

Guide to Ofsted's house style

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Introduction

This guidance is intended to help those writing and editing for Ofsted to present written information in a clear and consistent style so that readers can readily understand the content. In following the guidance, writers and editors will help maintain the corporate identity and consistency that support the authority and effectiveness of Ofsted's publications and correspondence. There is further useful information and guidance in *Accessibility: a good practice guide*, a document developed following a review of Ofsted's communications policies and practices. It is available on the intranet.

Ofsted aims to help improve quality and standards in the public services it inspects or regulates through the independence of its judgements, the clarity of its communication, the wide dissemination of inspection findings and the provision of advice to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Ofsted has a duty to promote equal opportunities and social inclusion. Language and communication play an important role in supporting these objectives. Ofsted's reports and other publications express the views of the organisation.

Children's Views reports by the Children's Rights Director present the views of children, rather than the views of Ofsted. They are written in a style which aims to be readable by both children and professional adults, but should be consistent with this guidance wherever applicable.

Part A. House style

Abbreviations

1. Avoid using abbreviations whenever possible, especially in documents intended for an external audience. If the abbreviated expression occurs only a few times at intervals, it is best to write it out in full each time. Exceptions to this are GCSE, A level, BTEC and MP, which never need to be written in full. The glossary includes phrases that should never be abbreviated, such as 'Every Child Matters' and 'looked after children'.
2. Do not use abbreviations in headings or titles of publications.
3. Do not use the abbreviations 'eg', 'ie' or 'etc'. Always spell out in full: 'for example', 'that is', 'and so on'. If you write the phrase 'for example', there is no need for 'and so on' since it is clear from your use of 'for example...' that you do not intend to list all possible instances.
4. If a phrase that can be abbreviated appears many times, especially if the occurrences are close together, you may need to use an abbreviation to avoid annoying repetition. In this case, spell out the words in full the first time the expression is used and put the abbreviation in brackets after it: for example 'the Department for Education (DfE)'. (Make sure that the phrase will actually need to be abbreviated later before including the abbreviation here.) The glossary includes some details of particular abbreviations.
5. Do not use full stops in abbreviations.

Addresses and telephone numbers

6. Postal addresses should be left-aligned and should have no punctuation at the end of each line. Postcodes should go on a separate line. The Royal Mail recommends that the two halves of a postcode should be separated by two spaces. For example:

Ofsted
Freshford House
Redcliffe Way
Bristol
BS1 6NL

7. You do not have to include 'http://' in website addresses that are referred to in reports if the address starts with 'www'. For example:

www.teachernet.gov.uk

but

<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk>.

8. Avoid giving just the home page of a website in a reference. It is more helpful to the reader to have the web address of the page being referred to. Avoid giving web addresses that link directly to files such as PDFs and Word documents – give the address of the page where there is a link to the file. Contact the publications team if you would like further guidance.
9. Include a space after the area code in telephone and fax numbers. Please note that the area code for London is 020, not 0207 or 0208.

Bullets and lists

10. Use square bullets. Try to avoid using sub-bullets, but if they are necessary, indicate each one with a dash. All bullets and sub-bullets should be spaced out to increase accessibility.
11. The Plain English Campaign recommends different ways to present a sequence of bullet points, depending on its structure. Each point may consist of one or more complete sentences, or the points together may make up one continuous sentence introduced by a stem. You should not mix the two kinds in one sequence.
12. If the bullet points consist of full sentences, they should begin with a capital letter and end in a full stop. For example:

'Three conclusions can be drawn from the evidence collected for this survey.

- There was a marked variability in funding for libraries, even across schools with good libraries.
- Even the best-funded school libraries struggled to meet the most commonly recommended levels of funding.
- There was a direct link between well-funded libraries and effectiveness.'

13. If the bullet points have a stem and are not full sentences, they should have no punctuation apart from a colon after the stem and a full stop after the final bullet. Each bullet point must start with the same kind of word or phrase (noun or verb), and follow logically from the stem. The three points in the example below start with verbs.

'A school's food policy should:

- state clearly its aims, objectives and success criteria

- affect all aspects of food provision, for example tuck shops, school lunches and vending machines
- ensure that the lunch break experience contributes positively to the pupils' personal development.'

Lists

14. Lists are useful for breaking up text, but do not overuse them or they risk overpowering the main body of the text.
15. If a list in the running text of a document contains a number of complex items, use a lead-in line followed by a colon, with a semicolon to follow each point. For example: 'The new inspectorate's remit includes: the inspection of children's social care, formerly the responsibility of the Commission for Social Care Inspection; the inspection of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (formerly undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration); the inspection services of the Adult Learning Inspectorate; and the existing work of Ofsted.' Do not use semicolons in a list comprising bullet points.
16. Where lists do not need to be numbered, use bullet points. This implies that there is no priority or other meaning in the order of appearance.

Capital letters

17. Ofsted's style is to minimise the use of capital letters. In general, capital initials should be used only for proper nouns: the names of individual people, places, organisations or languages. They should not be used for common nouns except where these begin a sentence or heading. They should not be used for subjects and curriculum areas in early years provision, schools and colleges except for languages and when the names of subjects are abbreviated, for example: 'The school provided French, additional physical education, art and drama in its after-school clubs.' The following paragraphs give specific examples of when capital letters should be used and when they should not.
18. Do not use capital letters in blocks of text, either in headings or paragraphs. CAPITALS SHOUT AT THE READER. They are also harder to read than lower-case letters, which is why they are rarely used for road signs. Do not use blocks of capital letters in the subject line of letters; use sentence case instead, that is, only the first word and any proper nouns begin with a capital letter.
19. Use sentence case in titles, headings and subheadings: for example 'Supply and Deployment of Teaching and Support Staff' should be 'Supply and deployment of teaching and support staff'. This applies to all documents, including letters.
20. Use capital initials for certain titles and ranks when they refer to one specific person. For example: the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families;

the President of the United States; the Director of Children's Services; Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills; the Director, Children; the Divisional Manager (of a specific division). The Principal (of a specific institution) should also have a capital initial to avoid confusion with any other meaning of the word, but headteacher is lower case. Job titles take lower case when used in a generic sense, or where there are more than one. For example: 'the principals of all the colleges'; 'the meeting of divisional managers'; and additional inspectors, childcare inspectors, team leaders, key workers. However, Registered Managers of social care provisions take capital initials in all contexts, because this is how the title appears in the regulations. Another exception is Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) because 'Her Majesty' must have capital initials and it would be awkward to mix upper and lower case here.

21. Use capital initials for Key Stage 1, Level 1 of the National Curriculum, but lower-case letters when 'key stage' and 'level' are used generically. For example: 'Standards in mathematics were high in Key Stage 1, but low in other key stages' or 'Level 2 and Level 4 are the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.' Capital initials should also be used for the names of school years: for example Reception Year, Year 1 and Year 2. 'Nursery' should take a capital initial when it refers to the Nursery Year in a school. 'Level' is lower case in references to post-16 qualifications.
22. Use capital initials for the main words in the titles of acts of parliament, bills and legal documents, for example: 'the Education Act 2005'. If you need to check that you have the correct name of an act, the Office of Public Sector Information website has a complete list (www.opsi.gov.uk/acts.htm). Use capital initials for 'White Paper' and 'Green Paper'.
23. The title of an initiative, policy or programme should be capitalised: for example 'the Primary National Strategy', 'the National Curriculum', 'the Train to Gain programme'. Also use an organisation's website to check the spacing between words of programmes or initiatives: for example 'Jobcentre Plus' and 'learndirect'. Fair trade is lower case when used generically, but the correct form for the accrediting organisation is Fairtrade, which should be used when referring to products or services it has approved.
24. Do not use capital initials in the titles of publications; use sentence case instead. Exceptions to this are the titles of newspapers and periodicals, for example *The Guardian* and *The Economist*. Capital initials are also used in the titles of the Annual Report and Departmental Report. The References section gives further guidance (see paragraph 94. See also the glossary for how to refer to the Annual Report.

