were away.*

## 4.2 Punctuation

The purpose of punctuation, broadly speaking, is threefold:

- to indicate pauses or breathing spaces in normal speech
- to support or convey meaning
- to join or separate items in a list.

- *Punctuation indicates pauses or breathing spaces*

At one level, punctuation reflects the different lengths of breathing space and pause as follows, from shortest to longest: comma (,) and parentheses (); semi-colon (;); colon (:); dash (–); full stop (.), query (?) and exclamation mark (!)

- *Punctuation conveys/supports meaning*

In addition – sometimes in combination with the first purpose – punctuation helps to convey or support meaning:

These are my brothers. These are my brother's. These are my brothers'.

In each sentence here, the words are identical; it's the punctuation that changes the message being conveyed.

*My cousin who lives in PE turns 21 today.*  
*My cousin, who lives in PE, turns 21 today.*

In the first sentence, the speaker presumably has more than one cousin and has to specify (“define”, “restrict”) the one who turns 21: “who lives in PE” tells us which one; so we call it a “defining clause”. In the second sentence, the information between the commas is incidental (“non-defining”), presumably because the speaker has only one brother, so no definition or distinction is necessary.

- *Punctuation for emphasis*

Punctuation can also be used to convey various degrees of emphasis, usually conveyed by a speaker's posture, gesture and intonation:

*If you do it well (and I mean really well) I shall reward you handsomely.*  
*If you do it well – and I mean really well – I shall reward you handsomely.*

The statement between parentheses is intended as an aside or a “whisper”; the same statement between dashes is more emphatic. The words are identical, though.

- *Punctuation of lists*

Three basic models can be employed:

- full sentences: initial letter upper case, end all items in full stops
- incomplete sentences: initial lower case, end all items in semi-colons, except the final item, which ends in a full stop
- one- or two-word items: initial lower case, no end punctuation, except a full stop after the final item.

We now consider some aspects of the punctuation marks – particularly those that give wordsmiths trouble: full stops; commas, semi-colons and colons; apostrophes; parentheses and brackets; the ellipsis, and the query and exclamation mark.

#### 4.3.1 Full stops

Do not use full stops in abbreviations: *USA, UN, ie, eg, etc.*

Do not use full stops after initials: *NR Mandela.*

Do not use full stops in abbreviations that end in the final letter of the complete word:

*Col for colonel; Revd for Reverend; St for Street and Saint.*

The last item in a bulleted/vertical list must end in a full stop.

#### 4.3.2 Commas, colons and semi-colons

Use commas (,) to:

- separate items in a straightforward list:

*The colours of the rainbow are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.*

- separate a phrase or clause that explains what went before:

*Peter, an architect, designed our house. The bus, which runs past our house, takes me to work every day. Before returning home, we stopped by the supermarket.*

- avoid ambiguities:

*A bright, yellow flower. vs A bright yellow flower.*

- indicate non-defining clauses (always a pair of commas):

*My house, which is painted blue and white, is Victorian.*

- between a string of adjectives of the same type (either classifying or qualitative):

*She's a tall, dark, beautiful woman.*

*The dog's long, brown, freshly washed coat gleamed in the sunshine.*

- *Commas vs semi-colons*

Use commas to separate items in a simple list:

*We learn about oceans, deserts, mountains and grasslands.*

But use semi-colons (;) to separate items in a list of items which themselves contain commas:

*Our journey took us to Italy, where we discovered the Roman civilisation; Egypt, which introduced us to some of the wonders of pre-history; and Greece, where we explored the early roots of Hellenism.*

- *Semi-colons instead of conjunctions*

Use semi-colons instead of conjunctions to balance two complementary, supporting or contrasting statements:

*To err is human; to forgive divine.*

*The country is on a knife-edge; the outcome of the elections will be decisive.*

*We tried hard; however, we failed.*

Use a colon (:) to introduce a list of items or bullet points:

*I will ensure that our services have the appropriate:*

- *focus*
- *integrity*
- *professionalism.*

Use a colon to break a sentence before an illustration, an explanation or a resolving statement:

*He is correct: the only way to solve this problem is to hire more staff.*

*The frog is unique: it lives in water and on land.*

*The rose is associated with romance: for example, red roses symbolise love.*

Notice that in all three examples the colon is followed by a lower-case initial. An upper-case initial should be used only when what follows the colon is a self-contained sentence or a question:

*Late that evening in Sienna, we dined out in the village square: When in Rome, do as the Romans do.*

#### 4.3.3 Apostrophes

Apostrophes (') are often misused; they should be used in the following ways:

- To show possession (singular): *the cat's whiskers, the boss's view*, (plural): *business partners' investment; the provinces' MECs.*

**Note:** But not the possessive form of pronouns (his, hers, theirs, its) – see Pronouns above and below in this section.

- To show that a letter has been left out: don't (contraction of do not), it's (contraction of it is).
- To show time or quantity: one month's notice, five metres' worth of fabric, a year's supply of rice.

When NOT to use an apostrophe:

- In words that are not contracted:

*Whose package is most profitable?* Not: *Who's package is most profitable?*

*Its campaigns help create jobs.* Not: *It's campaigns help create jobs.*

*That item is theirs.* Not: *That item is their's.*

- To show the plural of letters and words:

*There are two ns in Johannesburg* (not *n's*).

*These are the dos and don'ts of writing* (not *do's and don't's*).

- For decades: *1990s* (not *1990's*).
- Plurals: *Ptys* (not *Pty's*); *photos* (not *photo's*); *SMSs* (not *SMS's*); *companies* not (*company's*); *apples* (not *apple's*); *tomatoes* (not *tomatoe's*).

#### 4.3.4 Hyphens, en-rules (–) and dashes (– or —)

Hyphens, en-rules and dashes each have distinct roles to play in documents.

Use hyphens (-) for:

- e-words: *e-mail, e-business, e-commerce, e-books*
- compound nouns (where two or more nouns are joined): *buy-out, cost-effectiveness, cross-reference*
- compound adjectives (where two or more adjectives are joined) ONLY where the noun it describes follows it: *cost-effective project* (but *the project was cost effective*), *risk-based portfolio, long-term commitment*.
- nouns formed from phrasal verbs: a *break-up* (to break up); *buy-out* (to buy out); *line-up* (to line up); *take-off* (to take off).

The following are a few basic guidelines regarding hyphens:

- hyphenate compound (attributive) adjectives: *old-fashioned clothes, so-called champion*
- hyphenate prefixes to proper names: *un-Christian, sub-Saharan, trans-Karoo*
- when *pro* means in favour, use a hyphen: *pro-life*
- with the prefix *non*: *non-smoker, non-conformist, non-destructive*; but *nonconformist, nondescript, nonentity*
- with prefixes ending in *e*, when the root word begins with *e*: *re-edit, pre-empt*
- where a difference in meaning from a non-hyphenated word needs to be conveyed: *re-bound vs rebound; re-sort vs resort; re-create vs recreate*.
- use a hyphen when writing certain figures: eg *thirty-six, three-quarters*
- hyphenate titles such as *director-general, lieutenant-colonel, inspector-general*
- use a dash (–) to draw attention: *The Budget will rise – from R10 billion to R15 billion – next year.*

See “Words often misspelled” for words that are not hyphenated, including:

- abovementioned
- postgraduate
- subsection.

When NOT to use a hyphen:

- When compound adjectives do not appear before the noun they refer to (they usually appear after a verb (predicative) – see Adjectives above):

*day-to-day problems* but *from day to day*

*higher-rate tax* but *the higher the rate of tax*

*long-term insurance* but *in the long term*

*up-to-date system* but *keep up to date*.

- After an adverb ending in -ly:

*widely read report*

- Instead of a hyphen between figures (including dates) to mean *to*, use an en-rule (eg 3 – 12 *March*) (press Ctrl and the minus key on the numeric keypad)

#### 4.3.5 Ellipsis (...)

An ellipsis is used almost exclusively within quoted passages and indicates that the author who borrowed the quoted matter did so selectively, leaving out unnecessary words intentionally. Treat an ellipsis like any other word with regard to spacing, therefore:

Michaels says "... it is difficult to credit Sauls with ... having been a proponent of liberal capitalist views ...".

In this quotation, the ellipsis at the beginning has a normal word space after it; the ellipsis in the middle has spaces either side of it; the one at the end of the quotation has a space before it. The quotation marks and final punctuation are set close up to the ellipsis.

Another use of the ellipsis is to indicate that a sentence or statement is incomplete, for whatever reason. In such instances, it would be wrong to terminate the sentence in a full stop:

*Let's leave that to your imagination ...*  
*I don't know what I feel about ...*

#### 4.3.6 Question marks

These are used only after actual questions:

*Is it raining? Are you coming?*

No question mark in:

*He asked if I was coming.*

#### 4.3.7 Exclamation marks

These are used only after actual exclamations:

*I don't believe it!*  
*Astonishing!*  
*Eish!*

If they are used, there should be only one per exclamation. They have almost no place in formal writing.

