

COMMUNICATIONS STYLE GUIDE



The Y's Communications Style Guide is designed to help ensure consistency of language and style across the organisation - specifically focused on the written word.

It's written informally and accessibly, and is for use by all staff, volunteers and external suppliers who are preparing or updating material for the Y and its associated entities.

The style guide includes the Y's preferred style for presenting information. It includes abbreviations, numbers, italics, spelling, capitalisation and hyphenation, as well as some universal grammar and punctuation rules.

Why is style important?

Consistency is a reflection of an organisation's professionalism, competence and effectiveness. When the Y presents information in print, online or in other formats, it is important that the style is consistent. Consistency is important not just within a single document but across the full range of materials.

How will a style guide help?

As written style is often a matter of personal choice, the easiest way to achieve consistency is for staff and external suppliers to follow a style guide. It will also save you time – from the start of any project, your entire team can follow the same guidelines.

What if it's not in this style guide?

If you can't find what you're looking for in this style guide, reach out to the Communications team and they will be more than happy to help.

If you're wondering how to spell a word when there is more than one way, the preferred dictionary is the Oxford English Dictionary.

Accompanying documents

The preferred style for logos, corporate colours, font styles and cover layouts can be found in our brand portal at ymcavictoria.mediavalet.com/portals/brandportal (you can find this link on the homepage of YNet). Here you will find many visual examples to refer to.

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STYLE GUIDE

Type face and font size

All publications should use Mont, Helvetica or Arial type face. Arial is only to be used when the other fonts are not available or installed.

The size of the body type should usually be 12 point. It is acceptable to use 11 point however to ensure compliance with accessibility standards, the Y prefers that public documents meet this requirement.

In circumstances that 12 point is too large to fit the wording onto one page, 11 point is acceptable.

In PowerPoint presentations the font size should be a minimum of 24 point for visibility by the audience.

You can find out more about font use at the Y in the National Brand Guidelines.

Tone

The tone of your communication needs to be appropriate for the audience and the medium in which it is delivered.

The Y seeks to create a welcoming, supportive environment and therefore this is the tone in which we write our communications.

Aim of communication

Guided by our belief in the power of inspired young people, and our commitment to being a welcoming and inclusive organisation for everybody regardless of age, race, gender, sexuality or ability, the words we use are important in conveying these values.

Ensure you use plain English. Think carefully before using words that may appear to the reader as either too academic or negative. If there is a simpler or more positive way to say something, say it that way. That said, don't always shy away from the truth if the truth is not pleasant. Depending on the situation, we need to be bold and advocate for what is right and in other instances admit where we might have made a mistake and, importantly, what we are doing to rectify it.

Think about the key message you wish to communicate to your audience, then set the tone of the communication using the clearest possible language.

The Y's Vision and Member Y's Strategic Goals

As communicators our goal is to ensure our vision and all our communications are real, desirable, attainable and accessible.

While vision statements and strategic goals may change and adapt, the tone and purpose of our communication remains the same. The Y is a welcoming place that celebrates our differences and promotes diversity. Regardless of the program, service or sector you are writing for, this is the value that runs through all we do.

Grammar

- Adjective - is a describing word that defines or evaluates a noun eg: *a hot day, an awful noise.*
- Adverb - a word that adds to the information of a verb eg: *come quickly, most competent, very soon.*
- Noun - provide the name of a person, place, animal or tangible, non tangible, visible or invisible thing. eg: *tree, sand, James, Horsham, skiing, humour, strength, angel.*
- Pronoun - stand in for nouns and noun phrases already mentioned. eg; *I, you, he, she, we, they, this, those, who and which.*
- Preposition - indicates relationship with a noun eg; *after Lunch, with the reporter, under no circumstance.*
- Verb - expresses action or processes eg: *speak, grow, stand- stood, teach- taught, drive- drove, ring- rang, build- built, wait- waited, pass- passed, finish- finished.*

For further detail, consult the *Commonwealth of Australia, Style Manual for Authors Editors and Printers*, John Willey & Sons Pty Ltd Sixth Edition 2002.

Formality and tense

In general we prefer an informal ‘conversationalist’ writing style, rather than a formal style.

- ✓ ‘How do you like to keep fit?’
- ✗ ‘the Y says the best way to get fit is ...’

We prefer to communicate in the second person (You/Yours/We/Our/Ours) which is warmer, more welcoming and less formal than the third person (i.e. the Y).

- ✓ You/Yours
- ✓ We
- ✓ Our/Ours

However, it’s acceptable and appropriate to refer to your centre, program or service by name in the first instance then refer to it in the second tense in future references.

The {name of centre} is a great place to work out. We provide a range of facilities to meet everyone’s needs. Here you will find ...

Whichever tense you choose to write in to suit your particular key target audience, stick with it. If you are referring to ‘our staff’ at the start of your piece, don’t shift to ‘you’ in the middle. Be consistent.

See also Appendix 1: Writing tips

SPELLING AND CAPITALISATION

Spelling list

This is an alphabetical list of some of the commonly used words in Y documents. The most important point is to aim for consistency throughout your document. Watch out for words with alternative spellings: the fact that both spellings are in common use makes it easy to miss inconsistencies.

