

Editorial style guidelines

These guidelines help to make sure that our written communications are clear and consistent.

The main thing is to be consistent within the publication, and not to distract your readers with inconsistent spelling or punctuation, or grammatical errors.

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Spelling

General points

Use UK English (centre, ageing, programme) unless you have good reason not to, except in names and titles that use another spelling, such as Population Studies Center, Gray Panthers.

Use “s” in words such as “specialise” and “organisation”, except in names and titles that are spelt with a “z”, such as World Health Organization.

As a general rule, use Collins English Dictionary at www.collinsdictionary.com

Standard spellings and forms

adaptation
adviser
agecare
ageing
all right
antiretroviral
benefited, benefiting
carer or caregiver (not caretaker)
cooperate
data (singular)
dependant (noun), dependent (adjective),
dependence
DFID (Department for International Development)
email
enquiry
focused, focusing
formulas
forums
government – always lower case unless a specific title
healthcare
HelpAge (not HAI)
HelpAge global network
HIV and AIDS (all caps)
homecare
housebound
indexes (plural of index)
intergenerational
International Day of Older Persons
internet
judgement
learnt (past tense of “learn”)
liaise
life course (hyphenate when an adjective eg “life-course approach”)
lifelong
Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA)

movable
non-communicable diseases (NCDs)
orientation, orientate
ongoing
per cent (% in tables and on the web)
policy maker
practice (noun), practise (verb),
preventive
pullout
queuing
side effect
United Nations Principles for Older Persons
website
wellbeing
worldwide

Hyphens (-)

Use hyphens where the meaning may be unclear without one. Otherwise, avoid them as far as possible. As a general rule, use a hyphen when two words are used as an adjective before a noun, unless one of the words is an adverb. For example: a community-based organisation, a poorly lit room.

Examples of hyphenation with numbers:

A 76-year-old man
The woman was 93 years old
A group of people over 70 years of age
A 12-page publication
Three-quarters

Countries and regions

Côte d’Ivoire (not Ivory Coast)
Democratic Republic of the Congo
The Gambia (upper case “T”)
North Korea, South Korea (not Korea)
Myanmar (not Burma)
the Netherlands (with lower case “t”)
oPt (short for Occupied Palestinian Territories)
the Philippines (with lower case “t”)
sub-Saharan Africa
Vietnam (not Viet Nam)

Foreign words

Generally avoid foreign words (including Latin). If you need to use foreign words, show them in italics followed by the English in brackets if necessary. For example: All the *brigadistas* (brigade workers) are over 50 years old.

Use normal font (not italics) for non-English names of organisations.

Numbers

Numerals

In narrative text, use words for one to nine and numerals for higher numbers, except where there is a mixture of numbers, in which case use numerals. For example: 8 cases per 1,000.

Spell out approximations. For example: about a hundred books.

Use comma separators for thousands, such as 1,000 and 10,000.

Use numerals for percentages and decimals, and when referring to precise measurements of length, weight or volume, such as 1 per cent, 5mg (no space between numeral and unit of measurement).

Use numerals for millions, such as 3 million, 5.8 million. Spell out “million”.

Do not start a sentence with a numeral. Either reword the sentence or spell the number out.

Numbers adjacent to each other should have one of the numbers spelt out. For example: nineteen 32-seater buses (but preferably avoid this sort of construction by rewording).

Hyphenate two-thirds, three-quarters etc.

Dates and numerals ending with “s” do not have an apostrophe. For example: a woman in her 80s; in the 1970s.

Measurements

Normally use metric (which can be followed by imperial measurements in brackets).

20cm, 10cc, 42m (no space)

75 per cent (not %, except in tables and on the web)

12°C (but “the temperature is raised by three degrees”)

“billion”, if used, should mean one thousand million, but preferably avoid using billion

With currencies, show US\$ equivalent in brackets.

For example: 500Rs (US\$11). Use Full Universal Currency Converter website.

“13 square miles”, “28 square kilometres” (spell out in main text)

Dates and times

10am, 4.30pm

1 October 2017 (date, month, year)

1990s, 2000s (no apostrophe)

2016-2017 (hyphen) for calendar years

2016/17 for financial years

Punctuation

Abbreviations

Do not use ampersands (&) except where they are part of a brand or organisation name.