Organisations, denominations and political parties

25. Use capital initials for the names of organisations, ministries and departments: for example HM Treasury, Cambridge City Council, the Equality and Human

Rights Commission. 'Ofsted' begins with a capital letter and continues with lower case. Never use 'OFSTED'.

26. 'Parliament' takes capital initials when used to refer to the British Parliament, and lower-case initials when used generically. Use capital initials for 'Commons', 'Lords' and 'House'.
27. Use capital initials for 'Conservative', 'Labour', 'Liberal Democrat' when referring to political parties, but 'liberal' and 'conservative' when used as general adjectives.
28. Use a lower-case initial for 'church' except when it is part of a title, such as the Roman Catholic Church. Use capital initials for 'Buddhism', 'Catholic', 'Christianity', 'Judaism', 'Islam', 'Muslim', 'Protestant' and so on.

Proper names of periods of time, historical eras and events

29. Use capital initials for the names of geological and historical periods: for example 'Iron Age' and 'Dark Ages'.
30. Use 'First World War' and 'Second World War', not 'World War I' and 'World War II'.
31. Use capital initials for recognised geographical places, areas and countries. Use 'North' and 'South' if they are part of the title of an area or a political division, for example 'North America', 'Western Australia', the 'West', 'Eastern Europe', 'Ofsted's North Region', but not when they are descriptions in general terms, such as southern Scotland, the south of Scotland, in the south-western part of Kent, north-east Somerset. If the words form part of the name of an organisation, check what the organisation itself uses: for example 'Bath & North East Somerset Council'.

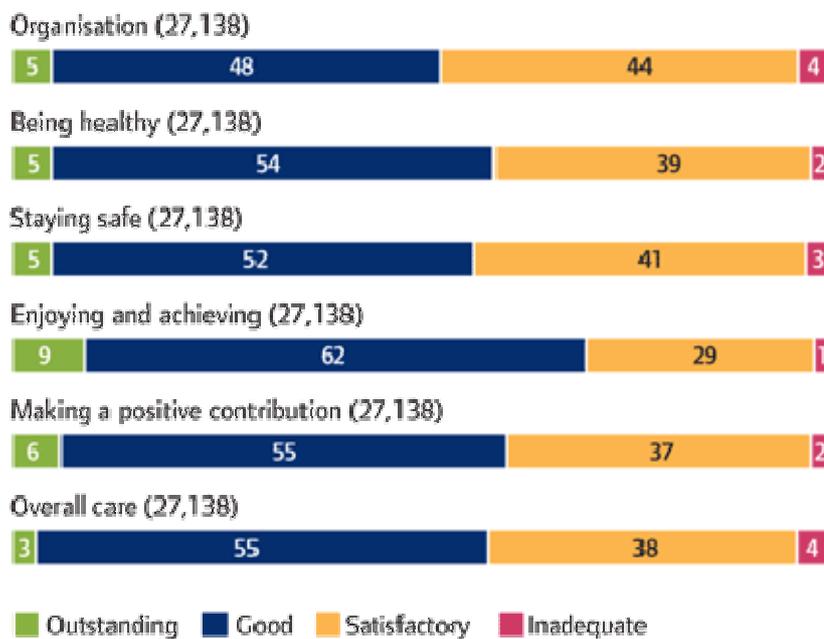
Charts and tables

32. Use charts and tables to present data. Please note that 'data' takes a plural verb. Check that all the units and abbreviations that have been used are defined and that all totals add up. Make sure that the relevant contact in the inspection insight team is given an early draft of the report so that the data can be checked.
33. The date(s) of the information should be provided in the caption (see below). Any notes that will help the reader may also be added below the chart or table. For example, where necessary add a line explaining that the figures have been rounded and may not add up to 100%. This wording should be used consistently within a publication. The source of the data may also be shown there.

34. All charts and tables should be labelled with a caption in 11pt bold Tahoma, as illustrated in paragraph 35. The caption should appear above the chart or table.
35. The following example illustrates the correct way to present charts.

Figure 1: Overall quality of childcare by type of provider, July 2006 to June 2007 (percentage of providers inspected)

36. The colours selected for charts should look different from each other when the



electronic document is printed out in black and white.

37. If a publication is to be printed, charts and tables should be supplied to the publications team separately in Excel format as well as in Word.

Data presentation

38. Authors need to ensure that the findings in their report stand up to scrutiny on the basis of the data collected. Much survey inspection is based on a relatively small sample of schools, other institutions or providers; a good rule of thumb is to think of 'small' as less than 100. Where a sample is relatively small, or known to be unrepresentative, for example where schools or colleges were selected because of known good practice, authors should express proportions carefully. Describing scale using the number of institutions, for example by referring to 'five of the 20 schools' rather than 25%, is preferable. Fractions may be used sparingly to express proportions, but should be kept simple – denominators of two, three, four and 10 are acceptable.
39. For small samples authors should avoid:

- describing proportions as percentages, which can seem to suggest that what is said applies to all institutions, rather than just the particular sample that was inspected
 - using expressions of proportions in words: for example 'a large majority', 'a minority'.
40. For all sample sizes it is essential to remind the reader when the findings cannot be generalised. At the start of the report, use phrases such as 'in the schools visited for this survey', 'in the settings in this survey', 'in the colleges in this sample' to make it clear that the findings refer to a specific group. Later in the report it is enough to say, 'in the schools visited' or 'in five of the seven authorities' to reinforce the evidence base. Readers should not be given the impression that the report is about all institutions or settings nationally unless that is really the case.
41. As well as the size of the sample, authors need to consider the extent to which the sample is representative (or not). For instance:
- If the whole of a particular group is small, for example if there are 12 city technology colleges and all 12 were inspected, then the writing should reflect the fact that the findings refer to all of them.
 - If the sample is very large, say from a survey of 15,000 pupils, but it has not been selected to be representative of all pupils, the writing should reflect this.
42. 'Significance' or 'significant', for example in expressions such as 'a significant majority', should be used with caution when discussing data, quantities or proportions since these words can imply statistical significance, even when the author does not mean this. Authors should also be cautious about the use of the word 'some', as in 'some schools', 'some LAs' and so on. It should be possible to give a sense of scale, as in 'around half the schools inspected'; 'only two of the 12 LAs in the survey'; 'nearly all the partnerships'; 'the few exceptions were'; 'in the best examples'; and so on.
43. If authors are drawing conclusions based on other Ofsted publications, they need to bear the following in mind:
- the need to identify and explain where data are not comparable
 - the need for footnotes to indicate sources.
44. When in doubt, authors should seek advice from the inspection insight team early in the drafting process.