If a word is not in this list, consult the Oxford English Dictionary. Check that your 'language' and 'spellcheck' functions in MS Word are set to English (Australia).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

acknowledgement

advisor (not adviser)

affect (verb) tip: who will the program affect or impact

effect (noun) tip: what is the effect or impact of the program

ageing (not aging)

among (not amongst)

appendices (not appendixes)

Board member

café / cafe (both are acceptable)

chair / chairperson

childcare/child care (both are acceptable)

cooperation

coordinate, coordinator

council (capitalise if it is a specific council)

dependant (noun) tip: the child is the dependant of the mother

dependent (adjective) tip: the child is dependent on the care of his mother

email (not e-mail)

enquire (not inquire)

focused (not focussed)

full time (noun)

full-time (adjective)

get/got (avoid use, never use US participle 'gotten')

government (capitalise if it's a specific government)

grass roots (noun)

grass-roots (adjective)

haves and have-nots

ill-health

indigenous (and: non-indigenous)

Internet

Intranet

-ise (not 'ize': authorise, capitalise, and so on)

Koori / Koorie (both are acceptable; preferred spelling will depend on name of organisation/group being referred to)

life cycle

lifestyle

Spelling list

non-government

online (not on-line)

-our (not 'or': colour, flavour; but the Australian Labor Party)

people of colour, POC

people with disability

policy-maker

preschool

program (not programme; capitalise if it refers to a specific program)

self-confidence

self-esteem

socio-economic

subpopulation

SunSmart

The Hon. (The Honourable)

the Y (not The Y unless at the beginning of a sentence)

TV / television (both are acceptable)

type 2 diabetes

versus (not v. unless space is limited)

website (not web site or web-site)

wellbeing (not well-being)

while (not whilst)

workplace

World Health Organisation (WHO)

Worldwide

YNet (not Ynet)

YMCA (or The Young Men's Christian Association Incorporated – must be spelt out when referring to entity)

The Y (In first instance refer to YMCA, to be used as a reference as subsequent text)

The Y Movement (reference to the YMCA worldwide network)

For the purpose of tenders or legally binding contracts, the correct registered name of the entity must be used to reference the organisation that holds the legal responsibilities.

Capitalisation (Also see Appendix 2)

Aim for minimal and consistent capitalisation in body text, headings and tables.

Minimal capitalisation means that only the first word and nouns which name a specific person or place are capitalised.

- Programs, Departments, Centres and Sites within the Y always take a capital letter.
- Words that don't take capitals include: seasons (summer not Summer), the (there are exceptions ie: The Age), and, or, to, with, types of activities like swimming and gymnastics are also lower case.
- Capitals are not necessary when words are used in a general sense or references are indirect.
- Block capitals attract attention, but are difficult to read. NEVER TYPE A DOCUMENT OR EMAIL MESSAGE IN CAPITALS BECAUSE IT IS CONSIDERED SHOUTING.

Abbreviations and acronyms

In general, use abbreviations only to refer to terms that are central to the document.

Don't abbreviate terms that you use only once or a couple of times (write them out each time).

Don't overwhelm your reader with strings of acronyms and abbreviations. Do not use full stops between the letters. See also Numbers and Symbols.

1. Well-known abbreviations and acronyms do not need to be written in full.

GST, YMCA

2. In other contexts, use the full name and place the abbreviation in brackets after the first reference. Once spelt out in full, you can use the acronym in succeeding references.

The Young Men's Christian Association of {Y member} Inc. (Y {entity} or YMCA or the Y)

3. If the abbreviation is written with lower-case letters or an initial capital letter use a full stop.

Co. Prof. Hon. vol. p.v.*

Do not abbreviate 'versus' in text (use the abbreviation only in tables and where space is limited).

The exception is am and pm, which are written without full stops.

3pm – 9am

4. There is no need to use a full stop if the abbreviation ends with the last letter of the word:

Dr Ms

5. Internationally recognised units of measurement do not take full stops and are never plural.

Km kg cm

6. Where possible, avoid Latin abbreviations.

e.g. (exempli gratia) use: for example or such as

i.e. (id est) use: that is

etc. (et cetera, and so forth)

If you introduce a list with 'including' or 'such as', it's incorrect to add 'etc' because the reader knows that the list is incomplete.

The Aquatics Taskforce liaises with many centres, including {centre name}, {centre name}, {centre name} and {centre name}. Group fitness classes bring many advantages (for example, friendship, fun, fitness). (Remember to insert a comma after 'for example'.)

Hyphens

Hyphenation is a contentious subject (ice cream, ice-cream, icecream?). Some people use very few hyphens; others use too many. The main reason for using a hyphen is to avoid ambiguity. The best approach is to aim for consistency and follow some widely accepted guidelines (see also Dashes).

Use a hyphen:

1. In nouns or adjectives made up of two or more words that together operate as a single unit of meaning.

mother-in-law (plural: *mothers-in-law*)
side-effect

2. To clarify meaning when using adjectives before a noun.

thirty-odd people live in purpose-built houses

3. To separate double vowels or consonants.

pre-existing cross-section But: *coordinate* (no ambiguity)

4. When the meaning of the words would change with the hyphen's removal.

re-creation/recreation
re-cover/recover
thirty-odd people / thirty odd people

5. With a prefix plus a capital letter or date.

un-Australian
post-1990s

6. In fractions and compass points.

one-third north-east

* Hyphenation varies according to sentence structure. Some examples:

It was an AIDS-related illness.	The cause was AIDS related.
An up-to-date report is coming now.	Is that information up to date?
It was an Australia-wide survey.	The survey was Australia wide.
I've been offered a short-term contract.	In the short term, we will need more coffee.
They live in purpose-built houses.	It didn't work because it wasn't purpose built.

Italics

Italics are used for titles of publications, books, newspapers, magazines, films and works of art

*We distributed **The Australian** to all participants.*
The health costs of violence.

Titles of articles and chapters within a published work are set apart by single quotation marks.

Italics are also used to give emphasis to a word or phrase or to reinforce an important contrast, and are preferable to using underline, **bold** or ALL CAPS.