## 5. A TO Z GUIDE

### A

**abbreviations.** Write out the first instance in each chapter/section, with the abbreviation in brackets; thereafter use the abbreviation only (except in headings). When abbreviating names of organisations, use the abbreviation only after the full name has been used first: *The headquarters of the United Nations (UN) is in New York. The UN, the international body, announced that ...* Plurals of abbreviations are written without an apostrophe: *MECs, MPLs, SGBs, NGOs*. If the sound of the first letter of an abbreviation is a vowel, write "an" before it: *an MP*.

**about.** Use in place of *approximately, in the region of or around*.

**accept, except.** *Accept* means "receive" or "agree with": *I accept your opinion; except* means "to make an exception of": *Except for his tantrums, he's a great fellow*.

**Act.** When used in the legislative sense, the first letter is always capitalised: *The Act provides for ...* When mentioned for the first time, the Act must be named in full: *the Revenue Laws Amendment Act, 2003 (Act 45 of 2003), was recently signed into law* (note the comma after the last bracket).

**action.** This is a noun, not a verb. You do not action something, you *do it*, or *carry it out*, or *implement it*. You do take action, though.

**additionally, in addition.** Use *additionally* before an adjective to intensify it: *The patient's condition is additionally worrying in view of his medical history.* Use *in addition* as a connector: *In addition to going to gym, Joe runs 10 km twice a week.*

**adverse, averse.** Adverse means "opposing" or "unfavourable": *They played the game in adverse weather conditions, and lost.* Averse means "reluctant; unwilling": *I'm not averse to eating spicy foods.*

**advice, advise.** Advice is a noun: *I will ask for her advice.* Advise is a verb: *I will advise her what to do.*

**adviser.** Not *advisor*.

**advocate, advocate for.** The first can be either a verb or a noun: *I advocate rights for animals; that makes me an animal rights' advocate.* The second can be only a noun: *He is an advocate of change.* Incorrect: *He advocates for change.*

**affect, effect.** Affect is a verb meaning to make a difference to: *The decision did not affect the outcome.* Effect is both a noun, meaning a change that something causes in something else, and a verb, meaning to make something happen: *The decision has a significant effect (noun); to effect changes (verb).*

**African** (upper-case initial), Indian, but coloured, black and white (lower-case initials).

**African Renaissance** (upper-case initials); but *We're witnessing a renaissance of literature in South Africa.*

**ages.** Should always be given in figures. Hyphenate: *The 40-year-old unionist*, but don't hyphenate: *He was 21 years old.*

**agree to, agree with.** Agree to means "consent to": *Do you agree to support us?* Agree with means "have the same opinion as": *I agree with you that we must uphold the Constitution.*

**AIDS.** Upper case, as is HIV.

**all of the.** Use *all the*, *all*, or *every*.

**all right.** Always use *all right*, written as two words; not *alright*.

**all together, altogether.** *All together* means "simultaneously" or "in the same place": *We were huddled all together in the small tent.* *Altogether* means "entirely; with everything included": *I shall have flown to Lanseria nine time altogether this year.*

**allude, elude.** Allude means to mention indirectly: *allude to a book.* Elude means to escape: *elude pursuers.*

**alot, a lot, allot.** Alot does not exist; a lot means a large quantity or amount: *He puts in a lot of time as a volunteer;* allot means to parcel out: *We were each allotted a small patch of land.*

**alternate, alternative.** Alternate (adjective) means going back and forth between two things, as in *alternate weekends* (every other weekend). Alternative means "other" and applies when there are two opinions, as in *an alternative plan.*

**among, between.** Use *among* for more than two people or things and *between* for two people or things. Exception: in the case of agreements, pacts or contracts, the correct idiomatic use is "between": *The agreement was signed between the SADC member states.* Avoid *amongst*.

**and/or.** Avoid using, except in a legal document.

**anticipate, expect.** Anticipate means foresee or regard as possible yet not sure, such as *rain*. If you expect something, you are sure about it happening, such as *expecting a visitor*.

**antiretroviral** (one word).

**apartheid** (lower-case initial), not italics.

**appendices** (the plural of appendix).

**approximately.** Use *about*.

**archaeologist.**

**as.** Do not use *as* for *because*: *He left because he was tired* not: *He left as he was tired.*

**as well (as).** Use "and" unless "in addition" or "over and above" is meant: *He was impolite, dirty, foul-mouthed as well as dishonest.* Don't end a sentence with *as well*. Incorrect: *aswell* (one word).

**as yet.** Use *yet*, not *as yet*.

**Asian (adjective and noun).** Upper case. Refers to people or products from Asia. Incorrect: Asiatic.

**assure, ensure, insure.** You *assure* (promise) a person that things will go well (instil confidence). You *ensure* (make sure) that work is done. You *insure* (guarantee or protect) something against loss or damage.

**ATM.** Stands for automated teller machine, therefore don't write *ATM machine*.

**averse, adverse.** If you do not like something, you are averse (opposed) to it. *Adverse* (bad) is an adjective, as in *adverse conditions*.

**avocados.**

## B

**backlog** (one word).

**basically, essentially, totally.** Avoid. These do not add any meaning to a sentence.

**basis.** Avoid phrases such as *on a regular basis* (use regularly) and *on an annual/weekly/daily basis* (use annually/weekly/daily).

**belief (noun), believe (verb).** *It is my belief that it will rain tomorrow; I believe in God.*

**benefit, benefiting, benefited** (single *t*).

**besides, beside.** *Besides* means *in addition to, apart from, moreover* or *other than*. *Beside* means *next to*.

**between ... and.** not *between ... to*: *Identify the prime numbers between 16 and 49.*

**biannual, biennial.** *Biannual* refers to something occurring twice a year or half-yearly. *Biennial* means occurring every two years.

**Bible, bible.** Use *Bible* (not italics) to refer to the Holy Bible; use *bible* as a metaphor for a fundamental or indispensable work: *This handbook is the motor mechanic's bible.*

**bid, bade.** *Bid* (n. or v.) refers to an offer (*At the auction I bid for the diamond pendant; as it turned out, my bid was not the highest*) or a greeting (I bid you farewell). The past tense verb form of *bid* (the greeting) is *bade*: *On his retirement he bade his colleagues farewell.*

**Big Five** (upper-case initials).

**bilateral** (one word).

**Bill** (upper-case initial). A draft of legislation presented to the members of Parliament for comment and possible amendment prior to enactment is a *Bill*.

**binational** (one word).

**black people.** lower-case *b*.

**blind.** Use *visually impaired*.

**borrow, lend.** You *borrow from* someone; you *lend to* someone.

**British spelling throughout.** Use *-ise* not *-ize*, *metre* not *meter* (except for *meter* as a measuring device), *colour* not *color*.

**Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE).**

**BuaNews.** Always write as one word with a capital *n*. It should be written in normal font and not italics.

**Budget.** Use upper-case initial when referring to the national Budget or the Budget Speech.

**burn, burned, burnt.** *Burned* and *burnt* are both past participles of *burn*. *Burned* is used more as a verb (*His house burned as everyone looked on*); *burnt* is used more as an adjective (*On my plate were burnt offerings instead of a hearty dinner*).

**bushveld.**

**by the fact that.** Avoid. Instead of: *I am surprised by the fact that the report is incomplete*, write: *I am surprised the report is incomplete*.

## C

**Cabinet** (upper-case initial).

**can, may.** *Can* (past tense: *could*) expresses ability: *She can play the piano*. *May* (past tense: *might*) expresses permission: *You may leave early*. *Might* also expresses possibility, though with less certainty than *may*: *It might rain*.

**canvas, canvass.** *Canvas* (noun) is a type of cloth. *Canvass* (verb) means to visit someone to ask for their vote.

**cellphone** (one word).

**census.**

**centre** (not *center*). *Centre on*, not *centre around*.

**century.** Spell out in full and use lower-case *c*: *19th century*.

**certainly.** Try to avoid using.

**chairperson.** Use in place of *chairman*, *chairwoman* or *chairlady*.

**close corporation (CC).** Not closed.

**cohort, cohorts.** Use *cohort*, which refers to a group not to individuals: *The cohort of militiamen came marching up to us*.

**colour.** not *color*.

**coloured people, coloureds** (lower-case initials).

**communication, communications.** *Communication* refers to written, spoken or non-verbal communication, whereas *communications* refers to technological communication.

**compared to, compared with.** *Compared to* expresses similarities: *Compare the landscape to a Monet painting*.

*Compared with* assesses the relation or difference between things: *Compare radio with television*.

**complement, compliment.** To *complement* means to add to or bring out the best in something: *Fish and tartare sauce complement each other*. *Compliment* means to praise, and *complimentary* means something given away for free.

**comprise.** Use *comprise(s)* and not *comprises of*. e.g. *The Olympic team comprises 90 athletes*.

**comprising, including.** *Comprising* is used when all the components of the whole are mentioned. *Including* does not presume that everything has been mentioned. *The team comprising 11 athletes left for New Delhi today*. *The whole team, including the coach and their manager, has left for overseas*.

**consensus.**



**consequent, subsequent.** *Consequent* refers to the result or logical conclusion of something. *Subsequent* refers to the event or events immediately following something.