Expressing proportions in words (to be used with very large sample sizes only)

45. When a survey is based on a very large sample, authors may wish to use more general terms, such as 'majority', 'minority' or 'most'. The list below should be used as a guide.

Proportion	Description
97–100%	Vast/overwhelming majority or almost all
80–96%	Very large majority, most
65–79%	Large majority
51–64%	Majority
35–49%	Minority
20–34%	Small minority
4–19%	Very small minority, few
0–3%	Almost no/very few

Days and dates

46. The correct order is day, month, year, for example: Monday 8 September 2006. Do not use '-th', '-rd', '-st'. Days and dates should not be abbreviated except in figures, tables and other graphical material where economy of space is important. If they are abbreviated, they should be shortened to three letters.
47. Where a single financial year comprises parts of two calendar years, use an en rule (for example: 'in the financial year 2001–02'). An en rule is longer than a hyphen. The keystrokes are Ctrl and the hyphen on the numeric keypad on the right-hand side of the keyboard.¹ An academic year is expressed using a forward slash: 'in the academic year 2005/06'.
48. When expressing a period of years, use words rather than symbols (for example: 'from 1999 to 2003'), but for a range of years use an en rule (for example: 'the 1914–18 war...'). Use 'from 1996 to 1999' or 'between 1996 and 1999' and not 'from 1996–99' or 'between 1996–99'. For periods of academic years, retain the forward slash: 'providers inspected during 2005/07'.

Emphasis

49. Use bold type for emphasis, but keep it to a minimum – too much bold is distracting. Do not use all capitals, underlining or italics for this purpose.

¹ Information on how to do this on a laptop is in paragraph 133.

Font size and type

50. The body text in all documents should be 12pt Tahoma.
51. Text should be left-aligned, that is, with a ragged right-hand margin. This is because text is easier to read when the spaces between the words are regular.
52. The following heading levels should be used:

Heading 1 (16pt bold Tahoma): use for chapter headings.

Heading 2 (14pt bold Tahoma): use for main section headings within chapters.

Heading 3 (12pt bold Tahoma): use for sub-headings within main sections.

Heading 4 (12pt italic Tahoma): use for further subdivision where necessary.

53. Do not use underlining for headings.
54. For guidance on bullets see paragraphs 10–13; for information on templates, see paragraphs 101–103.

Footnotes

55. Use footnotes rather than endnotes. Footnote numbers should appear at the end of the sentence to which they refer unless this would be misleading. They should follow any punctuation. If a sentence contains more than one footnote, separate each number with a comma. For example:

The distribution of schools subject to special measures varied considerably across local authorities.^{1,2}

56. For guidance on the correct way to cite publications in footnotes, see the examples in paragraph 96.

Inclusive language

57. Language can play an important role in promoting (or undermining) social equalities. Using inclusive language avoids inadvertent bias. There continues to be debate among interested groups about the most appropriate vocabulary, and we recognise that some people will prefer terms other than those approved by Ofsted and recommended in this guide. The terminology used here reflects the language used in relevant legislation and associated codes of practice. This guide was prepared following consultation involving Age Concern England, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Mencap, Participation Works, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) and Stonewall. It also reflects Ofsted's equality

schemes, which were subject to extensive consultation. Please see the Glossary at the end of the guide for information on specific terms not mentioned in the following paragraphs.

58. Treat people as individuals; no race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age group or religion should be stereotyped or arbitrarily given a leading or subordinate role.
59. If writing about adults, refer to 'men' and 'women'. Use 'male' and 'female' only where the age range referred to includes adults, young people and children.
60. Ofsted prefers to use the terms 'disabled person' and 'disabled people' rather than 'person with a disability' and 'people with disabilities'. The social model of disability explains that impairment does not have to lead to disability. Disability occurs when people are excluded, because of their impairment, from something that other people in society take for granted, such as the opportunity to attend an event or take part in an activity, to be kept informed or make use of a service, to live independently or earn a living, or just to make choices for themselves.
61. Ofsted's current position is that the term 'minority ethnic' is preferable to 'black and minority ethnic' as a collective term for ethnic groups that are minorities in Britain. When referring to black people or groups, it is appropriate to use 'Black', with an initial capital, as this form has become a signifier of social, cultural and political identity.
62. 'Black' and 'White' should both have initial capitals when they form part of a specific census category, such as 'Black Caribbean' or 'Any other White background'. These categories may appear in questionnaires and survey results.
63. Gypsy and Traveller should have initial capitals.
64. When referring to a person's sexual orientation, it is appropriate to describe someone as heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual. The term 'homosexual' is not used. Stonewall recommends that the word 'lesbian' should be used as a noun (for example, 'she is a lesbian'), and that the words 'gay' and 'bisexual' should only be used as adjectives. When referring to a group or community of people who are not heterosexual, it is appropriate to use the collective term 'lesbian, gay and bisexual people'. This is often abbreviated to LGB people, but Ofsted style prefers to avoid abbreviations where possible.
65. 'Transgender' is an inclusive term used to reflect the diversity of gender identity and expression. Because of a related history of inequality, it has sometimes been added to 'lesbian, gay and bisexual' (see above) to produce 'lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people'. However, this is best avoided, as gender and sexual orientation are different categories. In equalities monitoring questionnaires, they should appear in separate sections.

66. Refer to 'older people', not 'old people' or 'the elderly'.
67. From age 14, refer to 'young people', not 'children'.
68. Referring to 'vulnerable young people' or 'hard-to-reach groups' may give the impression that these are innate characteristics. At the first mention, it is better to refer instead to 'young people whose circumstances have made them vulnerable' or 'groups whose circumstances have made them hard to reach'.

Italics

69. Use italics for:
 - titles of Ofsted and other government publications, including White and Green Papers
 - titles of published books, except for the Bible, the Qur'an and books of the Bible, which are roman (plain type, not italicised) without quotation marks; titles of chapters, articles, short stories and unpublished theses are roman in quotation marks
 - titles of newspapers and periodicals, but article titles are roman and in quotation marks; inconsistency is often caused by 'The' – as a rule, print the definite article in lower case, for example the *Daily Express*, unless the definite article is part of the title, for example *The Times*, *The Economist* and *The Guardian*
 - titles of long poems that are virtually books in themselves, but titles of short poems are roman ('regular' type) and in quotation marks
 - titles of plays and films, radio and television programmes, CDs and DVDs
 - titles of major musical works such as operas and ballets
 - paintings and sculptures, names of ships, apart from such prefixes as HMS (*HMS Belfast*)
 - names of parties in legal cases, but v – not 'vs' – (= versus) between them is roman.
70. Italics should not be used for large blocks of text such as extracts. Ofsted aims to make its publications as accessible as possible and italic type is not as legible as roman.

Letters

71. You can find letter templates in the correct corporate identity on the intranet at [Our Work>Supporting our work>Communications>Branding and templates, images, style and accessibility>Templates](#). Use the black-and-white version for routine correspondence.

72. Do not use punctuation after the greeting or the sign-off. (See also guidance on addresses in paragraph 6.)
73. The sign-off depends on whether the letter is addressed to a named person. For instance: 'Dear Parent or Carer... Yours faithfully' but 'Dear Ms Jones... Yours sincerely'.
74. Like other documents, letters should normally be typed in 12pt Tahoma and left aligned (or unjustified) with a ragged right-hand margin. Do not use double word spacing after a full stop. Paragraphs should be separated by a line space; the first line should not be indented.