PUNCTUATION

The main purpose of punctuation is to clarify the meaning of sentences. By keeping your sentences short and simple, your writing will require less punctuation and will be easier to read.

Accents

As a general rule, accents on foreign words accepted in English should only be used if they make a critical difference to pronunciation. If a word does require accents, ensure that it receives its full complement.

Cliché
Attaché
Résumé

It is not necessary to include accents for well-assimilated words:

Elite
Naive
Premiere

Cafe (often the MS Word function will ‘autocomplete’ this word as you type; in this case it’s easier to leave it with the accent)

Ampersands (&)

Unless space limitations are severe, restrict ampersands to company names, such as ‘Jones & ...’ and joint authorship, such as Hodder & Stoughton

And/or

There is rarely a need to use ‘and/or’ and its use should be avoided. It creates a lack of clarity and is clumsy. In most cases either ‘and’ or ‘or’ will be adequate.

Apostrophes ’

Use apostrophes to:

- show possession
- indicate missing letters or contractions (can’t, she’ll)

Possession

The singular form – an apostrophe is inserted before the possessive s of singular common nouns:

the government’s policies
tomorrow’s program

Plural nouns ending in s take the s apostrophe:

swimmers’ routines
students’ answers

Plural nouns that do not end in s take the apostrophe s:

the children’s memories of camp
the instructor’s movement

Possessive pronouns do not use the apostrophe s at all. Their standard forms are: my, your, his, her, its, our, their, mine, yours, hers, and theirs.

Nouns which are more adjectival than possessive are often written without an apostrophe.

girls high school (a high school for girls not of girls)
senior citizens centre
a teachers training college

Don't insert an apostrophe in dates or acronyms unless they are showing possession.

1990s
GPs

Contractions

Use apostrophes for shortened forms of words or where two words are commonly pronounced as one syllable. The benefit of using contractions is that they'll warm-up your message and take the starch out of stiff sentences.

don't
we're

Its and It's

It's is a shortened version of it is.

It's about time you rang.

Its indicates possession.

Looking at this book, I don't like its front cover.

Colons and semi-colons

Colons

A good way to remember how to use the colon is to think of it as meaning 'and here it is' or 'and here they are':

There are several clusters at the Y: {site name}, {site name}, {site name}, and {site name}.

If a colon introduces a complete sentence, a formal statement, proper noun, quotation, or speech, capitalise the first letter. If the colon introduces a sentence fragment, do not capitalise the first letter.

The Treasurer was quoted as saying: "We may turn into a banana republic if industry does not become more competitive".

This is the gist of her speech: she agreed to...

Semi-colons

1. To link and separate parts of a sentence that are closely associated.

The Y helps people to live a healthy life; it assists people facing disadvantage.

2. To join clauses when a conjunction (and, but) has been omitted.

To be young and a smoker is dangerous; to be old and a smoker is even more dangerous.

3. To avoid confusion by separating words or phrases which already have commas.
The conference presenters were Dr Mary Jones, Director, Obesity Program, Department of Human Services; and Mr David Smith-Jones, Aerobics Team Leader, {site name}.
4. To precede clauses introduced with words like however, nevertheless, thus, accordingly, consequently, that is and namely.
Physical activity protects against obesity; however, it needs to be performed regularly at moderate intensity.

Commas

You may have been told to use a comma where you would take a breath. This is not good practice and can lead to misuse. Don't worry about the health of your readers; they will breathe without you showing them where.

1. Commas are used to separate words and phrases in a list
{Site name} offered classes in yoga, dance,
2. They also introduce direct speech. (A colon is sometimes used.)
{CEO name} said, "We are very pleased that physical activity rates have increased in the past 12 months".
3. Pairs of commas are used to set off extra information in a sentence.
{Site name}, which offered courses in cooking, budgeting and Japanese, was a great place for people to meet
4. Commas are also inserted before a conjunction in a sentence that could be two sentences.
Staff at {site name} wanted to offer a course in skydiving, but there was little interest from the local community
5. And when a sentence has a long introductory element, a comma allows correct reading.

How can you tell if the commas are in the right place?

Don't place a comma between the subject and a verb:

- ✘ Writers who don't pay careful attention to punctuation, will find themselves making mistakes
- ✓ Writers who don't pay careful attention to punctuation will find themselves making mistakes.

Don't place a comma where it will break up the main clause of your sentence:

- ✘ The objectors acting on their own initiative, have lodged an appeal against the development.
- ✓ The objectors, acting on their own initiative have lodged an appeal against the development.

Don't separate clauses with commas if they are referring to the same subject:

- ✘ The application was refused, but it had some merit.
- ✔ The application was refused, but the invitation was accepted.

Don't use commas to separate pairs of words or phrases that are joined by coordinating conjunctions:

- ✘ Planners are characterised by dedication, and enthusiasm.
- ✔ Planners are characterised by dedication and enthusiasm.

The last 'and'

Modern style calls for minimal punctuation, so do not put a comma before the last 'and' in a sentence unless the sentence demands it.

Please supply full details including name, date of birth, address and telephone number.

Dashes

The words en and em are printers' terms for how long a dash is

Unspaced en dash (–)

An unspaced en dash is used in spans of figures, in expressions relating to time or distance, and to convey an association between words that retain their separate identity. Word will often 'autocomplete' an en dash when you type a spaced hyphen;

March–April

pp.23–46

Melbourne–Sydney flight

Spaced en dash (–)

Use a spaced en dash to indicate an abrupt change in thought, or where a comma or brackets are too weak.