Avoid abbreviations in narrative text – some alternatives are shown in brackets. Do not use full points in abbreviations, or spaces between initials.

Examples:

eg (for example, such as)

etc (and so on)

ie (that is)

UK, USA, HIV

If using abbreviations, spell out the name in full the first time followed by the abbreviation in brackets: non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

Apostrophes (’)

Apostrophes are used to indicate that one or more letters have been omitted, such as “it’s” (“it is” or “it has”).

Do not use an apostrophe for “its” when it is a possessive.

For example:

It’s a group of older women. The group assists its members.

Bold, italics and underlining

In narrative text, do not use bold, italics or underlining for emphasis. Reword instead.

Contact details

Spell out “Street”, “Road”, etc

PO Box

Tel (no full stop)

Do not include the words “Email” and “Web” before email and web addresses.

Include the country code in phone numbers.

For example: +44 (0)20 7278 7778

Bullet points (•)

Bullet point lists are useful for bringing out points clearly and they help to break up the text. But avoid long lists, and avoid a mixture of phrases and complete sentences in the same list.

For a list of phrases within a full sentence, start with lower case after each bullet point and use no punctuation except for a full stop after the last bullet point. For example:

Members of the group talk about:

- medical conditions
- finances
- legal matters
- living arrangements.

For a list of individual sentences, start with an initial

capital letter after each bullet point and end each sentence with a full stop. For example:

- Families need support from the state, if they are to continue their role as carers.
- Homecare programmes should be designed to suit local needs, resources and cultures.
- More research is required on the need for homecare.

If the same article includes some bullet point lists of complete sentences and others of incomplete sentences, it may look better to use capital letters and full stops for both sorts of list.

For bullet point lists made up of entire paragraphs, insert a line space between each bullet point.

Capital letters

Keep the use of capitals to a minimum.

Do not type whole words in capitals (except for names such as UNICEF).

For organisations and groups, use lower case. For example: a government initiative. As part of a specific title, use initial capitals. For example: the Government of Tanzania.

For job titles, normally use lower case. For example: project officer. Use initial capitals if the job title is included in a list, or given at the end of an article with the name and address.

Dashes (–)

Use dashes (–) not hyphens (-) for subordinate phrases.

For example: Trainers from three countries – Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Fiji – took part in the workshop.

Avoid over-using dashes as punctuation – do not use them more than twice in the same paragraph.

Headings and titles

For book and report titles, use an initial capital for the first word only, and if you are referring to it in the narrative, use italics. For example: *Ageing and the city: making urban spaces work for older people*

For newsletter and journal titles, use an initial capital for every word except small words such as “a” and “and”.

If you are referring to it in the narrative, use italics. For example: *Ageing in Asia*.

For titles of articles, subheadings and chapters in books, use an initial capital for the first word only. If you are referring to it in the narrative, put it in quotation marks. For example: “Why population ageing matters”.

For events such as conferences and courses, use initial capital letters. For example: the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

Quotation marks (“ ”), (‘ ’)

Use double quotes for speech and words that are quoted in the text. For example: She is “mother” to her grandchildren.

In quotes within quotes, use single quotes. For example:

“We have a ‘warm house’ project in which a group of volunteers organise a social gathering in an older person’s flat,” she said.

Quotation marks go after the comma or full stop if the quote is a complete sentence starting with a capital letter, but before if it is part of a sentence. For example:

She said: “Before, nobody cared for us, but now our experience is put to good use.”

“Before, nobody cared for us,” she said, “but now our experience is put to good use.”

She said that “nobody cared”.

Spacing

Use a single space after a full stop.

Choice of words

For a full list of agreed terms and definitions see the [HelpAge International glossary at <http://www.helpage.org/brand>](http://www.helpage.org/brand)

Use “older people”, not “the aged”, “the elderly” or “elderly people” as these have connotations of frailty and otherness. Use the words that older people prefer in the region you are writing for. For example, in some cultures, older people are known as “elders” or “seniors”.

Use “internally displaced people” for those who are displaced within their own country, and “refugees” for those who have crossed borders. The term “displaced people” can be used for both groups.

Generally avoid “ethnic background”, “race” and “tribe”. When not used accurately, these may be derogatory. If in doubt, use “people”.

Avoid gender-specific words that are used to mean both men and women, such as forefathers (ancestors), manmade (artificial), manpower (human resources, staff).