**Constitution.** Use a capital letter, but do not capitalise *constitutional*, other than in *Constitutional Court*.

**continual, continuous.** *Continual* means happening over and over again. *Continuous* means happening constantly without interruption. *I can't stand his continual moaning and groaning in the office! The continuous drilling sound is disturbing us.*

**cooperate** (one word).

**coordinate** (one word).

**cornerstone** (one word).

**cost-effective.**

**council, counsel.**

**countrywide** (one word).

**criteria.** Is the plural form of the singular *criterion*. *There can be either one criterion or several criteria.*

**critique.** It is a noun, not a verb. It does not mean purely criticise.

**currency.** Lower-case initial when written out: *dollar, rand, euro*. Symbols upper case. No space between abbreviation and the figure: *R500*.

**currently.** Use *currently* or *now* instead of *presently, at this point in time, at this juncture, at the present moment* or *at this point*.

## D

**darkroom** (one word).

**data.** Takes the singular. *The data is complete.*

**dates.** *16 June 1976; 1990s; Tuesday, 14 August.*

**daycare** (one word).

**D-Day.**

**deaf.** Rather use *hearing impaired* or *hearing challenged*.

**decimal commas.** Use decimal commas, not points: *R300,45* not *R300.45*; *1 234,56* not *1,234.56*.

**degrees.** Use the degree symbol: *40 °C* or *30°S*.

**Democratic Republic of Congo** (not *the Congo*).

**Denotation, connotation.** *Denotation* is the exact meaning. *Connotation* is the implied meaning.

**Department, department.** When referring to a specific department by its correct title, e.g. *Department of Justice and Constitutional Development*, use upper-case initials. When referring to a department generically or in the plural, use lower case: *the justice department, the departments of labour and of education*.

**dependant, dependent.** *Dependant* (noun) means a person who is *dependent* (adjective) on someone else.

**director-general.** Plural: *directors-general*. **Initial upper-case in full title; Director-General of Basic Education.**

**disabled.** People with a disability or disabilities.

**disinterested, uninterested.** *Disinterested* means unbiased or neutral about an issue: *Judges should be disinterested – they can't afford to take sides while hearing trials! Uninterested* means not interested. *I'm not interested in your excuses.*

**doctoral degree, doctorate.**

**downscaling, downsizing** (one word).

**due to.** Use *owing to* or *because of*. *The prices have escalated because of increased demand.*

## E

**each other, one another.** Two people talk to *each other*; more than two talk to *one another*.

**Earth.** Upper-case initial when referring to Earth, the planet; lower case when referring to the soil: *tilling the earth; what on earth do you mean?*

**economic, economical.** *Economic* is used in relation to finances and cost. *Economical* refers to giving good value or avoiding wastage. *The economic climate in South Africa is fairly healthy at present. A 5-kg pack is more economical than a 1-kg pack.*

**educators.** Not teachers.

**eg and ie.** *Eg* stands for the Latin *exempli gratia*, meaning *for example*; *ie* stands for the Latin *id est*, meaning *that is* – it should be followed by a clarifying statement, not an example: *His recent bad behaviour, ie his rudeness and lack of consideration for others, is totally out of character.*

**elections.** Use instead of *polls*.

**endeavour** (n.). Use the plainer *try* or *attempt* instead.

**enquiry, inquiry.** *Enquire* is a formal word for *ask*; *inquire* is used for an investigation. However, for the sake of simplicity, it is acceptable to use only *enquire*.

**equally, equally as.** Use *equally*. *Peter and Paul are equally clever.* Or *Peter is as clever as Paul.* Or *Paul is just as clever as Peter.*

**etc.** Use with a full stop after and a comma before. Do not use *etc.* if a list is preceded by “for example”, “for instance” or “such as”; only actual examples should follow.

**every day, everyday.** “*Everyday*” (adjective) means occurring every day, not out of the ordinary, commonplace: *An everyday event happens every day.*

**except, accept.** *Except* means *to make an exception of*: *Except for his tantrums, he’s a great fellow.* *Accept* means “receive” or “agree with”: *I accept your opinion.*

## F

**farm workers.**

**farther, further.** Use *farther* for physical distance and *further* to mean additional or continued: *travel farther down the road* but *pursue an issue further.*

**fewer, less.** Use *fewer* with numbers of items or people: *Fewer than 10 delegates attended.* *Less* refers to quantity: *Less than half the delegates arrived.* *Less power is needed to warm the water.*

**First Economy.**

**first world.**

**flout, flaunt.** *Flout* means “to break rules openly and even with contempt”: *Flouting the law regarding after-hours liquor sales could land you in trouble.* *Flaunt* means “display oneself ostentatiously; show off”: *The young billionaire flaunts his wealth in the form of flashy clothing and motor cars.*

**focus, focused, focusing.** One s.

**forego, forgo.** *Fore* means before. *The foregoing text provides the background to the story.* But: *In prison he had to forgo the luxuries in life.*

**formula, formulae.** Use *formulae* not *formulas* as the plural of *formula*.

**fractions.** Hyphenate fractions: *one-half, two-thirds*. Treat them as singular: *two-thirds is greater than one-quarter.*

**from ... to.** *The distance from A to B is a day’s journey.*

**fulfil.** But *fulfilled, fulfilling*.

**fully.** *Fully fledged programme.* Don’t use a hyphen because of the *-ly ending*.

## G

**G5** (no hyphens).

**G8** (no hyphens).

**GCIS.** Government Communication and Information System. There is no s suffix on Communication or System. A shorter version can be used: *Government Communications (GCIS)*.

**glamorous.** Not *glamorous*.

**go-ahead** (n.), go ahead (v.). *The department has received the go-ahead ...; but: go ahead with executing the board’s instructions.*

**gold mining, gold mines, but goldfields.**

**Gospel, gospel.** Capitalise when referring to the Bible, use lower case when using as an adjective: *The gospel singer reads from the Gospel every night.*

**got, gotten.** Use *got*, not *gotten*. The latter is American English; South African English has its roots in British English, so *got* is the acceptable option.

**government.** Use lower-case initial in all cases, except when referring specifically to *the Government*: *the South African Government*, but *government projects*.

**governance, government.** *Governance* is the action or manner of governing: *Sound corporate governance*. But: *Since 1994, South Africa has had a constitutional system of government.*

**grassroots** (one word).

**Green Paper** (initials upper case).

**gross domestic product (GDP).**

**ground-breaking.**

## H

**handicapped (person).** Use *person with a disability*.

**hectare (ha).** Space between number and abbreviation: *700 ha*.

**he or she and his or her.** Using *they* instead of *he* or *she* and *their* for *his* or *her* is grammatically incorrect. Ways to avoid *he/she* and *him/her*, if so required: use plural nouns and pronouns; use *the* instead of pronouns; or remove the pronoun entirely:

*Students should study hard if they want to pass the examinations.*

**head.** People *head* committees, they do not *head up* committees. Use lower-case initials for *head of department* (HoD).

**headings.** First initial upper case, all other words in heading lower case, except names: *Arts and culture, National symbols*, but *Department of Arts and Culture*. Do not use abbreviations in headings.

**healthcare** (one word).

**historic, historical.** *Historic* means a *significant* or *important event* that will stand out in history: *the historic democratic election*. *Historical* refers to any past occurrence.

**HIV** (upper case).

**HIV and AIDS.** Not *HIV/AIDS*.

**highveld.**

**home owner.** But *home-owner's allowance*.

**honorary.** *Honorary degree*, not *honourary degree*.

**honours degree.** No apostrophe.

**human-resource development (HRD).** Not *resources*; use lower-case initials.

**HRD Strategy.**

## I

**ie, eg** Do not confuse these two abbreviations. *Ie* means "that is" and introduces an explanation or clarification. *Eg* means "for example" and simply introduces one or more examples. *His siblings, ie his older two brothers, are supporting him.*

**immunise.**

**impact** is a noun, not a verb: *The impact of the fuel and energy price increases will be enormous*. Not: *The fuel and energy price increases will impact us greatly*.

**incidence, incident.** They should not be used interchangeably as synonyms. *Incidence* (an abstract n.) can mean "the rate or frequency of occurrence of a phenomenon"; "incident" means "a distinct occurrence or event": *The greater the number of incidents of crime, the higher we can say the incidence of crime is*.

**independent, not independent.**

**in-depth.**

**Indian (n. or adj.).** Upper case.

**informal settlement.** Use in place of *squatter camp*.

**information and communications technology (ICT).** Lower-case initials.

**information technology (IT).** Lower-case initials.

**install.** But *instalment*

**instil.** One "l"; but *instilled, instilling*.

**inter alia.** Rather use *among other things* (and certainly not *among others*).

**interactive.**

**interdepartmental.**

**interdependent.**

**intergovernmental.**

**Internet (upper-case initial).**

**intra-racial.**

**intra-sectorial.**

**-ise, -ize.** Use *-ise* for all words spelt with *-ize*: *eg organise* not *organize*. Exception: *first prize*.

**italics.** Should be used sparingly to emphasise the meaning of words. Always use for non-South African words and phrases; titles of publications, albums of music recording, operas, ballets, and movies; *the titles* of Green and White papers; lawsuits (*Smith v Jones; Ex party Lawson*); website addresses (*www.sayearbook.gov.za*); and the names of ships (*SAS Protea*), aircraft and spacecraft.

**its, it's.** "It's" is a contraction of it is: *It's hot today*. *Its* is a possessive meaning of *it*: *Among its various provisions, the Constitution ensures equal rights for all*.