The Y is supporting peak organisations to work with specific population groups – women, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and First Australians – to increase participation in physical activity.

The en rule should never be used with the words 'from' and 'between':

The period between 1970 and 1990 (not the period between 1970–90)

Available in sizes from 9 to 26 (not available in sizes from 9–26)

Ellipses (...)

An ellipsis is three full stops used to mark omitted text. It may also indicate an unfinished sentence or hesitant speech. There are always only three points, even if the ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence.

Could you perhaps...

er...

I was wondering...

Full stops

Spacing after a full stop

Use only one space between a full stop and the capital letter that follows.

Brackets

If brackets are used within a sentence, there is no full stop inside the bracket.

{Site name} was crowded with holidaymakers (most with big smiles on their faces) who were fit and young.

When a whole sentence is in brackets it starts with an initial capital letter and the full stop/question mark/exclamation mark is inside the bracket.

She refused to go without her cat. (We didn't know she even liked it.)

See Abbreviations for guidelines about full stops in abbreviations.

Lists

Using a bulleted or numbered list can make your information more accessible. If the entries have information in steps, it's preferable to create a numbered list (using Arabic numbers).

Check the following:

- 1) danger
- 2) response
- 3) airway
- 4) breathing
- 5) circulation

Punctuation in lists

1. Simple list (no end punctuation is required)

The program offered:

- exercise
- refreshments
- social interaction

2. Full sentences (use an initial capital letter and full stop)

The committee came to two important conclusions:

- Officers from the department should investigate the feasibility of developing legislated guidelines.
- Research should be funded in the three priority areas.

3. Sentence fragments that do not use commas (no initial capital letter but use a full stop)

The survey found that staff:

- wanted to use A4 paper.
- enjoyed social outings every month.
- thought the parental leave arrangements were generous.

4. Sentence fragments that contain commas (no initial capital letter and use a semi-colon to separate the items)

The objectives of the scheme are to:

- help groups disadvantaged by social, cultural and geographic circumstances;
- contribute to self-determination for those who develop, create and stage community-based activities;
- and
- raise awareness of the links between social inclusion, valuing diversity and positive mental health.

Quotation marks

Double quotation marks are used for direct speech.

“We are very pleased that physical activity rates have increased in the past 12 months,” said {CEO name}.

Single quotation marks are used to enclose a quote within a quote, a quote within a headline, or a title within a quote.

"We are making sure that the 'bubble wrap' generation get a chance to engage in free play at the Y," said {CEO}.

"The Y recently warned about 'stranger danger' in relation to safeguarding children in communities," {CEO} added.

Solidus (/)

Use a solidus – also known as a diagonal, oblique or slash – to indicate alternatives (male/female, and/or), to form standard abbreviations (n/a), to replace ‘per’ in measurements (80 km/h), and to denote a fraction.

The solidus should not be used instead of other punctuation marks.

Sydney–Brisbane flight not Sydney/Brisbane flight
financial year 2004–05 not financial year 2004/05

Square brackets

Use square brackets to show that text within does not belong to the document or quotation but is being inserted for clarity. Explanations within direct quotations and editorial comments come into this category.

The naturopath believed that it [ginger] cured travel sickness.
He wrote: “It was a forgone [sic] conclusion”.

NUMBERS AND SYMBOLS

Dates

Use minimal punctuation in dates:

Tuesday 12 November

June 2020

Tuesday 12 November, 2010 [insert comma before year]

26–30 April

the 1990s [no apostrophe]

1990–91 [use an en dash not a hyphen for number spans]

Numbers

In general, spell out numbers from one to nine, then use 10, 11, 12. Follow the same rules for ordinals: first, second, third, 14th, 15th, 16th. However, use figures for measurement, ranges of numbers, mixed fractions and decimals. If starting a sentence with a number, spell it out. Some examples:

Words	Figures
two-thirds	$\frac{2}{3}$
half an hour	$\frac{1}{2}$
two minutes	between 4pm and 6pm
the second earthquake	a woman in her 30s
four adults	12-year-old child
	\$40–\$55 (not \$40-55)
	20% of adults
	10,000–12,000 (not 10–12,000)
	7kg, 800m
	2.8 times more likely to walk
	20–29 age group
	type 2 diabetes
	1990s
	chapter 7

High numbers

Do not use a comma until 10,000. Spell out ‘million’ and ‘billion’.

5000

10,000

\$2.6 billion

four million

Page references

Give page references a consistent form: ‘see page 14’ in one place should not become ‘p. 14’ in another. Double-check all cross-references for accuracy.

Per cent (%)

Per cent is an abbreviation of the Latin per centum. In text and tables, use the symbol (%). Figures not words should be used with percentages.

At the Y, 85% of the staff support workplace giving.

Ratios

Use a colon when expressing ratios.

17:24

Telephone numbers

Use brackets for area codes and spaces to divide parts of a telephone number.

(03) 9667 1333

0418 574 695

+61 3 9667 1333

Time

Use am and pm, no space and no full stops.

8am, 10.15pm, noon, midnight

In documents where few numbers are used, times of the day are often expressed in words, particularly when they involve full, half and quarters hours:

E.g. They agreed to meet at quarter past ten.

She had to leave at ten o'clock.

However, time expressed as numerals should be used whenever the exact time is important:

E.g. The bus leaves at 7.15pm

Copyright notice

When inserting a copyright notice, the copyright symbol, name of proprietor and date should follow each other closely, ideally on the same line.

© Copyright {proprietor name} 2021

What is copyright?

Copyright protects the original expression of ideas, not the ideas themselves. It is free and automatically safeguards your original works of art and literature, music, films, sound recording, broadcasts and computer programs from copying and certain other uses. Copyright is not registered in Australia.