Avoid “he”, “she” or “s/he” to mean “he” or “she” – instead, use “he or she”, “they”, repeat the noun, or use plural.

Avoid terms such as “beneficiary”, “in the field”, as these can sound demeaning.

Avoid “slum” and “shanty town” as they are often felt to be derogatory. Use “informal settlement” instead.

Avoid assumptions about people, such as their sexuality, whether they have children, or whether they have particular abilities or disabilities.

Do not assume the sex of a particular group of people. For example: “business people”, not “businessmen”.

Use “people living with HIV”, “children affected by HIV and AIDS”, or “orphans and vulnerable children” (not “AIDS orphans”). Follow UNAIDS Terminology Guidelines.

Use “people with disabilities” or “disabled people”, not “the disabled” or “handicapped”.

Use “blind people” or “people with a visual impairment”, not “the blind”.

Use “deaf people” or “people with impaired hearing”, not “the deaf”.

Use “people with leprosy” or “people affected by leprosy”, not “lepers”.

Use “wheelchair user” not “wheelchair bound”.

When referring to parts of the world, consider whether you need to refer to specific regions. For example, you might say “in some parts of the world” or “in many cultures”. Instead of saying “both in developing and developed countries” you could say “across the world”. If you need to refer to specific regions, use geographical descriptions or use “developing countries”, “countries in transition” and “elsewhere”. Try to avoid “Third World”, “under-developed”, “industrialised” and “industrially developed”. “North” and “South” are disliked by some because they are geographically

Notes and references

Generally avoid using explanatory notes. Include references in publications for a policy audience. To indicate a note or reference in the text, use a superscript number outside the punctuation, like this.¹

List full references at the end of the publication (as endnotes). Alternatively, list them at the bottom of the page or in the margin (as footnotes). Use a full-size number followed by a full stop. Use commas between the elements of the reference, and no full stop at the end.

Publication references

If there is more than one author, use the first author's name and 'et al.'

If no author is specified, treat the publisher as the author.

If the same work is cited in the same article or chapter, repeat the author's surname and title of the book or article, or a shortened form of it. Do not use 'op. cit.' or 'ibid.'

For published materials, use italics. For journal articles, chapters and unpublished materials, use single quotation marks and give details of the source.

For web pages and online publications, include the usual reference followed by the web address (excluding 'http' if the address includes 'www') and the date viewed in brackets.

For emails, include the author, subject of message, title of discussion list (if any), email address, and date received or viewed.

If the publication has a bibliography or further reading list as well as references, use the same style for the bibliography as for references, listing entries in alphabetical order by author surname.

For references in translated editions, the title and publisher's name should be in English. Other words should be in the language you are translating into. If the reference is to a work first published in English, which has been translated into the language you are translating into, you should refer to the English edition, since this is the one that was used as the source. You may wish to add a note that a translated edition is also available.

Examples

Books and reports

1. Knox-Vydmanov C, *The price of income security in older age: cost of a universal pension in 50 low- and middle-income countries*, London, HelpAge International, 2011, p.6

Subsequent references

1. Knox-Vydmanov, p.6

Subsequent references where more than one work by the same author is cited

1. Knox-Vydmanov C, *The price of income security in older age*, p.6

Where no author is given, treat the publisher as the author

1. HelpAge International, *Counting carers*, London, HelpAge International, 2006

Chapter in edited book

1. Barrientos A, 'Ageing, poverty and public policy in developing countries: new survey evidence' in Kemp P, Van Den Bosch L and Smith L (eds.), *Social protection in an ageing world*, Oxford, Intersentia, 2006

Journal article

1. Kidd S, 'Equal pensions, equal rights: achieving universal pension coverage for older women and men in developing countries', *Gender & Development* 17:3, 2009, pp.377-381

Unpublished documents

1. Hoffman J and Martin J, 'Care needs, services and policies of older people in South Africa', presentation prepared for HelpAge International, 2012

Email discussion group

Include date viewed in brackets

1. Patel P, 'Income generating opportunities', Livelihoods Discussion Group, listserv@leeds.ac.uk (30 January 2013)

Web page or online publication

Include date viewed in brackets

1. UNDESA Population Division, *World population prospects: the 2012 revision*, 2013, Mortality data, <http://esa.un.org/wpp/excel-data/mortality.htm> (7 August 2014)