## J

**JSE Securities Exchange Limited (JSE).** This is the official name.

**jewellery.**

**judgement, judgment.** *The driver's judgement was impaired by alcohol. The court's judgment is due in two weeks.*

## K

**Khayelitsha.**

**kick off.** Soccer events and projects *kick off*, but conferences and campaigns *open, begin* or *start*. The noun form is *kick-off*. *The kick-off is due at 15:30.*

**kilolitre (kl).** Not the American or Afrikaans spelling, *kiloliter*.

**kilometre (km).** Not the American *kilometer*. Non-breaking space (Shift+Ctrl+Spacebar) between the figure and the km: *3 000 km*. Never use *kms*.

**knobkierie.**

**knock-and-drop.**

**knockout (boxing).**

**KwaZulu-Natal** (with a hyphen in the position shown).

## L

**landowners (one word).**

**land-users (hyphenated).**

**languages.** There are 11 official languages in South Africa:

- Afrikaans
- English
- isiNdebele
- isiXhosa
- isiZulu
- Sesotho sa Leboa (Sepedi)
- Sesotho
- Setswana
- siSwati
- Tshivenda
- Xitsonga.

**latter, last.** *Latter* is used of two people or things; *last* of three or more. *Of feathers and lead, the latter is the denser matter.*

**lead, lead, led.** *The metal is lead (Pb); I'll lead the way, provided you're prepared to be led by me.*

**leaders, leadership.** *The trade union has several leaders, but they are sadly lacking in leadership* (ie the quality of leading) skills.

**learn, learned, learnt.** *Learned* and *learnt* are both past tense forms of *learn*. *At school we learned arithmetic and spelling. Have you learnt nothing about good manners? Learned* is used in a special way as an adjective (to mean "wise"), with the stress on the "ed": *the learned professor, my learned colleague, the judge.*

**lekgotla.** Gathering. Plural: *makgotla*.

**lend, borrow.** You lend something *to* someone and borrow something *from* someone: *I lend my pen to you, May I borrow your pencil?*

**less, fewer.** *Less* refers to quantity, *fewer* refers to number: *Fewer than 10 delegates attended; Less than half the delegates arrived.* (See also Nouns.)

**letsema.** Communal volunteerism.

**licence (n.), license (v.).**

**lifelong.**

**life-size.**

**light.** Correct: *In the light of that information, we must act.* Incorrect: *In light of that information ...*

**like.** Avoid using *to* mean *such as* or *as if*.

**Limpopo.** Not *Limpopo Province*.

**Limpopo River.** But *Limpopo and Orange rivers*.

**line-up (n.), line up (v.).** *The police line-up was delayed. We had to line up to see Oprah.*

**loan, lend.** Use *loan* as the noun and *lend* as the verb. *Lent* is the past tense.

**locally.** No hyphen when used adjectivally because of *-ly ending*: *locally developed vaccines*.

**longstanding** (one word).

**long-term.** Hyphenate when it's used as an adjective, otherwise write as two words: *long-term investment; In the long term, my finances will be fine.*

**lose (v.), loose (adj.).** *I often lose my keys. My shoelace is loose.*

**lowveld.**

## M

**macrobenefits.**

**macroeconomic.**

**maize meal.**

**mangoes.**

**may, might.** *May* expresses both permission and possibility, while *might* expresses only possibility: *May I leave the room? It might rain today.*

**mealiemeal.**

**medium (singular), media (plural).**

**media conference.** Covers both print and electronic media.

**Medium Term Budget Policy Statement and Medium Term Expenditure Framework.** No hyphens. But *medium-term arrangements.*

**megalitre (MI).** Refers to a million litres.

**Mercosur.** The trading block. Not *MERCOSUR*.

**microlending.**

**millennium.**

**million tons (Mt).** Write in full, separately from numerals: *32 million.*

**Minister.** Capitalise when used as a title: *the Minister of Finance, Mr Govan Reddy, or Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan*; but *the finance minister and the minister*. Also use lower case when the plural is used: *the ministers of health and of communications.*

**ministry, Ministry.** Capitalise only when written out in full: *The Ministry of Justice*, but *the justice ministry or the ministry*.

**money, plural:** *moneys*, not *monies*.

**moneylending.**

**Mpumalanga.** Not *Mpumalanga Province*. Note the spelling.

**multidimensional.**

**multilingualism.**

**multimedia, multimillion (one word).**

**multitude.** Is a singular concept: *A multitude of ideas is buzzing in my head.*

**myself, I.** Incorrect usage: *Myself and Susan will be attending (Susan and I will be attending); my friend and myself are going (my friend and I are going)*. Otherwise, use only in the reflexive form, as in *I baked the cake myself; I myself do that regularly.*

## N

**National Budget** (upper-case *n*).

**national Department of Human Settlements** (lower-case *n*).

**nation-building.**

**nationwide.**

**New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad).**

**newsroom.**

**non-.** The prefix "non" indicates the negative sense of words with which it is combined. Hyphenate, as in *non-smoker*. But *nonconformist, nondescript, nonentity*.

**non-governmental organisation (NGO).** Lower-case initials. Plural: *NGOs*.

**no one (two words).**

**North West** (the province). No hyphens. *Not North West Province*. But: *North-West University*.

**northern hemisphere.** Lower-case initials.

**numbers.** Use words for one to nine, numerals from 10 onwards. Decimal and negative numbers are rendered as numerals. Write out numbers at the beginning of a sentence. For millions, use the numeral: *R4 million*. Hyphenate million only when used adjectivally: *R4,5 million* but *R4,5-million investment*. Use a space for thousands: *R168 050*.

**numerous.** Rather use *many*.

## O

**of, off.** *Of* is a preposition, *off* can be an adverb or a preposition. Avoid mistakenly using *off* as a preposition, as in *I picked it up off the floor. Off the top of my head, I'd say we made R2 million profit last year.*

**one another, each other.** Two people talk to *each other*; more than two talk to *one another*.

**ongoing.**

**online** (one word).

**onset, outset.** Do not confuse them. *Onset* means "commencement, outbreak"; *outset* means "start, beginning". *The onset of influenza is characterised by headache and fever. From the outset, the project has been beset by delays.*

**organise, organisation.** See *-ise*.

**overcrowded** (no hyphen).

**overexpenditure** (no hyphen).

## P

**pandemic.** Use to denote the *global* AIDS problem. Use *epidemic* to denote the problem in South Africa.

**Parliament, parliamentary.** *The South African Parliament* or *the Parliament*, but *parliamentary briefings*.

**passed, past, last.** *Passed* is the past tense form of *pass*; *past* is the adjective derived from *pass*, and it means "the time gone by"; *last* means "final". *I passed him in the corridor on my way to the office. This past year has been so busy. In the last few months of his life, he was fit and active.*

**peacekeeping** (no hyphen).

**per annum (pa).** In text, use *a year* or *each year*, not *per annum* or *per year*. However, *pa* may be used in tables or where space is limited, provided it is explained in full below or first.

**per cent** (two words); but *percentage*.

**peri-urban.**

**persons, people.** Both are plural forms of "person", but *persons* belong more to legal or official documents and notices (*Admission only to persons over the age of 18*), whereas *people* should be a part of in everyday usage (*there are too many people who drive alone to work*).

**PhD.**

**phenomenon** (singular), **phenomena** (plural).

**plus-minus.** *About* or *approximately*. Do not use  $\pm$ .

**police, police officer.** Use instead of *policeman*, *policewoman* or *cop*.

**post-apartheid.**

**practice (n.), practise (v.).** *At soccer practice we practised our dribbling.*

**premise, premises.** A *premise* is a previous statement or proposition from which another is inferred or follows as a conclusion: *You can't operate on the premise that women are less productive than men. Premises* (only plural) comprise a house or building together with its grounds, or a building housing a business, for example.

**The Presidency** (upper-case initial when referring to the institution); **The President's Office** (upper-case initials).

**President, president.** *President Jacob Zuma*; but *our president*, or *the president of a company*.

**principal, principle.** *Principal* means "main, head". Use *principal* as a synonym for most important or main, or instead of *headmaster/headmistress*. *Principle* means a moral guideline or fundamental truth.