Material is protected from the time it is first written down, painted or drawn, filmed or taped. Copyright material will also enjoy protection under the laws of other countries who are signatories (like Australia) to the international treaties.

Copyright protection is provided under the Copyright Act 1968 and gives exclusive rights to license others in regard to copying the work, performing it in public, broadcasting it, publishing it and making an adaptation of the work. Rights vary according to the nature of the work. Those for artistic works, for instance, are different to those for literary and musical works.

Although making copies of copyright material can infringe exclusive rights, a certain amount of copying is permissible under the fair dealing provisions of the legislation.

Copyright doesn't protect you against independent creation of a similar work. Legal actions against infringement are complicated by the fact that a number of different copyrights may exist in some works – particularly films, broadcasts and multimedia products.

Consider using a copyright notice

Although a copyright notice with the owner's name and date is not necessary in Australia, it can help prove your ownership of the copyright, and is necessary to establish copyright in a few overseas countries.

A copyright notice can also act as a deterrent to potential infringers.

Copyright is lost if the owner applies a three-dimensional artistic work industrially. In such a case, it is necessary to register the design if protection is required.

Duration of copyright

This varies according to the nature of the work and whether or not it has been published.

Depending on the material, copyright for literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works generally lasts 70 years from the year of the author's death or from the year of first publication after the author's death.

Copyright for films and sound recordings lasts 70 years from their publication and for broadcasts, 70 years from the year in which they were made.

Who administers copyright?

The Attorney-General's Department administers the Copyright Act 1968.

Source: www.ipaustralia.gov.au/

Trademarks

Registered trademarks and brand names should be written with a capital letter. To print one without a capital letter implies that it's generic, and is an infringement of the trademark status. Unless you are referring to a specific product, trade names are best avoided. Use generic alternatives, such as tissues instead of Kleenex.

ADDRESSES

Email addresses

Write email addresses as they are used. (Don't insert a full stop after the address if it appears at the end of a sentence to prevent confusion in the address.)

To contact us, please email safe@ymca.org.au.

Website addresses

Do not include the 'http' section of a website address, unless there is no 'www'.

www.ymca.org.au

If a website address ends a sentence, it must include a full stop.

The Y contact details

For further information please visit www.ymca.org.au.

APPENDIX 1:

Writing tips

Plan your document

Before you begin drafting your document, you need to decide exactly what it aims to do. Who will the readers be? Do they have little or no knowledge of the subject, or a good understanding of it? What do they want to know? What is the best way to present the information?

Put the reader first

Once you know who your readers are, try to write things from their point of view, rather than from your organisation's perspective. Write directly to the reader, as though you were explaining the facts in person. Use "we" and "you". It is friendlier than expressions like "the branch" and "the member".

Use words your reader will know

About 50% of adult Australians can't cope with a level of writing more complex than found in a popular newspaper. So if your documents are aimed at the general public, you will need to pitch your writing at this level.

Don't use technical or specialised terms unless you know that your readers will understand them. If it is important that readers understand a specific term, explain it. Avoid outdated words like "heretofore", "herein" and "aforementioned".

Use everyday language

Your writing will be easier to understand – and much more reader-friendly – if it is in plain, everyday language. Of course, plain English isn't merely a matter of replacing pompous words with plain ones. But it's a good start to write in the same kind of language you would use if you were talking directly to the reader.

From the Department of Education, Science and Training website: http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/plain_english_at_work/default.htm

Here are some examples of expressions commonly used in business letters and other written communications with some clearer alternatives:

I refer to your letter of 7 May.	Thank you for your letter of 7 May.
You wrote to me in relation to...	You wrote to me about...
Should you require further assistance...	If you need more help...
at such time as	when
prior to and following	before and after

Use short sentences and brief paragraphs

Write in fairly short sentences. Have only one or two ideas in each sentence. If you need to explain a term or qualify a point, use a separate sentence. But don't sacrifice clarity for brevity. Being short doesn't necessarily mean a sentence is clear. In some cases, you may need to use more, rather than fewer, words to get your message across clearly. Don't slavishly follow any rule, which says a sentence should only contain a certain number of words. A better guideline is to use only as many words as necessary.

Organise your thoughts into brief paragraphs, with one central topic in each.

This makes your writing much easier to read and understand.

APPENDIX 2: Acknowledgement of country

The Y recognises Aboriginal people's unique position in the history and culture of Australia. Aboriginal people are the original custodians of the land and it is important that this special position is recognised and incorporated into official Y events protocol. Official events include forums, conferences and statewide meetings, and ceremonies engaging the attention of participants, observers and the broader community. These events also reflect the values of our community and the way we see ourselves.

An acknowledgement of country is a way for an Aboriginal person, who is not a traditional owner or custodian of the land where the event is being held, or for non-Aboriginal people, to respect Aboriginal heritage.

An acknowledgment of country is only to be undertaken when no traditional owner or custodian is available to do so.

The chair, speaker, master of ceremonies or other can begin the meeting by acknowledging that the meeting is taking place in the country of the traditional owners.

For example:

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land (insert name if known) we are meeting on, and remind people that we are on Aboriginal land.

Or

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land who are part of the Aboriginal nation known as the Eora, and on whose land we now stand.

Or

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to the elders both past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and hopes of Aboriginal Australia. We must always remember that under the concrete and asphalt this land is, was, and always will be traditional Aboriginal land.

Acknowledging Elders

It is important that all speakers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, acknowledge any Elders in attendance prior to presenting or speaking. If an Elder is present, always include a sentence such as:

I also acknowledge the Elders and in particular those attending today's event.