Money

75. Use numerals for monetary values, for example '£6' not 'six pounds' and '£6,000' not '£6 thousand', but use numerals and words combined to express very large round numbers, for example '£15 million'. Do not use 'k' or 'K' for thousands. Do not mix units. For round figures, miss out the empty decimal places, for example use £1, not £1.00. For sums under £1, do not use pound signs, for example, 55p, not £0.55. However, where sums of money above and below £1 appear together, treat them all in the same way (£7.70, £2.65 and £0.53).

Numbers

76. Write numbers from one to nine in words and use numerals for 10 and above. Exceptions are:
 - mathematical/statistical data, including percentages
 - money
 - Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2
 - Year 1, Year 2
 - Level 1, Level 2
 - sets 1, 2, 3
 - chapter headings/page numbers
 - abbreviations in footnotes (for example: '2nd edition').
77. Use a comma to separate thousands in numbers: 1,000; 10,000; 100,000.
78. Try not to use a number to start a sentence. When this is unavoidable, write the number as a word rather than as a numeral. If the figure is a percentage, write out 'per cent' rather than using the '%' sign.
79. Express decimals in numbers and fractions in words, for example: 0.75; three quarters. Do not hyphenate fractions unless used adjectivally, for example: 'two thirds'; 'a two-thirds majority'.
80. Use only numbers in tables, charts and graphs.

81. Use numbers before abbreviations: for example, '5kg', '6%'; remember that abbreviated units of measurement have no full stops and do not take 's' in the plural. There should be no space between the number and the unit of measurement.
82. Use the '%' sign (it is short and easily visible), unless a sentence begins with a percentage, when 'per cent' should be written out to match the number (for instance, 'Ten per cent...'). Percentages are proportions, not exact numbers.
83. Avoid mixing numbers, fractions and decimals and percentages in the same sentence or paragraph. Avoid using percentages when expressing numbers below 100; use the exact numbers instead. For example: 'in 15 of the 79 providers that were inspected...'
84. Use first, second, third (not firstly, secondly, thirdly). Use 20th century, 21st century, avoiding superscripts as in 20th and 21st.

Plain English

85. Use plain English in all written communications. The Plain English Campaign describes it as text that is 'written with the reader in mind and with the right tone of voice, that is clear and concise'. Using it involves following a few simple principles to ensure that your writing is easier to read and understand. This section offers some basic guidance; for more detailed information see the Plain English Campaign website: www.plainenglishcampaign.co.uk.
86. Try to use short sentences whenever possible, as long sentences which express several different ideas can be confusing for the reader. It is usually easy to break these up into shorter sentences. A good principle to follow is to express one main idea per sentence, with one other related point if necessary. This does not mean that all sentences should be the same length: good writing will contain a mixture of short sentences and well-punctuated longer ones. The Plain English Campaign recommends that the average sentence length should be 15 to 20 words.
87. Use the active rather than the passive forms of verbs. For example, write 'We will inspect the college on 23 October' instead of 'The college will be inspected on 23 October'. Sentences that use the active forms of verbs are more direct and easier to read. Passive verb forms need not be avoided altogether; they can be useful when you do not know the 'doer' of an action or when you want to soften a difficult message.
88. Avoid jargon in written communications. If you need to use technical or specialist language, ensure that you explain the meaning clearly. Jargon can be useful shorthand in discussions between professionals, but it is not usually appropriate for publications aimed at a wider audience. All material published on Ofsted's website should be understandable to non-specialist readers.

89. Avoid using a long word if there is a shorter one that expresses the same meaning. Long words can sound pompous and may not be understood by all of your readers. The Plain English Campaign website includes an A–Z of alternative words which may be helpful: www.plainenglishcampaign.co.uk.

Quotations

90. Use single quotation marks, except for quotations within quotations, where double quotation marks should be used. When quoted material is more than two lines, indent the text to display it more effectively.

91. If the quoted material is a single word or phrase, put the punctuation outside the closing quotation mark. For example:

Planning was underpinned by a strong commitment to the principle that ‘every child matters’.

92. If the quoted material is a complete sentence or question, punctuation should fall inside the closing quotation mark. For example:

At first pupils highlighted the contrasts simply by stating two facts rather than using connectives. For example: ‘In Chembakoli the climate is very hot. In our town the climate is cold.’

93. When quoting direct speech, use a comma to introduce or follow a short sentence or phrase and a colon to introduce a longer quotation. For example:

‘Standards in science have improved,’ he said, ‘but more work needs to be done.’

Ofsted’s Director of Education said: ‘It is important to celebrate the very good work going on in schools across England and I am delighted that today’s report shows that the efforts of headteachers, teachers and governors are being recognised by parents, who are very satisfied overall with their children’s schools.’

References

94. Publication titles should be italicised and in sentence case. Titles of journal articles or chapters within books should be in roman type (not italicised), sentence case and in quotation marks. However, capital initials are used in the titles of the Annual Report and Departmental Report, which are only italicised when they are written out in full in bibliographies or footnotes. See the glossary for the correct way to refer to the Annual Report.
95. Full publication details should not be cited in the main body of the text. If three or fewer publications are cited, the references should be supplied in footnotes. Insert all the publication details, including the title, reference number (if any), publisher and date of publication.

96. Use the following styles for citing publications in footnotes and bibliographies. Note the information that is required for each type of publication and the order in which it should appear:

Drawing together: art, craft and design in schools (080245), Ofsted, 2009;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080245.

Languages for adults: overcoming the barriers, ALI, 2007;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/20071016.

Being a young carer, CSCI, 2006; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/20073003.

V Collier, 'Age and rate of acquisition of second language for academic purposes', *TESOL Quarterly*, 21, 1987, pp 617–641.

D Crystal, *Rediscover grammar*, Longman, 1998.

97. If the publication cited is available electronically, you can add a hyperlink after the publication details. Avoid giving just the home page of a website in a reference. It is more helpful to the reader to have the web address of the page being referred to. For example:

Drawing together: art, craft and design in schools (080245), Ofsted, 2009;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080245.

You do not have to include 'http://' in web addresses that start with 'www'. Underlining makes text harder to read, so remove the underlining that appears automatically under hyperlinks.

98. Avoid giving web addresses that link directly to files such as PDFs and Word documents – give the address of the page where there is a link to the file.
99. If the reference is to an Ofsted publication, you can probably link directly to it via an abbreviated 'friendly' link without having to use the long full address. This facility is available for most documents and works as follows.
- The generic friendly link is www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/xxx.
 - The number you need for xxx will be on the document's web page in the reference number field at the top. The field is also available in the publication and forms and guidance listings.
 - xxx has to be numerals only. If the entry in the field is 123a then neither .../publications/123a nor .../publications/123 will work. The document will not have a friendly link.

Contact the publications team if you need help with friendly links.

100. In the Annual Report, publications cited within the text are listed in a bibliography at the end and numbered i, ii, iii... Cross-references should be '(see i, p.xxx)'. The style for references listed in a bibliography should follow the guidance in the preceding paragraphs.