**prizewinner** (one word).

**proactive** (no hyphen).

**probably, likely.** In South African English, each of these words belongs to a unique phrase: *That mine will probably close. That mine is now likely to close.* Incorrect: *That mine will likely close.*

**Prof. (with a full stop).** Abbreviation of *Professor*.

**programme, program.** *Programme* on TV or radio, but *computer program*.

**prove, proven, proved.** *Proved* is the past tense form of *prove*: *He proved me wrong at our meeting yesterday.* In front of a noun, *proven* tends to be preferred: *It is a proven fact that water freezes at 0 °C.*

**public service.** Use instead of *civil service*.

**publications.** Titles of publications are set in italics: *Vuk'uzenzele, South Africa Yearbook*, etc.

## Q

**quatercentenary.** 25th anniversary. No *r* between *qua-* and *-tercentenary*.

**quite, quiet.** *Quite* is an adverb meaning *very* or *fairly* (*you are quite right; that was quite good*); *quiet* is an adjective meaning *making little or no noise*: *You are quite right. She is a quiet person.*

## R

**R500** (no space).

**race.** *African, Indian* and *Asian* get an upper-case initial; *black, coloured* and *white* are lower case.

**reason.** The construction *the reason being is ...* is incorrect. Replace it with *the reason is ...* or *the reason being put forward is ...*

**recently.** Use instead of *yesterday* or *last week*, depending on the degree of urgency.

**regard, regards.** These two words each belong to unique contexts and phrases and cannot be used interchangeably: *I regard you as my friend.* It is usually safer and better to use “about” or “regarding” instead of *with regard to/as regards* in contexts such as: *With regard to our friendship, I can say little more. As regards our friendship, what else is there to say?* A letter may be ended with the phrase *Kind regards.* Incorrect: *With regards to this matter ...*

**reign, rein.** To *reign* is to *rule* or *govern*; a *rein* is a *leather strap* used to control a horse when riding it: *The dictator's reign ended abruptly in a coup d'état.*

**renaissance.** Capitalise only if it is used with *The* and refers either to the historic period or the *African Renaissance.*

**Rev.** (with a full stop). Abbreviation of *Reverend.*

**ringleader.**

**role player.** Two words. But *role-playing game*

**roll out** (v.), **roll-out** (n.).

## S

**savanna.** Also *savannah* – use one or the other consistently in a single document.

**school-leaver.**

**schoolteacher, schoolmaster, schoolchildren, schoolboy, schoolgirl** (one word).

**Section 21 company.**

**Section.** Section of an Act takes an upper-case initial: *As we read in Section 15(1)(e) of the Act.*

**Sector Education and Training Authority (Seta).**

**semi-arid.**

**semi-colons.** Use *commas* to separate items in a simple list, but use *semi-colons* to separate items in a list of items which themselves contain *commas.* (See also 4.3.2 Commas, semi-colons and colons.)

**service delivery.** But *service-delivery programme.*

**service-providers** (hyphenated).

**shareholder.**

**since.** Do not use *since* to mean “because”; this can lead to ambiguity: *Since he has been promoted, he no longer greets me.* (because, or from the time?)

**sister.** Use *staff nurse.*

**small, medium and micro-enterprise (SMME).** Plural: *SMMEs.*

South Africa Yearbook. *African* is incorrect.

**southern Africa.**

**southern hemisphere** (lower-case initials).

**spokesperson.** Use instead of *spokesman* or *spokeswoman.*

**stakeholder.**

**State, state.** Capitalise when referring to an organised political community under or belonging to or in the interests of one government: *The building belongs to the State, but state visit or state-owned.*

**stationary, stationery.** *Stationary* means standing still. *Stationery* is writing material supplied by a stationer.

**storeroom** (one word).

**subdirector.**

**subprogramme.**

**substantial, substantive.** *Substantial* means of solid material or structure; ample and nourishing of ample or considerable amount or size: *Have a substantial meal before you start fasting; It was so substantial that it took two men to push it.* *Substantive* means “having a separate and independent existence; self-sufficient; important, significant, considerable”: *He wrote volumes of substantive essays that contribute to the world of learning.* Incorrect: *The facilitator played a substantive role in their learning experience.*

**subtropical.**

**sugar cane.**

**supersede.** Not *supercede.*

## T

**talk show** (two words), but *talk-show host.*

**taxpayer** (one word).

**technikons.** Now universities of technology.

**tercentenary.** 300th anniversary.

**than, then.** *Than* is used to indicate comparison: *His work is better than mine.* *Then* indicates a time-based sequence: *They ate dinner, then they went out dancing.*

**that, which.** Use *that* to introduce a defining clause: *This is the house that Jack built.* Use *which* to introduce a qualifying clause: *This house, which was built by Jack, is up for sale.* As a general rule, where a phrase can be put in parenthesis or between commas, it is introduced by *which*.

**that, who.** Use *that* with animals and inanimate objects; *who* with people: *This is a man who cares for his staff and his family. People who say that are stupid.*

**there, their.** *There* is an adverb meaning "in, at or to that place": *Look there; There's where you'll find your pen.* *Their(s)* means "belonging to them": *Those are their books; The books are theirs.*

**till, until.** Avoid using *till* as a substitute for *until*.

**time frame** (two words).

**time limit** (two words).

**to, too.** *Too* is an adjective that means *also* (*he went too*) or *excessively* (*too much*). *To* is a preposition used to introduce a noun (*He went to the office*) or as part of an infinitive verb (*to go, to report*).

**turnaround** (n.), **to turn around** (v.).

## U

**ubuntu** (Nguni), **botho** (Sotho). Means humanity.

**underprivileged.**

**underqualified.**

**under-resourced** (hyphenated).

**underserviced.**

**underused.** Use instead of *underutilised*.

**underway.**

**unfazed.**

**upside down** (not hyphenated).

**US** (adjective), **USA** (noun). *US* Marines; *US* foreign policy; the *USA*. *US\$50* – no spaces.

**use.** Means "take, hold or deploy as a means of accomplishing or achieving something": *Use your money wisely.* Use it instead of *utilise*, unless to convey the meaning "to make practical and effective use of": *We must utilise the resources we have to best wadvantage.*

## V

**very.** Avoid. It has been so overworked it often weakens the sentence rather than strengthening it.

**voters' roll.** Apostrophe after the s.

## W

**the (World Wide) Web.**

**webmaster.**

**website** (one word). For website addresses, use *italics* and exclude *http.www.gov.za*

**well-being.**

**whereas.** Use it instead of *while*, to avoid ambiguity. *Michael is an architect, whereas Sara is a doctor.*

**whereby, whereupon, etc.** Use *by which, upon which, etc.*

**whether, weather.** *I do not know whether they have arrived or (whether) they have not; The weather is sunny but cold.* Avoid *whether or not*.

**whether, if.** *Whether* (as explained above) introduces alternatives; *if* introduces a condition: *I don't know whether it's going to rain today; If you do your homework, you can watch TV.*

**while.** Avoid the use of *whilst*. Do not use *while* to mean *whereas* (see above).

**White Paper on Arts, Culture** ... Italicise White Paper titles.

**white people.** lower-case *w*.

**who, that.** Use *who* to refer to people; *that* to refer to animals and things: *The person who committed the crime should be punished. It is behaviour that should not go unpunished.*

**will.** Avoid the use of *shall*.

**winegrowers.**

**winemaking.**

**withhold.**

**woman.** Plural *women*; possessive is either *woman's* (singular) or *women's* (plural – the apostrophe before the s).

**workforce.**



workplace.  
worldwide.  
wrongdoing.

## X

xenophobia.  
Xmas. Do not use as an abbreviation for Christmas.  
X-ray. Upper-case X.

## Y

yearbook.  
year-end.  
years. Financially speaking, use 2009/10; otherwise 2001 – 03. When used adjectivally, hyphenate age: *The 10-year-old boy couldn't swim*, but *He was 10 years old*. Incorrect: *The 10-year old boy*.  
yellowwood.  
yesteryear.  
yield.  
your, you're. *Your* is a possessive pronoun: *Is this your book?* *You're* is a contraction of *you are*: *You're my best friend*.

## Z

zero tolerance. Hyphenated only when used adjectivally: *zero-tolerance campaign*.  
zookeeper.  
zoom lens.

## 6. WORD LISTS

### 6.1 Words often misspelled

#### A

abattoir  
abovementioned  
absolutely  
accede  
access  
accidentally  
accommodation  
acquaintance  
acquainted  
acquiesce  
acquire  
advice (n.), advise (v.)  
affect (make a difference to)  
ageing  
albumen (egg white; protein found in egg white)  
albumin (form of protein soluble in water)  
allomorph  
allopathic  
alumni, alumnus  
anaesthetic  
analogy, analogous  
analyse  
anoint  
appearance  
appropriate  
arbiter, arbitrator  
  
archaeology

architecture  
arrest  
asbestosis  
assess

#### B

battalion  
beach  
beauty  
been  
beginning  
being  
belief (a firmly held/religious conviction)  
benefited, benefiting  
biased  
breath (n.), breathe (v.)  
by-law

#### C

cacao  
cache  
campaign  
canister  
census

centre, centring  
challenge  
chauffeur  
citation  
colossal  
coexist  
combating  
complement (to add to or bring out the best in something)  
compliment (praise)  
comprise  
concomitant  
conducive  
connoisseur  
consciousness  
conscientious  
consensus  
cooperate  
coordinate  
copyright  
cost-benefit  
criticize  
critique

## D

deceive  
definite, definitely  
dependant (n.)  
dependent (adj.)  
descendant  
develop, development  
dialogue  
diarrhoea  
dietician  
disappoint  
disc (flat, thin, round object)  
disk (storage device for computers)  
dissatisfaction  
dissipate  
drunkenness  
dual (purpose)  
duel (contest)

## E

ecstasy  
effect (a change that something causes in something else)  
eligible  
eliminate  
embarrassment  
encyclopaedia  
enquiry (general questioning)  
enrol, enrolment  
entrepreneur  
exacerbate  
exceed  
existence

extant (adj.)  
extend (v.)  
extent (n.)  
extension

## F

faecal  
faeces  
feisty  
fiery  
focuses  
focusing  
foetal  
foetus  
foreseeable  
forego (precede)  
forgo (do without)  
formally  
formerly  
forthcoming  
franchise  
frenzied, frenzy  
fulfil, but: fulfilled, fulfilling  
full-time