For information on Aboriginal Languages/Tribes of Australia, please access the website of The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) at: aitisis.gov.au

APPENDIX 3:

How do I address a Member of Parliament?

POSITION	ENVELOPE	SALUTATION	CONCLUSION	HOW TO ADDRESS ORALLY
Prime Minister	The Hon. Scott Morrison, MP Prime Minister of Australia	Dear Prime Minister	Yours faithfully	Prime Minister or Mr Morrison
President of the Senate (when writing formally)	Senator the Hon. Scott Ryan President of the Senate	Dear Mr President	Yours faithfully	Mr President or Senator Ryan
President of the Senate (when writing to the President in his electoral capacity)	Senator the Hon. Scott Ryan	Dear Senator or Dear Senator Ryan	Yours faithfully	Senator
Speaker of the House of Representatives (when writing formally)	Mr Tony Smith, MP Speaker of the House of Representatives	Dear Mr Speaker	Yours faithfully	Mr Speaker or Sir or Mr Smith
Speaker of the House of Representatives (when writing to the Speaker in his electoral capacity)	Mr Tony Smith, MP Speaker of the House of Representatives	Dear Mr Smith	Yours faithfully	Mr Speaker or Sir or Mr Smith
Minister (Senate)	Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, Minister for Finance	Dear Minister	Yours faithfully	Senator or Minister
Minister (House of Representatives)	The Hon. Susan Ley, MP Minister for the Environment	Dear Minister	Yours faithfully	Minister or Ms Ley
Assistant Treasurer (House of Representatives)	The Hon Michael Sukkar, MP Assistant Treasurer, Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness, Social and Community Housing	Dear Assistant Treasurer	Yours faithfully	Minister or Mr Sukkar
Parliamentary Secretary	The Hon Ben Morton MP Parliamentary Secretary for Public Service	Dear Mr Morton	Yours faithfully	Mr Morton
Senator	Senator the Hon Kim Carr Senator for Victoria	Dear Senator	Yours faithfully	Senator
Member (House of Representatives)	Mr Adam Bandt MP	Dear Sir	Yours faithfully	Mr Bandt

Who can use the title Honourable?

Members or Senators who become Ministers are appointed to the Executive Council and thus have the title 'Honourable' while they remain Executive Councillors.

It rests with the Governor-General to continue or terminate membership of the Executive Council and consequently the right to the title. With one exception, Ministers appointed to the Executive Council have not in the past had their appointment to the Council terminated upon termination of their commission and hence have retained the title 'Honourable' for life.

Parliamentary Secretaries also have the title 'Honourable' when, as has been recent practice, they have been appointed to the Executive Council.

It is established custom for a Member who is elected Speaker to use the title 'Honourable' during his or her period of office and to be granted the privilege of retaining the title for life if he or she serves in the office for three or more years.

Source: *House of Representatives Practice (5th edition)*

APPENDIX 4:

The Y inclusive language guidelines

Inclusive language fits the ethos of the Y in that everyone is welcome regardless of faith, race, age, ability and income. In addition, current legislation requires inclusive language, particularly:

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth) Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Racial Hatred Act 1995 (Commonwealth)

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Commonwealth) Workplace Relations Act 1996 (Commonwealth)

Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (Commonwealth)

Why do we need inclusive language guidelines?

Using inclusive language recognises that all people are diverse and respected community members. It is always important for everyone at the Y – in all our work, every day.

What do we mean by inclusive language?

Inclusive language is non-discriminatory language. It means avoiding words that may offend, humiliate, insult, exclude, stereotype, or belittle people because of a particular attribute such as gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability or because of their membership of a certain group.

The importance of language

Language helps to define power; it can demean, intimidate, reinforce damaging stereotypes, make people feel ineffective or excluded and contribute to the unequal status of individuals. Humour based on gender, race, impairment and age can be particularly offensive and may constitute harassment in particular circumstances.

The use of inclusive language (non-discriminatory language) plays a key role in achieving equality and eliminating discrimination.

Purpose of the guidelines

These guidelines aim to:

- encourage Y staff, volunteers and external contractors to actively think about the language they use
- promote courtesy and equitable practices in their verbal and written communications
- provide practical examples of how to use inclusive language.

Inclusive language should be used in all forms of internal and external Y communications, whether spoken or written. Particular care should be taken in public speaking, especially in formal settings such as lectures, seminars and meetings. In these settings, using speech conventions that reflect equality is particularly important.

Language is a dynamic medium, which means that it is constantly evolving according to changes in culture, customs, and standards. Consequently, these inclusive language guidelines are part of a living document, requiring regular review to ensure that they concur with the social justice practices of the present day.

Using gender inclusive language

Historically, sexist language has been directed mainly at women. It limits their role, status and presence in society. Using gender inclusive language means using terms that are not sexist for either women or men.

Use generic terms for men and women – that is, language that can apply to both sexes.

For example:

Instead of	Consider
Chairman	Chairperson/Chair/Convenor/Co-ordinator
(to) man	(to) staff/operate/attend
manpower	workforce
man-made	handcrafted, artificial
one-man	run by one person
sportsmanship	fair play, sporting

Use inclusive personal pronouns

Instead of he/him/his, use the plural they/them/their, add the female equivalent or leave out the pronouns.

For example:

Instead of	Consider
Each manager will determine his centre's schedule	Managers will determine centre schedules
When a person joins, he should...	When people join, they should ... or When a person joins, she/he should...
When attending a camp, each person must bring with him...	When attending a camp, participants must bring with them ... or each person must bring with him/her...