Templates

101. You should use templates in the corporate identity for most documents. Templates for letters, minutes, meeting notes, faxes and PowerPoint presentations are loaded to your computer profile in Word and PowerPoint. You can find them when you open a new document. For reports, consultations, inspection guidance or leaflets for electronic-only publication, please use the appropriate Word template. These include pre-set styles for headings, text, bullets and case studies. You can obtain the correct template for your document from the publications team: email publishing@ofsted.gov.uk.
102. If you need guidance on using the templates, please consult the publications team.
103. See also the sections on font size and type (paragraphs 50–54) and bullets and lists (paragraphs 10–16).

Time

104. The 12-hour system, with am and pm, is more easily understood than the 24-hour system. For example, normally use 9.30am and 3.20pm instead of 09.30 and 15.20. Say 'from 8am to 12 noon' rather than 'from 08.00 to 12.00'. However, lengthy timetables presented as tables may look more precise in the 24-hour form.

Part B. Punctuation

105. Aim for simplicity. Avoid cluttering the text with unnecessary punctuation.

Apostrophes

106. Use to indicate possession (the pupil's book, schools' plans, parents' meeting). Possessive pronouns (its, his, hers, ours, yours, theirs) do not take apostrophes.

107. Note the difference between 'its' and 'it's'. The former is a possessive pronoun and does not take an apostrophe. The latter is the contraction of the words 'it is' or 'it has' and does take an apostrophe. For example:

'The school has completed **its** self-evaluation form.' (possessive pronoun)

'**It's** been one year since the school's last inspection.' (contraction of 'it has')

108. Avoid contractions in written communications (for example, 'I will contact you again when I know the answer' not 'I'll contact you again...'). Children's Views reports are an exception to this, since they are written in a style that aims to appeal to children.

109. If a plural noun ends in 's', indicate possession by placing the apostrophe after the 's', for example: 'the pupils' work'. If you are not sure where to place the apostrophe, ask yourself, 'Who is doing the owning or using?' and put the apostrophe immediately after the owner, for example

'The children's books' (The children own the books.)

'The ladies' cloakroom' (The ladies use the cloakroom.)

'The women's singles tournament' (The tournament is played by the women.)

110. For names that end with 's', such as Charles, James, Thomas, the advice still applies:

'Thomas's GCSE results' (The GCSE results belong to Thomas.)

111. Apostrophes are used in descriptions of terms of duration, depending on whether the time is singular or plural (for example, one day's time, in three years' time; four months' experience).

112. Do not use apostrophes to indicate plurals (1980s not 1980's).

Colons

113. Never follow a colon with a dash.
114. Use a colon to separate a clause that introduces a list, quotation or summary. Use a colon also when the second half of the sentence explains the first half, as if it were standing for the words 'in the following way'. For example:

'This publication aims to help all staff in Ofsted: it sets out guidance and provides advice on tricky areas of writing.'

115. Colons introduce lists, the items of which may be separated by commas or semicolons in a paragraph. Choose the latter if the items of the list are complex. For example:

'Under the new inspection arrangements, introduced in autumn 2006, inspectors report on three strands: personal and social development; employability and vocational training; and literacy, numeracy and teaching English as an additional language.'

Commas

116. Use commas at both ends of an embedded clause if the clause could be removed leaving the sentence complete. For example: 'The monthly newsletter, issued in July, set out the timetable for all staff.' In contrast, without the commas, 'The monthly newsletter issued in July sets out the timetable for all staff,' suggests that the monthly newsletter for the other months does not contain it.
117. Use commas before and after connectives (such as 'however', 'therefore', 'consequently', 'moreover') when they are embedded in a sentence, and after connectives where the connective starts a sentence, for example: 'The college, therefore, saw its enrolments fall' or 'As a result, the report will be withdrawn.'
118. Only use a comma before 'and' in a list if the meaning would be unclear without it. For example: 'The learners studied catering, key skills, and information and communication technology' (where 'information and communication technology' is one item in the list).

Ellipsis

119. An ellipsis consists of three dots (...) and is used to mark an omission of one or more words from a sentence. It may be used at the end of a sentence to indicate that one or more sentences have been missed out. An ellipsis should have no space before it and one space after it. Do not use a full stop with an ellipsis.

Full stops

120. Use one space after a full stop.
121. Full stops are unnecessary in abbreviations (DfE, BIS) and contractions (Mr, Dr, Ltd, St), and after initials in names.

Hyphens

122. Use hyphens for compound adjectives which precede a noun: for example 'long-standing agreement', 'part-time teacher', 'up-to-date records'. This includes adverbs not ending in '-ly', such as 'well', 'ill', 'better', 'worse', 'little', 'much', 'new' and 'old', and the words they modify, which should be hyphenated when they precede a noun. For example: 'well-qualified teacher', 'little-used method'. This is to avoid any ambiguity of meaning arising from the fact that some of these adverbs can also be adjectives. The hyphen makes clear that the word is an adverb that modifies the following word and not a separate adjective describing the noun. These compounds do not usually need a hyphen if they follow the noun, for example: 'an agreement of long standing'; 'the teacher works part time'; 'the records are up to date', 'the teacher is well qualified', 'the method is little used'. However, the hyphen may be retained if it is needed to make clear the connection between the parts of the compound: for instance, not only 'a child-friendly policy' but 'a policy that is child-friendly'.
123. Hyphenate compound nouns that have been derived from phrasal verbs, for example: 'take-up', 'cut-off', 'catch-up'.
124. If a word has a prefix, use a hyphen to avoid confusion or mispronunciation. For example: 're-engage'; 'pre-existing'; 'non-negotiable'. Also use a hyphen where a word that has a prefix could be confused with a word that does not, for example: 're-form'; 're-creation'.
125. Use a hyphen where a prefix is followed by a proper name, a numeral or a date, for example: 'pre-Ofsted'; 'mid-August'; 'post-16'.
126. Hyphenate compass points, for example: 'south-west of Leeds'; 'south-westerly wind'. Specific regions, for example 'the South East', do not need to be hyphenated.
127. Use hyphens when referring to children's ages, for example: 'four-year-old children'. This helps to avoid ambiguity, since 'four year old children' can mean either 'four year-old children' or 'four-year-old children'.
128. Floating hyphens take the following form:
 - three- and four-year degrees
 - three- and four-part lesson structures.

129. Never hyphenate adverbs that end '-ly', for example: 'newly qualified teacher'; 'appropriately trained staff'; 'easily accessible settings'. The '-ly' form itself signals that this is an adverb modifying the word following it.
130. Do not hyphenate capitalised words, for example: 'Latin American studies'.
131. Do not hyphenate fractions unless used adjectivally, for example write 'two thirds of the sample', but 'a two-thirds majority'.
132. For guidance on the hyphenation of particular words, refer to the Glossary. If the word you are looking for is not there, consult the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Dashes

133. The 'dash' is also known as an 'en rule' (–). It is longer than a hyphen. On a PC the keystrokes are Ctrl and the hyphen on the numeric keypad on the right-hand side of the keyboard. Since laptops do not have numeric keypads, the keystrokes must be set manually. To do this, go into Word, then go to Insert > Symbol. Ensure that Normal Text is selected in the Font section. Scroll down until you find the en rule, click on it, and then click on Shortcut Key. In commands, you will see the en rule. Go to 'Press new shortcut key' and choose the keys you wish to associate with the en rule (for example, Ctrl and -). Click on assign. These key strokes will now be set to the en rule. On a Mac the keystrokes are Alt or Option instead of Ctrl and the hyphen on the main keyboard.
134. Use spaced en rules to mark off matter in parenthesis, for example:

The overall picture from the data is of a school which is improving rapidly – but unevenly – across a range of subjects.
135. Use an en rule to indicate a range of numbers for convenience, for example 'the 14–19 prospectus...', although wherever possible use words, for example 'the 14 to 19 prospectus'). Use an en rule in 14–19-year-olds, but write 'from 14 to 19' (not 'from 14–19') and 'between 14 and 19' (not 'between 14–19'). An en rule should also be used to separate the two calendar years in one financial year, for example 'the financial year 2005–06'.
136. Use the en rule to indicate a noun composed of two nouns of equal relation. For example: 'the North–South divide'; 'the student–teacher relationship'.