## G


gauge  
goodwill  
gorilla (animal)  
gouge  
guerrilla (fighter)  
*gynaecologist*, gyaecology

## H

haemorrhage  
harass  
height  
heist  
helpdesk  
helpline  
high-risk  
homeopath  
homogeneous  
honorary  
humorous  
hygiene, hygienely  
hypocrisy

## I

Idiosyncrasy  
idiosyncratic  
immediately



illegible  
inadvertent  
inauguration  
incidentally  
independent  
indigenous  
indispensable  
infra-red  
innate  
inoculate  
inquiry (official investigation)  
insistent  
install  
instalment  
irresistible

## J

jealous  
jeopardy  
jewellery  
judgement (more legal)  
judgment (general)

## K

ketchup  
Kimberley, kimberlite  
knowledgeable  
knuckle  
kwashiorkor

## L

lead (present tense and the metal)  
led (past tense)  
liaise, liaison  
licence (n.), license (v.)  
lifelong  
life-size  
liquefy  
liquidise  
loath (adj.), loathe (v.)  
lose (to no longer have)  
loose (not tight)

## M

marginalised  
marquee  
metaphor  
methamphetamine (tik)  
micro-enterprises

millennium  
millionaire  
minuscule  
miscellaneous  
misdemeanour  
monetary  
myriad

## N

nauseating, nauseous  
nautical  
necessary (adj.), necessity (n.)  
neighbour  
neglect  
nemesis  
nuclei, nucleus

## O

oblivious  
obvious  
occasion  
occult  
occurred  
occurrence  
ongoing  
online  
organogram  
outcast

## P

parallel  
paralysed  
Parliament  
pastime  
pavilion  
penetrate  
perpetrator  
perseverance  
personal  
personnel  
pertinent  
playwright  
possession  
postgraduate  
post-mortem  
post-partum  
preceding  
precis  
predominantly  
prejudice  
principal (head of school, or a main element)



principle (a rule or belief governing one's behaviour)  
prise (force)  
privilege  
prize (award)  
proactive  
proceeding  
procreate  
professional  
professor  
program (computers)  
programme (radio, concert, theatre)  
prominence, prominent  
promiscuity, promiscuous  
pronounce  
pronunciation  
prophecy (n.), prophesy (v.)  
psyche  
psychiatry  
psychoanalysis  
psychology  
purge  
pursuant, pursue

## Q

quality  
quandary  
quantify  
quantum  
quarrel  
quarter-final  
quartermaster  
questionnaire  
queue  
quiet (silent)  
quintile  
quite (rather or extremely)  
quorum


## R

racecourse  
radioactive  
ratepayer  
re+e: re-edit, re-educate, re-embark, re-enter  
re-bound vs rebound  
recede  
receipt  
receive  
reception  
recession  
recommend  
re-create vs recreate  
referral, referred  
reign (of a ruler; of terror)

rein (with which to lead a horse)  
renaissance  
repetition, repetitive  
re-sent vs resent  
re-sort vs resort  
restaurateur  
rhyme  
rhythm  
ridicule, ridiculous  
rogue

## S

sacrilegious  
scholar  
school-leaver  
schoolteacher  
seismic  
seize  
seizure  
semi-final  
separate, separation  
shepherd  
sheriff  
siege  
sight (view)  
significant  
similar  
simile  
site (place)  
skilful  
social  
sort (kind or type)  
sought (past tense of seek)  
specialise (v.), specialist (n.)  
sphere  
stationary (not moving)  
stationery (writing material)  
storey (of a building)  
subcommittee  
sub-contract  
subpoena  
subtle  
subsection  
sub-standard  
succeed  
succession  
summon (call)  
summons (order to appear in court). Past tense: summonsed  
superintendent  
superior  
supervisor  
supposedly  
surreptitious



syndrome  
systemic

## T

tariff  
taught (past tense of teach)  
taut (tight)  
teamwork  
tempestuous  
thematic  
theory, theoretical  
threshold  
thumb  
thyroid  
toll-fee  
toll plaza  
toll road  
tortuous  
trial (in court)  
trail (of an animal or a hiker)  
truly  
tranquillity  
tyranny, tyrant

## U

ubiquitous  
unanimity  
unanimous  
uncooperative

undoubtedly  
unilateral  
unique  
unshakeable  
usually

## V

vicissitude  
victoriously  
villain  
visitation, visitor  
vociferous  
voluminous

## W

woman abuse (not women)  
weird  
who's (who is)  
whose (which person's)  
withdrawal  
withhold  
workforce  
workplace

## Y

yearbook  
youngster  
youth, youthful

## 6.2 Plurals

Where more than one plural form is given, the second is the more “modern”, accepted plural.

abacus	abacuses	carcinoma	carcinomata (medical); carcinomas
acquarium	acquaria; aquariums	concerto	concerti (music); concertos
addendum	addenda	consortium	consortia; consortiums
agenda	agendas	crisis	crises
alumnus	alumni	criterion	criteria
amoeba	amoebae; amoebas	curriculum	curricula; curriculums
analysis	analyses	datum	data
antenna	antennae (creatures); antennas (aerials)	dogma	dogmas
apparatus	apparatus; apparatuses	economic	economics
auditorium	auditoria; auditoriums	ego	egos
bacterium	bacteria	electron	electra
binoculars		embryo	embryos
bureau	bureaus	fauna	faunae; faunas
bus	buses	fellah	fellahin
cactus	cacti; cactuses	flora	florae; floras



foetus	foetuses	opus	opera (music); opuses
formula	formulas; formulae (scientific)	–	pants
forum	forums; fora (classical, legal)	phenomenon	phenomena
fungus	fungi; funguses	placenta	placentas
gas	gases	plateau	plateaus
genius	geniuses	potato	potatoes
genus	genera	prognosis	prognoses
Germany	Germanys	prospectus	prospectuses
ghetto	ghettos	quorum	quorums
–	glasses (spectacles)	radio	radios
graffito	graffiti	radius	radii; radiuses
half	halves	Reece	Reeces
headquarters	headquarters	–	remains
hippopotamus	hippopotami; hippopotamuses	rhinoceros	rhinoceri; rhinoceruses
honorarium	honoraria; honorariums	roof	roofs
Humphrey	Humphreys	Sandy	Sandys
hypothesis	hypotheses	scarf	scarves
ignoramus	ignoramuses	schema	schemata (medical); schemas
Jones	Joneses	series	
key	keys	skeleton	skeletal; skeletons
kibbutz	kibbutzim	species	–
lady	ladies	stadium	stadia; stadiums (classical)
larva	larvae	stigma	stigmata; stigmas (medical)
lens	lenses	stimulus	stimuli
lexicon	lexicons	stratum	strata
life	lives (but still lifes)	taxi	taxis
locum	locums	thesis	theses
locus	loci; locuses	tomato	tomatoes
madame	mesdames	trauma	traumata (medical); traumas
mantra	mantras	–	trousers
–	mathematics	uterus	uteri; uteruses
medium	mediums (people who communicate with the dead); media (publishing, advertising)	vacuum	vacua; vacuums
memorandum	memoranda; memorandums	virus	viri; viruses
minutia	minutiae	vista	vistas
money	monies; moneys	whereabouts	whereabouts
monsieur	messieurs	wife	wives
nemesis	nemeses	zero	zeros
news			
octopus	octopi; octopuses		

### 6.3 Redundancies (or tautologies) and plainer alternatives

#### ***Avoid***

12 midnight

12 noon

a great deal of

a number of

a person who is honest

a total of 14 birds

absolutely spectacular or phenomenal

advocate for

afforded the opportunity

approximately

around

as to whether

at this point in time

attached herewith

attempt

basically the same, etc.