As men usually precede women in expressions such as men and women and his and hers, try to reverse the order sometimes.

Use inclusive titles of address

As a rule, use a first name, a neutral title or nothing. For women, the use of Miss and Mrs identifies marital status as well as title, while Mr refers only to title. The use of Ms is recommended for all women where the parallel Mr is applicable, and when a woman's preferred title is unknown. However, a woman's preferred title should be respected when known. When listing names, use alphabetical order except where order by seniority is more important.

Where titles are appropriate, try to use parallel titles. For example:

Instead of	Consider
Peter Smith and his wife	Peter and Jillian Smith
Dear Sir	Dear Sir/Madam, Dear Madam or Sir

Avoid sex role stereotyping

Avoid terms that stereotype women or men. Occupational terms or job titles that relate to only one sex are no longer accurate, and discriminatory. In everyday communication, a person's occupation should not be linked to her/his sex, i.e. male nurse, lady doctor.

For example:

Instead of	Consider
Staff and their wives	Staff and their partners
Businessman/woman	Business executive
Policeman/woman	Police officer
Headmaster/headmistress	Principal
Layman	Lay person
Fireman	Firefighter
Managers and their wives	Managers and their partners
Salesman/salesmen	Sales assistant/sales staff
Air hostess	Flight attendant
Mother of four appointed CEO of leading charity	Juliet Nguyen has been appointed CEO...

Use words of equal status

Many common terms can put down or be condescending towards women and men. For example, referring to them as 'dear', 'love' or 'sweetie'. So-called compliments such as:

- 'You think just like a man'
- 'You're very feminine for a career woman'

are offensive to women, as are expressions such as 'he plays like a girl' and 'he behaved like an old woman', are also belittling and insulting to women.

Instead of	Consider
Ask the ladies/girls in the office...	Ask the staff in the office...

Avoid sexist humour

Jokes used to make light of gender issues are sexist. People who perpetrate such jokes often fail to recognise the potential damage.

For example:

'I wish someone would sexually harass me!'

Such a statement cheapens the significant issue of sexual harassment, which can have devastating results for the person being harassed.

Using language inclusive of people with disabilities

For people with disabilities, their disability is often the focus of how they are described.

This practice positions them as a one-dimensional object of sympathy rather than a person with a full life. Terms such as victim or sufferer are sometimes used to describe people with disabilities or medical conditions. Equally, some people use a 'condition' as a description, i.e. Maria is an epileptic, Ravi is a haemophiliac. These are all examples of non-inclusive language that tend to dehumanise a person with a disability or medical condition.

Normally, people with disabilities don't want to be pitied, feared, ignored, or seen as brave or special. Avoid terms that define the disability as a restriction, for example, confined to a wheelchair or using terms such as normal or able-bodied when contrasting people without a disability.

Expressions such as handicapped, spastic and cripple are offensive.

If possible, find out how the individual refers to her or his disability.

Instead of	Consider
the disabled	people with disabilities
disabled toilet	accessible toilet
the visually impaired	person with a vision impairment
the mentally handicapped	person with an intellectual disability
the mentally ill	person with a mental illness/psychiatric disability
victim of AIDS or AIDS sufferer	person with AIDS/person who is HIV positive, person living with AIDS or HIV
Diabetes sufferer/Diabetic	person with diabetes

Use culturally inclusive language

Non-discriminatory language in relation to race and ethnicity aims to recognise and present the diversity of Australia's population in positive ways.

Using language inclusive of indigenous people

With evidence of occupation over 60,000 years, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia may be the world's oldest people in the world's oldest land. Awareness of and sensitivity towards language issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, are of particular importance.

Some key points are:

- Most Aboriginal people prefer not to be called an Aborigine, as this was a term forced on them by the British. It is becoming the norm to use the term Aboriginal when describing Australian Aboriginal people.
- Always use capital 'A' for Aboriginal, lower case is insulting and derogatory.
- Inappropriate and offensive terms include 'part-Aborigine', 'full-blood', 'half-caste' and 'Abo'.
- Use the term indigenous people when referring to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. When using indigenous, always use a capital I.
- The indigenous people of the Torres Strait Islands have a separate linguistic and cultural identity to Aboriginal people.

- Never shorten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by using ATSI or ABL for Aboriginal.
- Regional terms are used by Aboriginal people to describe each other according to their home country.

For example:

Koories – Aboriginal people of south eastern Australia i.e. southern NSW and Victoria

Yolngu – general reference for Aboriginal people across Arnhem Land

Murris – Aboriginal people of northern NSW and Queensland

Ngungar – Aboriginal people in south west WA

Nunga – used by those in the south west, Adelaide, Peninsula area of SA

Yura – Aboriginal people of Flinders Ranges

Anangu – Aboriginal people in the central desert regions

Use the term indigenous people or First Nations Australians when referring to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Always use capitals for Indigenous, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander people or First Nations Australians.

The use of such terms recognises the changes to the original structure of language groups but acknowledges the cultural variations still present within present-day Aboriginal society.

Please note the spelling of the above regional terms may vary.

- When working with a local Aboriginal community, it is important that you always check, as to the correct name or terms to use for Aboriginal people in the area/region.
- Where a meeting or event is being held, an Acknowledgement of Country is a way, for non-Aboriginal people, to respect Aboriginal heritage (please see Acknowledgement of Country).

Non-indigenous language issues relating to ethnicity

People who have immigrated to Australia, particularly from non-English speaking backgrounds are still often ignored, or portrayed in stereotyped terms within the public sphere.

Traditionally, the ‘norm’ against which ‘others’ are described is the Anglo-Celtic majority. It is still common for Australians from minority groups to be referred to by their ethnic group of origins even in situations when they have lived here for many years or were born in Australia.