Quotation marks

137. Use single quotation marks ('xxx') to mark the beginning and end of reported speech. Use double quotation marks ("xxx") when a quotation appears within a quotation. For example:

'He suggested that the "loyalty factor" might have influenced responses to the questionnaire.'

Semicolons

138. Semicolons are used to connect clauses that could stand as sentences on their own, but are so closely related that they convey their sense better combined into one sentence.

‘Staff conveyed to pupils that they were offering a fresh start; they had high expectations for them, set them challenging tasks and anticipated what support they would need.’

139. They are also used for breaking up lists of complex items after a colon in a paragraph (but not in a bulleted list), in order to make it clear where the items divide. For example:

‘Ofsted judges early years provision against four of the five Every Child Matters outcomes: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; and making a positive contribution.’

Part C. Style and syntax (miscellaneous points)

'A' or 'an'

140. With abbreviations it is not always clear whether to use 'a' or 'an'. The writer should decide whether the abbreviation is intended to be read as an acronym (NATO) or in the abbreviated form (an MP). When we write 'LA', it is usually read as two letters, not as local authority; therefore, we would say 'an LA'. Similarly, for a reduced tariff inspection, we would say 'an RTI'. The abbreviation for 'self-evaluation form' is usually read as an acronym rather than as three letters, therefore we would say 'a SEF'.

Adjectives

141. Make sure that adjectives are matched to the correct noun, for example 'an organic box of vegetables' should be 'a box of organic vegetables'.

'-ise' v 'ize' spellings

142. Use the '-ise' ending for words like 'realise' and 'organise'.

'Me', 'myself' and 'I'

143. Use 'I' if you are doing the action of the verb (for example, the speaking in 'I spoke to him'); use 'me' if the action of the verb is being done to you ('he spoke to **me**'). Confusion sometimes arises when there is more than one person doing the action ('**Claire and I** spoke to him'), or having the action done to them (He spoke to **Claire and me**'). If you are unsure which is correct, try removing the extra person from the sentence: 'He spoke to I' is obviously wrong.

144. Do not use 'myself' as a substitute for 'I' or 'me'.

Position of 'neither' and 'both'

145. Do not write 'which neither suited him nor me', but 'which suited neither him nor me' and, in the same way, 'which suited both him and me', although 'both' is used for emphasis here and could be omitted.

Position of 'only'

146. Beware of ambiguity, for example: 'Resources only issued on Fridays.' This could mean: 'Only resources are issued on Fridays', or 'Resources are issued, not checked in, on Fridays', or 'Resources are issued on Fridays only'.

Singular or plural verb

147. Consistently treat group (corporate) nouns (for example, 'Ofsted'; 'government'; 'team'; 'division', 'family', 'playgroup') as singular, for example: 'Ofsted is a non-ministerial government department'. 'Staff' is an exception, for example: 'The staff were pleased when the lead inspector gave positive feedback.' If a plural sense is desired, redraft the sentence, for example: 'several members of the government were...'
148. Use a singular verb ('is', not 'are') for the following: 'none of them is...'; 'neither of them is...'
149. Use a plural verb ('are', not 'is') for the following: 'leadership and management are...'; 'data are...'; 'criteria are...'
150. Avoid using a singular verb in sentences such as 'A majority of pupils are happy at school.' If the word 'pupils' is omitted and the sense of the sentence still suggests that the subject is plural, it is preferable to use a plural verb.
151. The same applies to sentences where expressions of quantity such as 'a proportion', 'a percentage', 'a number', 'one in three', 'half' or 'one third' are used in a similar context. For instance: 'A small proportion of settings are inadequate.'

Split infinitives

152. These are best avoided if you can do so without making the sentence sound awkward.

'That', 'which' and 'who'

153. 'That' is used for a defining clause; 'which' and 'who' can be used for both defining and non-defining clauses. Defining clauses have no punctuation, but non-defining clauses must be between commas or introduced by a comma. For example:

'The training sessions which were repetitive and unchallenging were poorly attended.'

'The training sessions, which were repetitive and unchallenging, were poorly attended.'

The punctuation changes the meaning of the sentence: in the first sentence 'repetitive and unchallenging' defines which particular sessions were poorly attended; it suggests that there were other sessions which were not poorly attended. Here 'that' could be used instead of 'which'. In the second sentence the 'which' clause between the commas simply adds extra information about

the poorly attended sessions (that they were repetitive and unchallenging). In this case 'that' could not be substituted for 'which'.

Similarly, 'the deputy headteacher who is responsible for assessment' is counterposed to any other deputy headteachers who do not have this responsibility. On the other hand, in 'the deputy headteacher, who is responsible for assessment,' the clause between the commas merely tells you something about the deputy headteacher.

Glossary

This Glossary aims to cover the terms most commonly used in writing for Ofsted, and those that most often cause difficulty. It is not intended to be comprehensive. Although some are listed, please avoid using abbreviations wherever possible. There is more guidance about abbreviations in paragraphs 1 to 5.

A	
&	only use an ampersand if it is part of a formal title, for example City & Guilds
academy	lower-case initial unless part of title
adult and community learning	do not abbreviate
advanced skills teacher	lower-case initials no hyphen
age ranges such as 14–19 and 16–19	use dashes rather than hyphens do not mix dashes and words: write 14–19-year-olds, but 'from 14 to 19' (not 'from 14–19') and 'between 14 and 19' (not 'between 14–19')
alcohol misuse	not abuse
A level	does not need to be written in full lower-case l hyphenate when used as an adjective, for example: A-level results
among	not amongst
annual performance assessment	lower-case initials
Annual Report	capital initials the first time it appears, refer to 'Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report' use 'Annual Report' for subsequent references it is not 'Ofsted's Annual Report'
area-wide inspection	hyphen
AS level	does not need to be written in full lower-case l hyphenate when used as an adjective, for example: AS-level results
asylum seeker	lower-case initials no hyphen except when used as an adjective, for example: pupils from asylum-seeker families.
A* to C	not A*– C