basis, on an annual/a regular, etc

biography of her life

by means of

circle around

close proximity

compartmentalise

completely unanimous

concretise

conceptualise

consensus of opinion

conversationalise

cooperate together

each and every

enclosed herewith

end result

endeavour

enhance

escalate

exactly the same

final completion

for the purpose of

frank and honest exchange

free gift

#### ***Rather use***

*midnight*

*noon*

*many, most or much*

*a few, some, many, or several*

*an honest person*

*14 birds*

*spectacular or phenomenal*

*advocate*

*given the opportunity*

*about*

*about, on*

*whether*

*at this point or now*

*attached*

*try*

*the same, etc.*

*annually, regularly*

*biography*

*by*

*circle*

*proximity, closeness*

*divide into compartments*

*unanimous*

*make concrete, give a concrete example*

*think up, think of*

*consensus*

*converse, make conversation*

*cooperate*

*each*

*enclosed*

*result, outcome*

*try*

*improve*

*increase in importance (or urgency)*

*the same*

*completion*

*for, to or of*

*frank exchange or honest exchange*

*gift*

he/she is a person who ...	<i>he or she</i>
implement	<i>carry out</i>
important or basic essentials	<i>essentials</i>
in many cases/instances	<i>often, frequently</i>
in order to	<i>to</i>
in spite of the fact that	<i>although or despite</i>
in terms of	<i>on, about, regarding</i>
in the context of	<i>for or about</i>
in the event that	<i>if</i>
in the first place	<i>first or firstly</i>
inception	<i>start or beginning</i>
incorrect	<i>wrong</i>
infrastructure	<i>be specific in the context (eg roads, railway lines, buildings, telecommunications links)</i>
job functions	<i>job or functions</i>
maximisation	<i>maximise, make the most of</i>
month of June, etc.	<i>June, etc.</i>
new innovations	<i>innovations</i>
numerous	<i>many</i>
one and the same	<i>the same</i>
operationalise	<i>put into operations</i>
participate (in)	<i>take part in</i>
particular interest	<i>interest</i>
period of four days	<i>four days</i>
personal opinion	<i>opinion</i>
personally I think/feel	<i>I think or I feel</i>
pertaining to	<i>relating to or belonging to</i>
purchase	<i>buy</i>
puzzling in nature	<i>puzzling</i>
the reason being is that	<i>the reason being that, the reason is that</i>
reasons why	<i>reasons</i>
reconstruct	<i>rebuild</i>
refer back	<i>refer</i>
your letter refers	<i>I/we refer to your letter</i>
in regard to, with regard(s) to	<i>of, on, about, under, according to</i>
relating to	<i>about</i>
repeat again	<i>repeat</i>
return again	<i>return</i>
revert back	<i>revert</i>
shorter/longer in length	<i>shorter or longer</i>
small/large in size	<i>small or large</i>
square/round/rectangular in shape	<i>square, round or rectangular</i>



structures	<i>be specific in the context (eg street committees, planning committees, community groups/ representatives)</i>
summarise briefly	<i>summarise</i>
surrounded on all sides	<i>surrounded</i>
surrounding circumstances	<i>circumstances</i>
systematic	<i>organised</i>
the fact that	<i>that</i>
the future to come	<i>the future</i>
there is no doubt about that	<i>no doubt</i>
to a larger degree	<i>largely</i>
usual/habitual custom	<i>custom</i>
utilise	<i>use</i>
we are in receipt of	<i>we have received</i>

#### 6.4 Common abbreviations

##### A

AA	affirmative action
AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
AA	Automobile Association
AAA	Association of Advertising Agencies
ABC	Agricultural Business Chamber
ABC	Audit Bureau of Circulations
Abet	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACDP	African Christian Democratic Party
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific states
ACS	Agricultural Credit Scheme
Acsa	Airports Company South Africa
Adm.	Admiral
AEC	African Economic Community
AFP	<i>Agence France-Presse</i>
AFU	Asset Forfeiture Unit
A-G	Attorney-General
A-G	Auditor-General
AGM	annual general meeting
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
Alssa	Association of Law Societies of South Africa
AMD	acid mine drainage
AMPS	All Media Products Survey
ANC	African National Congress
ANCWL	ANC Women's League
ANCYL	ANC Youth League
Anfasa	Association of Non-Fiction Authors of Southern Africa
AO	accounting officer
AP	Associated Press
Apla	Azanian People's Liberation Army
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
ARC	Agricultural Research Council
Armscor	Armaments Corporation of South Africa
ART	antiretroviral treatment

ASA	Advertising Standards Authority
ASAIB	Association of South African Indexers and Bibliographers
ASD	assistant director
Asean	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATKV	Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging
ATNS	Air Traffic and Navigational Services Company
AU	African Union
Azapo	Azanian People's Organisation
<b>B</b>	
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BA	British Airways
BAC	Business Against Crime
BAS	Basic Accounting System
Basa	Business and Arts South Africa
BBBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
BBC	Black Business Council
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBI	Black Business Initiative
Bcawu	Building Construction and Allied Workers' Union
BCCSA	Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BEEC	Black Economic Empowerment Commission
Bifsa	Building Industries Federation of South Africa
BLNS	Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland
BMF	Black Management Forum
BNC	binational commission
Brig.	Brigadier
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
<b>C</b>	
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme
CAF	Confederation of African Football
Capt.	Captain
Caricom	Caribbean Community
CBO	community-based organisation
CBRTA	Cross-Boarder Road Transport Agency
CC	Competition Commission
CC	Constitutional Court
CCF	credit-card format
CCMA	Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration
CCTV	close-circuit television
CDA	Central Drug Authority
CDW	community development worker
Cedaw	(United Nations) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEF	Central Energy Fund
CEM	Council of Education Ministers
CEO	chief executive officer
CFO	chief financial officer
CGE	Commission on Gender Equality
CGIC	Credit Guarantee Insurance Corporation
CHE	Council of Higher Education
CHOC	Childhood Cancer Foundation South Africa

CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of State and Government Meeting
CIO	chief information officer
CISA	Consumer Institute of South Africa
Cites	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CJS	criminal justice system
ClaRA	Communal Land Rights Act
Cllr	councillor
Cmr	commissioner
CNN	Cable News Network
Col.	Colonel
Contralesa	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
COO	chief operating officer
Cosab	Council of South African Banks
Cosafa	Council of Southern African Football Associations
Cosas	Congress of South African Students
Cosatu	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPA	Consumer Protection Act
CPA	Cotonou Partnership Agreement
CPF	community policing forum
CPI	consumer price index
CPO	citizen's post office
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRC	Criminal Record Centre
CRLR	Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights
CSBP	Centre for Small Business Promotion
CSG	Child Support Grant
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CWC	Chemical Weapons Convention

## D

DA	Democratic Alliance
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DC	diplomatic corps
DCEO	deputy chief executive officer
DCF	District Communicators' Forum
DD	deputy director
DDG	deputy director-general
DG	director-general
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
Dir	director/directorate
Dissa	Disability Sport South Africa
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo

## E

EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
EC	European Commission
ECD	Early Childhood Development
Ecosocc	(United Nations) Economic, Social and Cultural Council
Ecowas	Economic Community of West African States
Efta	European Free Trade Association
EIA	environmental impact assessment
EIP	environmental implementation plan
eNaTIS	Electronic National Traffic Information System

ENE	Estimates of National Expenditure
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
ESI	electricity supply industry
EU	European Union
EWT	Endangered Wildlife Trust
<b>F</b>	
F	Fahrenheit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FAS	Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
Fawu	Food and Allied Workers Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FBO	faith-based organisation
FCA	Foreign Correspondents' Association
FCI	Federated Chamber of Industries
FDI	foreign direct investment
Fedhasa	Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa
Fedsal	Federation of South African Labour Unions
Fedshaw	Federation of South African Women
Fedusa	Federation of Unions of South Africa
FET	Further Education and Training
FETC	Further Education and Training Certificate
FF+	Freedom Front Plus
FFC	Financial and Fiscal Commission
FICA	Financial Intelligence Centre Act
FIFA	<i>Fédération Internationale de Football Association</i>
FIG	foreign investment grant
FRD	Foundation for Research Development
FRU	Film Resource Unit
FSB	Financial Services Board
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
FTA	free trade agreement
FTFA	Food and Trees for Africa
FXI	Freedom of Expression Institute

<b>G</b>	
GAP	Gender Advocacy Programme
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCF	Government Communicators' Forum
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
GCP	Government Communication Programme
GCS	Government Communication Strategy
GDP	gross domestic product
GDS	Growth and Development Summit
Gems	Government Employees Medical Scheme
GEPF	Government Employees Pension Fund
GET	General Education and Training
GG	Government Garage
GIC	Government Information Centre
GLTP	Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park
GMT	Greenwich Mean Time
GNP	gross national product
G20	Group of Twenty
G77	Group of 77
G8	Group of Eight

<b>H</b>	
HDI	historically disadvantaged individual
HDP	historically disadvantaged person
HITB	Hospitality Industries Training Board
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HoC	head of communication
HoD	head of department
Hospersa	Health and Other Service Personnel Trade Union of South Africa
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
HR	human resources
HRD	human-resource development
HRIS	Human-Resource Information System
HRM	human-resource management
HSGIC	Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council

<b>I</b>	
IAAF	International Association of Athletics Federations
IAJ	Institute for the Advancement of Journalism
IBO	International Boxing Organisation
IBSA	India-Brazil-South Africa
Icasa	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ICC	International Cricket Council
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICD	Independent Complaints Directorate
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	information and communications technology
ID	identity document
ID	Independent Democrats
Idasa	Institute for Democracy in Africa
IDB	illicit diamond buying
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IDT	Independent Development Trust
IDZs	industrial development zones
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMC	International Marketing Council
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMM	Institute for Marketing Management
IMR	Institute for Medical Research
Interpol	International Criminal Police Organisation
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IOL	Independent Online
IOR-ARC	Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation
IPO	initial public offering
IRT	Integrated Rapid Transit (system)
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
ISP	Internet service-provider
ISRDP	Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme
ISSN	International Standard Serial Number