For example,

‘Many Italians come to my centre’ or ‘My Vietnamese neighbours’.

Referring to fellow Australians in this way is a form of exclusion, creating a sense of otherness - ‘they are not like me or us’. The term Australian refers to all Australian citizens regardless of ethnic background.

Some key points to consider are:

- Avoid referring to the ethnic and racial background of a person or group unless for a valid reason. If it is necessary, add the term Australian in your description. For example, Vietnamese-Australians or Greek- Australians.
- If someone has been in Australia for some time, calling them an immigrant or a migrant can be considered offensive – it can be seen to suggest that they will always be an outsider.
- Some Australians prefer not to be identified by their ethnic background.

- The great diversity of the Australian population, which includes people with many different religious and spiritual beliefs means that referring to one's Christian or First name is no longer appropriate. Instead, refer to Given name or Personal name.
- The term 'Asians' is used inappropriately to refer to people from diverse countries with different cultures, such as India, China, Japan. The term 'oriental' should not be used.
- Avoid inappropriate generalisations about ethnicity and religion, for example, not all Muslims are Arabic or Turkish; nor are all Arab-Australians or Turkish-Australians of the Muslim faith.
- Avoid physical features to describe people, for example, slanted eyes, or black skinned.

Other issues

Age

An individual or group's age should only be mentioned when relevant, and terms that are demeaning to older people such as pensioner or geriatric should not be used. Suitable terms include older Australians, seniors and mature age. Assumptions about an older person's physical or intellectual capacity should never be made.

Sexual preference and gender diversity

Gender, sex and sexuality are all different concepts. Gender refers to how a person identifies. Some people understand their gender as male and female; some people understand their gender as a combination of these or neither. A trans or transgender person is someone whose gender doesn't align with the one they were assigned at birth. Sex refers to male, female and intersex characteristics, such as chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. Whereas sexuality refers to a person's sexual orientation or preference.

Language that labels people because of their actual or assumed sexual preference or assumed gender is often very negative and offensive, and at best irrelevant. For example, it is still common to hear people referred to by their sexuality, if it's not the norm (heterosexual), i.e. The gay manager. When relevant, any discussion of issues relating to sexual orientation should be accurate and informed. Lesbians and gay men should be described in terms that do not trivialise or demean them, or encourage discrimination or distorted images of their lives.

Avoid negative stereotyping of supposed characteristics of lesbians and gay men, use the term partner instead of spouse and do not assume that everyone belongs to a traditional family. This is in line with the Y's broad definition of family – "No limitation is set for what constitutes family members or the size of the family grouping." Also avoid negative stereotyping of supposed characteristics of transgender and gender diverse people.

Plain language

The use of plain English enhances inclusive language. Plain English is good, clear writing which communicates as simply and effectively as possible.

ABSTRACT EXPRESSION	PLAIN ENGLISH ALTERNATIVES	ABSTRACT EXPRESSION	PLAIN ENGLISH ALTERNATIVES
accede	allow, give	magnitude	size
accentuate	stress	necessitate	need, have to, require
accommodation	where you live, home	notwithstanding	despite
acquiesce	agree	obtain	get
advise	inform, tell	outstanding	unpaid
affix	add, write, fasten, stick on, attach to	particulars	details, facts
aforementioned	this/(delete)	prohibit	ban, stop
assistance	help	provision	the law, policy
caveat	warning	recapitulate	sum up
comply with	keep to, meet	regarding	about, on
correspond	write	regulation	rule
designate	point out, show	remittance	payment
despatch	send	review	look at
disconnect	cut off	scrutinise	read/look at carefully
elect (verb)	choose	said	such, same
endeavour	try, attempt	shall (future action)	will
ensure	make sure	shall (legal obligation)	must
facilitate	help	stipulate	state, set/lay down
failure to	if you do not	statutory	legal, by law
forthwith	at once	undersigned	I, we
furnish	provide	undertake	agree, promise, do
initiate	begin, start	witnessed	saw
juncture	point, situation	zone	area, region

MINIMISE USING ...	PREFER USING ...	MINIMISE USING ...	PREFER USING ...
accounted for by the fact that	because	in the course of	during
are of the same opinion	agree	in the present communication	in this paper/report
as a consequence of	because	in the event of	if
as far as these experiments are concerned, they show	these experiments show	in view of the fact that	because
a sufficient number of	enough	in view of the foregoing circumstances	therefore
at a later date	later	interestingly it is of interest to note that	(omit)
at a rapid rate	rapidly	it may well be that	perhaps
at the present moment/ at this point in time	now	later on	later
cylindrical in appearance	cylindrical	mechanisms of a physiological nature	physiological mechanisms
dark blue in colour	dark blue	not infrequently	often
based on the fact that	because	on a regular basis	regularly
bring to a conclusion	finish	on two separate occasions	twice
deliberately chosen	chosen	over a period of the order of a decade	ten years
despite the fact that	although	owing to the fact that	because
due to the fact that	because	readily apparent	obvious
during the month of October	in October	reported to the effect that	reported that
equivalent as far as acceptability is concerned	equally acceptable	spell out in depth	explain
fully cognisant of the fact that	aware that	streamlined in appearance	streamlined
goes under the name of	is called	subsequent to	after
if conditions are such that	if	the question as to whether	whether
I myself would hope	I hope	the treatment having been performed	after treatment
in as much as	since	they utilise for sustenance	they eat
in connection with	about, concerning	through the medium of	by
in order to		to utilise	use
in respect of	about	very necessary	necessary