autumn	lower-case initial
Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network	awarding body offering skills-based qualifications that are often gained by young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities capital initials for key words
B	
Beacon council	capital B, lower-case c
benefited	not benefitted
Black (referring to people)	capital initial see also paragraphs 61–62 on inclusive language
blind, partially sighted	official categories under which people are registered; can be used in any context; use 'blind people', not 'the blind' refer more generally to people with 'sight problems' or 'sight loss' and not 'visual impairment' (RNIB preference)
BME (black and minority ethnic)	avoid this phrase and its abbreviation see also paragraph 61
Braille	capital
Britain	ensure that Great Britain and the United Kingdom are used correctly: Great Britain comprises England, Scotland and Wales; the United Kingdom comprises Great Britain and Northern Ireland
British sign language	no capital initials on 'sign language'
BTEC (abbreviation of the former Business and Technology Education Council)	does not need to be written in full
C	
Cafcass	Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service write in full the first time it appears
Chair of the Governing Body	capital initials
checklist	one word
Chief Executive	capital initials
child and adolescent mental health services	lower-case initials
childcare	one word
childminder/childminding	one word

children	in educational contexts, use only for the Early Years Foundation Stage in care contexts, use up to the age of 13, after which 'young people' should be used see PUPILS and STUDENTS
Children and Young People's Plan	capitals for key words
Children's Directorate led by the Director, Children	Ofsted directorate capital initials
Children's Rights Director	capital initials
circle time	usually needs an explanation – consider the intended audience
City & Guilds	use ampersand (&), not 'and'
clients	use for users of nextstep information, advice and guidance service
code of practice	lower-case initials
Common Inspection Framework	capital initials
Comprehensive Area Assessment	capital initials (replaces the annual performance assessment of local authorities and joint area review of local services from 2009)
comprehensive performance assessment	lower-case initials
comprise	not 'comprise of' 'The report comprises three parts' is correct
cooperate	one word, no hyphen
coordinate	one word, no hyphen
Corporate Services Directorate led by the Director, Corporate Services	Ofsted directorate capital initials
cost-effective	hyphen
criterion/criteria	criterion is singular; criteria is plural
cross-curricular	hyphen
D	
data	takes a plural verb do not use 'data-handling' – use 'handling data', as this is the National Curriculum's terminology
database	one word
dates	22 March 2006, not 22nd March 2006; 2–3 April, not 2nd and 3rd April.

day care day-care provider	two words when used as a noun hyphenate when used as an adjective
deaf	preferred by RNID to 'hearing-impaired'; use 'deaf people', not 'the deaf' can use 'hard of hearing' for adults with age-related hearing loss
decision making	two words when used as a noun hyphenate when used as an adjective, for example 'decision-making skills'
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	capital initials for key words if citing publications from its predecessors, use the correct title (for instance, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, Department for Education and Skills)
Department for Education	capital initials for key words if citing publications from its predecessors, use the correct title (for instance, Department for Education and Skills)
Department for Work and Pensions	capital initials for key words
deputy headteacher	not deputy or deputy head capital initials if a specific individual is referred to
design and technology	lower-case initials
Diploma	Initial capital when referring to the 14–19 Diploma
Director of Children's Services	capital initials for key words
disabled person/people	not person/people with a disability/disabilities not 'the disabled'
drugs misuse	not abuse
E	
early years	lower-case initials when used generally
Early Years Foundation Stage	capital initials do not abbreviate
Early Years Foundation Stage Profile	capital initials
east	no capital unless part of the official name of a specific place or area, for example 'East Sussex', but 'east London'
Education Directorate led by the Director, Education	Ofsted directorate capital initials

education welfare officer	lower-case initials do not abbreviate
email	no hyphen
English as an additional language	not 'as a second language' or any other variation; describes speakers of English, not courses refer to 'pupils who speak an additional language' not 'pupils with an additional language' see also English for speakers of other languages below
English for speakers of other languages	this is a course title
Entry to Employment E2E	capital initials for key words write in full the first time it appears
Every Child Matters	capital initials do not abbreviate not italics if the policy rather than the publication is referred to
examination board	use the current term 'awarding body' lower-case initials
extra-curricular	hyphen
F	
fair trade Fairtrade	when used generically when referring to the accrediting organisation or products it approves
feedback feed back	noun verb
fieldwork	one word
Finance Directorate led by the Director, Finance	Ofsted directorate capital initials
focused	not focussed
Foundation Stage	capital initials (now Early Years Foundation Stage)
Foundation Stage Profile	capital initials
fractions	do not hyphenate unless used as an adjective, for example: 'two thirds', but 'a two-thirds majority'.
fresh start/fresh start school	no hyphen lower-case initials
fulfil	not fulfill

full time	two words when used as a noun hyphenate when used as an adjective, for example 'a full-time contract'
further education	lower-case initials
G	
Gateway to Work	capital initials for key words
General Certificate of Education GCE	initial capitals for key words write in full the first time it appears
General Certificate of Secondary Education GCSE	initial capitals for key words does not need to be written in full
General National Vocational Qualification GNVQ	initial capitals for key words write in full the first time it appears
governing body	takes a singular verb
graduate teacher programme	programme for initial teacher training lower-case initials
Green Paper	capital initials
Gypsy(ies)	capital initial
H	
half term	two words no hyphen unless used as an adjective, for example 'half-term holiday'.
headteacher	one word do not use 'head', 'headmistress' or 'headmaster'
higher education	lower-case initials
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons HMIP or HMI Prison	write in full where possible and in any case the first time it appears if abbreviating is necessary, use 'HMI Prison' to avoid confusing with the very similar abbreviation for Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP)
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation HMIP or HMI Probation	write in full where possible and in any case the first time it appears if abbreviating is necessary, use 'HMI Probation' to avoid confusing with the very similar abbreviation for Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP)
Her Majesty's Inspector	abbreviated singular/plural form is HMI
hyphens	see the section on hyphens in paragraphs 122–132

	for guidance on individual words, consult the <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
I	
impact	avoid using as a verb – not ‘inspection impacts [or ‘impacts on’] the quality of childcare’, but ‘inspection affects the quality...’ or ‘has an impact on the quality...’
independent study	not self study
individual education plan	do not abbreviate
individual learning plan	do not abbreviate
information and communication technology ICT	write in full where possible and in any case the first time it appears lower-case initials ‘communication’ is singular
inner city/inner London	two words hyphenate when used as an adjective, for example inner-city schools, inner-London local authorities
INSET	avoid – use in-service training, staff development or professional development instead
inspection service provider	replaces regional and national inspection service provider
internet	lower-case initial
interactive	one word
intranet	lower-case initial
-ise v -ize	-ise
J	
Jobcentre Plus	‘Jobcentre’ one word capital J and P
joint area review	lower-case initials
judgement/judgment	judgement, except in the legal sense, when it is ‘judgment’, a usage which may occur in Cafcass inspection reports
K	
key skills	lower-case initials
Key Stage 1, 2, 3, 4	capital initials, but ‘other key stages’ or ‘at all key stages’ do not abbreviate to KS1, KS2 except in figures and tables where space is important

L	
Leadership Incentive Grant	capital initials
learndirect	lower-case initial, except when it begins a sentence one word roman, not bold
learners	use in work-based learning provided by the college (such as apprenticeships, Train to Gain) and all adult learning and skills documents see STUDENTS
learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	do not abbreviate use in documents relating to further education and post-16 learning and skills 'students' may be substituted for 'learners' when referring to colleges do not use 'special educational needs and/or disabilities' in this context
Learning and Skills Directorate led by the Director, Learning and Skills	Ofsted directorate capital initials for key words
lesbian, gay and bisexual	do not abbreviate do not add 'transgender' (see paragraph 65)
Level/level	capital initial when referring to a specific National Curriculum level, for example Level 4 levels in post-16 courses at colleges and schools do not need capital initials
literacy, numeracy and language	used in the context of skills training replaces 'basic skills'
local authority	no longer local education authority lower-case initials do not abbreviate takes a singular verb
Local Safeguarding Children Board	capital initials
lone parent	not single parent
looked after children	no hyphen do not abbreviate use this generic term rather than 'children in care', as not all looked after children are in the care of the local authority
lunchtime	one word