IT	information technology
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
<b>J</b>	
JBC	Joint Bilateral Commission
JCC	Joint Commission of Cooperation
JCPS	Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster
JPC	Joint Permanent Commission
JPCC	Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation
JSC	Judicial Service Commission
<b>K</b>	
Kat	Karoo Array Telescope
kg	kilogram
km	kilometre
KNP	Kruger National Park
kWh	kilowatt hours
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
<b>L</b>	
LED	local economic development
LCC	Land Claims Court
LHR	Lawyers for Human Rights
LHWP	Lesotho Highlands Water Project
Liasa	Library and Information Association of South Africa
LLIM	Local Liaison and Information Management
LPG	liquid petroleum gas
LRA	Labour Relations Act
LRAD	Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development
LRC	Legal Resources Centre
LSM	Living Standards Measure
LSSA	Law Society of South Africa
<b>M</b>	
MA	Master of Arts
MAPPP	Media, Advertising, Printing, Packaging and Publishing (Seta)
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MBChB	Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery
MCC	Medicines Control Council
MDB	Municipal Demarcation Board
MD	managing director
MDDA	Media Development and Diversity Agency
MDGs	millennium development goals
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MEd	Master of Education
Mercosur	South American Common Market
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
MFRC	Micro-Finance Regulatory Council
MHSI	Mine Health and Safety Inspectorate
MIDP	Motor Industry Development Programme
MinMec	Minister and Member of the Executive Council
Misa	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MISS	Minimum Information Security Standards
MK	Umkhonto weSizwe

MLC	metropolitan local council
MLO	ministerial liaison officer
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MP	Military Police
MPC	Monetary Policy Committee
MPRDA	Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act
MRC	Medical Research Council
MRM	Moral Regeneration Movement
MSc	Master of Science
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
<b>N</b>	
NA	National Assembly
NACF	National Anti-Corruption Forum
Nactu	National Council of Trade Unions
Nafcoc	National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Nafu	National African Farmers' Union
Nam	Non-Aligned Movement
NAMC	National Agricultural Marketing Council
Nampo	National Maize Producers' Organisation
Napwa	National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS
Nasasa	National Stokvels Association of South Africa
Nasrec	National Sports, Recreation and Exhibition Centre
Nato	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NBFET	National Board for Further Education and Training
NBI	National Botanical Institute
NCACC	National Conventional Arms Control Committee
NCCS	National Crime Combating Strategy
NCOP	National Council of Provinces
NCPS	National Crime Prevention Strategy
NCRF	National Community Radio Forum
NDPP	National Directorate of Public Prosecutions
NDA	National Development Agency
NEC	National Executive Committee
Nedlac	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NEF	National Empowerment Fund
Nehawu	National, Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union
Nemisa	National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa
Nepad	New Partnership for Africa's Development
Nersa	National Energy Regulator of South Africa
NFVF	National Film and Video Foundation
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NHBRC	National Home-Builders' Registration Council
NHC	National Heritage Council
NHF	National Heritage Foundation
NHFC	National Housing Finance Corporation
NIA	National Intelligence Agency
Nicoc	National Intelligence Coordinating Committee
Nicro	National Institute for Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders
NIPILAR	National Institute for Public Interest Law and Research
NLS	National Language Service
NLSA	National Library of South Africa
NMT	non-motorised transport
Nocsa	National Olympic Committee of South Africa

Nosa	National Occupational Safety Association
NPA	National Ports Authority
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
NPI	National Productivity Institute
NPO	non-profit organisation
NPS	National Prosecuting Services
NPU	Newspaper Press Union
NOF	National Qualifications Framework
NRF	National Research Foundation
NRSC	National Road Safety Council
NSA	National Skills Authority
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
NSRI	National Sea Rescue Institute
NUF	National Union of Farmworkers
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
Numsa	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
Nurcha	National Urban Reconstruction and Housing Agency
NYDA	National Youth Youth Development Agency
NZG	National Zoological Gardens

## O

OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ODA	overseas development assistance
OHS	occupational health and safety
Opec	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OPSC	Office of the Public Service Commission
OSD	Occupation Specific Dispensation
OSEO	Office for Serious Economic Offences

## P

PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
Palama	Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy
PanSALB	Pan South African Language Board
PAP	Pan-African Parliament
PAYE	Pay As You Earn (income tax)
PC	Project Consolidate
PCC	Presidential Coordinating Council
PCF	Provincial Communication Forum
PDI	previously disadvantaged individual
PEC	Provincial Executive Committee
PEG	Professional Editors' Group
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PGA	Parliamentary Gallery Association
PGDP	Provincial Growth and Development Plan
PGDS	Provincial Growth and Development Strategy
PGM	platinum-group metal
PHC	primary healthcare
PHP	People's Housing Process
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PIFSA	Print Industries Federation of South Africa
Pillir	Policy on Incapacity Leave and Ill-health Retirement
PLL	Provincial and Local Liaison
PMS	Performance Management System
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission



Popcru Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union  
 Potwa Post and Telecommunications Workers' Association  
 Powa People Opposed to Women Abuse  
 PPC Presidential Press Corps  
 PPP public-private partnership  
 Prisa Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa  
 Prof. Professor (note full stop)  
 PSA Public Servants' Association  
 PSA public service announcement  
 PSC Peace and Security Council (AU)  
 PSC Public Service Commission  
 PTA parent-teachers' association

## R

RAF Road Accident Fund  
 REC regional economic community  
 RDC regional district council  
 RDP Reconstruction and Development Programme  
 RICA Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-Related Information Act  
 RRU Rapid Response Unit  
 RTMC Road Traffic Management Corporation

## S

SAA South African Airways  
 SAAO South African Astronomical Observatory  
 SAAU South African Agricultural Union  
 SABA South African Booksellers' Association  
 SABC South African Broadcasting Corporation  
 SABDC South African Book Development Council  
 SABS South African Bureau of Standards  
 SACAA South African Civil Aviation Authority  
 SACC South African Council of Churches  
 SACE South African Council for Educators  
 Sacob South African Chamber of Business  
 SACP South African Communist Party  
 Sactwu Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union  
 Sacu Southern African Customs Union  
 SADC Southern African Development Community  
 Sadtu South African Democratic Teachers' Union  
 Safa South African Football Association  
 Safcol South African Forestry Company Limited  
 Safrea Southern African Freelancers' Association  
 Sagda South African Graduates Development Association  
 SAGNC South African Geographical Names Council  
 SAHRC South African Human Rights Commission  
 SAIP South African Institute of Physics  
 Salga South African Local Government Association  
 SALRC South African Law Reform Commission  
 Salt Southern African Large Telescope  
 Sama South African Medical Association  
 Samsa South African Maritime Safety Authority  
 SANAC South African National AIDS Council  
 Sanap South African National Antarctic Programme  
 SANC South African Nursing Council  
 Sanco South African National Civic Organisation

SANDF	South African National Defence Force
Sanef	South African National Editors' Forum
SANParks	South African National Parks
Sanral	South African National Roads Agency Limited
Sanrec	South African National Recreation Council
Santaco	South African National Taxi Council
Sapa	South African Press Association
Sapohr	South African Prisoners' Organisation for Human Rights
Sapp	Southern African Power Pool
SAPS	South African Police Service
Sapu	South African Police Union
Saqa	South African Qualifications Authority
SARB	South African Reserve Bank
SARCC	South African Rail Commuter Corporation
Sarfu	South African Rugby Football Union
SARPCCO	Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
Sars	South African Revenue Service
SAS	South African ship
Sasar	South African Search and Rescue Organisation
Sasco	South African Students Congress
Saspu	South African Students Press Union
SASS	South African Secret Service
Sassa	South African Social Security Agency
SATI	South African Translators' Institute
Sawen	South African Woman Entrepreneurs' Network
SAWS	South African Weather Service
SDI	spatial development initiative
Seda	Small Enterprise Development Agency
SET	science, engineering and technology
Seta	Sector Education and Training Authority
SFF	Strategic Fuel Fund
SHI	Social Health Insurance
SIPP	special integrated presidential project
Sita	State Information Technology Agency
Site	Standard Income Tax on Employees
SIU	Special Investigation Unit
SMMEs	small, medium and micro-enterprises
SOEs	state-owned enterprises
SoNA	State of the Nation Address
SPCA	Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
SRSA	Sport and Recreation South Africa
S&T	science and technology
STD	sexually transmitted disease
STI	sexual transmitted infection
<b>T</b>	
TB	tuberculosis
TDCA	Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement
Tefsa	Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa
TFCA	transfrontier conservation area
Thrip	Technology and Human Resource for Industry Programme
Ticad	Tokyo International Conference on African Development
Tisa	Trade and Investment South Africa
TKC	Trans-Kalahari Corridor

TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TRP	Taxi Recapitalisation Programme
Twib	Technology for Women in Business
<b>U</b>	
UCB	United Cricket Board
UCDP	United Christian Democratic Party
UDM	United Democratic Movement
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
UK	United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)
Umalusi	General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Council
UN	United Nations
Unctad	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
Unep	United Nations Environment Programme
Unesco	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
Unga	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees
Unicef	United Nations Children's Fund
Unido	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
Unifem	United Nations Development Fund for Women
Unisa	University of South Africa
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
URP	Urban Renewal Programme
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

<b>V</b>	
VAT	value-added tax
VCT	voluntary counselling and testing
VEP	Victim Empowerment Programme
VIP	very important person

<b>W</b>	
an	wide area network
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organisation
WHP	Women's Health Project
WID	Women in Development
Wims	Ward Information Management System
WRC	Water Research Commission
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature



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Acknowledgements:

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Plain Language Communications (Pty) Ltd

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