M	
mathematics	not maths
minority ethnic	not ethnic minority (as adjective)
misspell	not mis-spell
multicultural	one word
multilingual	one word
N	
National Curriculum	capital initials
National Qualifications Framework	capital initials
national standards/national minimum standards	lower-case initials
New Deal...	start of titles of various government programmes for unemployed people, for example New Deal for Lone Parents capital initials for such titles
nextstep	one word all lower case unless it starts a sentence roman, not bold
none	takes a singular verb
north	no capital unless part of the official name of a specific place or area, for example 'North America', but 'north London'
notice to improve	lower-case initials do not abbreviate
number	write numbers from one to nine as words write numbers 10 and above as figures avoid beginning a sentence with a number; if this cannot be avoided write the number in words for detailed guidance on numbers see paragraphs 76–84
Nursery/nursery	capital initial when referring to the Nursery Year within a school lower-case initial when used generically, for example, 'Ofsted inspects nurseries.'
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification write in full the first time it appears
NVQ at level 1	not NVQ level 1, which does not exist

O	
offenders	use in reports on prisons, but note that offenders become learners when engaged in learning and skills
off-task; on-task	avoid if possible
off-the-job; on-the-job	hyphenate when used as adjectives, for example to describe employment-related learning
Ofsted	not OFSTED
online	one word
outperform	one word
P	
participant	used instead of 'learner' or 'client' for people on employability programmes funded by the Department for Work and Pensions
part time	two words when used as a noun hyphenate when used as an adjective, for example 'part-time students'
per cent	use %, except with a number that is written as a word because it starts a sentence (see also paragraphs 78 and 82 on numbers)
personal education plan	do not abbreviate
personal, social and health education PSHE	write in full where possible and in any case the first time it appears lower-case initials when written in full
P levels; P scale data	capital P, no hyphen used to record attainment for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities working below Level 1 of National Curriculum
points score	'points' is plural
post-16	hyphen no capital
postcode	one word
practice	practise when used as a verb

Primary Care Trust	capital initials when part of title of specific trust; lower case when used generally do not abbreviate
principal/principle	often confused 'principal' means 'chief' or 'most important' and is also used for the head of a college the meanings of 'principle' include 'moral rule' and 'basis for belief or action', as in 'The principle that pupils' individual targets should be challenging yet achievable was widely accepted.'
program	spelling – when referring to computer software
programmes of study	lower-case initials
pupils	not acceptable in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but use for Years 1–6 and when referring to both primary and secondary schools see students
pupils' progress	not 'pupil progress'
Q	
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority	capital initials for key words
R	
Reception Year	capital initials
reduced tariff inspection	lower-case initials do not abbreviate
Registered Manager	capital initials (as in regulations on social care)
reinspection	one word
role play	no hyphen
S	
SATs	do not use, even if the school does – consider 'national tests' or 'end-of-key-stage tests' instead
school development/improvement plan	do not abbreviate
School Improvement Partner	capital initials do not abbreviate
section 5 inspection	lower-case initials

section 8 inspection	do not abbreviate to s5/s8
secure children's homes	lower-case initials
secure training centres	lower-case initial
self-assessment	hyphen
self-evaluation	hyphen
sentence case	only the first word and proper nouns begin with a capital use for titles and headings in all documents, including the subject line in letters
sixth form	no hyphen
skilful	not skilfull
Skills for Life	capital initials for key words
south	no capital unless part of the official name of a specific place or area, for example 'South Shields', but 'south Manchester'
special educational needs and/or disabilities	do not abbreviate use in all contexts except further education and post-16 learning and skills, where you should refer instead to 'learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities' (see glossary entry)
special measures	lower-case initials
spring	lower-case initial
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education	initial capitals for key words
statement of special educational needs	lower-case initials do not abbreviate to SEN
students	use for Years 7 to 13, and for learners in further education colleges, except those on work-based learning provided by the college see PUPILS and LEARNERS
sub-committees	sub-committees on governing bodies are usually committees, and the prefix should not be used, even if the school uses it
summer	lower-case initial
Sure Start	two words; capital initials

T	
teacher assessments	this is the term for statutorily required assessments such as those at Key Stage 1 use teachers' assessments elsewhere
team-building	hyphen
teamwork	one word
timescale	one word
timetable	one word
TLR	teaching and learning responsibilities do not abbreviate
trade union	lower-case initials the plural is trade unions
trainees	used for people undertaking initial teacher training courses
Training and Development Agency for Schools (formerly the Teacher Training Agency)	capital initials for key words
Train to Gain	capital initials for key words; no capital for 'to'
Traveller(s)	capital initial
Trust schools, Trust status	capital 'T'; lower-case 's'
U	
UK online centres	these provide community access to computers and learners can take learndirect courses there
underachieve	one word
under-fives; under-eights	hyphen do not write under-5s; under-8s
United Kingdom	ensure that Great Britain and the United Kingdom are used correctly: Great Britain comprises England, Scotland and Wales; the United Kingdom comprises Great Britain and Northern Ireland
units (previously modules)	lower-case initial
V	
value-added	consider 'added value'

vice-chair	hyphen lower-case initials
videoconference	one word
W	
Web/web	capital initial when referring to the World Wide Web (proper noun) lower case when used generally, for example in 'web page'
website	one word
well-being	hyphen
west	no capital unless part of the official name of a specific place or area, for example 'West Sussex', but 'west London'
while	not whilst
White (referring to people)	capital initial only when part of a specific census category such as 'White British' see also paragraphs 61 and 62 on inclusive language
White Paper	capital initials
whole-school	hyphenate when used as adjective, for example 'whole-school issues' but not otherwise: 'The whole school was involved.'
work-based assessors	assessors who conduct assessments of work-based learners' progress
work-based learning	hyphen
workplace supervisors	line managers who supervise learners in their workplace
working party	lower-case initials
Workstep	capital initial has 'participants' not 'learners'
Y	
Year 1, Year 2...	capital initials do not abbreviate to Y1, Y2...
Youth Justice Board	capital initials
young offender institutions	lower-case initials
young people	use for people from age 14
youth offending team	lower-case initials

Further information

Concise Oxford English Dictionary

The best edition to use is the most recent, the 11th edition (revised 2008), but the 10th edition is serviceable for most purposes.

David Crystal, *Discover grammar*, Longman, 1996

Practical help and guidance with grammar that is easy to understand. Includes practice activities.

John Seely, *Oxford A–Z of grammar and punctuation*, Oxford University Press, 2007

A handy brief guide.

R L Trask, *Penguin guide to punctuation*, Penguin, 1997

Clear explanations with many examples.

R L Trask, *Mind the gaffe: the Penguin guide to common errors in English*, Penguin, 2002

Advice on avoiding pitfalls and writing simply and effectively, presented in an entertaining way.

Further information on writing in plain English is available on the website of the Plain English Campaign: www.plainenglishcampaign.co.uk.