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**AWI writing style guide**

**A reference guide for AWI employees and partners**

**Purpose**

The *AWI writing style guide* is a reference tool for all AWI staff and writers and editors working on written communications for AWI.

It has been created to ensure all AWI written material, presentations and publications are expressed in a clear and consistent way, to convey AWI’s professionalism and branding.

The guide supplements the usual rules of grammar and punctuation.

**Scope**

This guide covers all written materials produced by staff and contractors for, or on behalf of, AWI.

This guide covers publications including *Beyond the Bale*, producer manuals, AWI newsletters, event flyers, handouts, and market information publications.

The key topics in the guide have been sorted by alphabetical order.

**The golden rules of writing and editing at AWI**

There are six important guidelines:

1. **Purpose:** Have a clear reason for the communication and know who the reader is – understand who they are and why would they be interested in the communications. Make sure you use language they understand. Write for the reader and the reader alone.
2. **The hook:** In the introduction reel out a hook and/or a compelling reason to continue reading – if the hook isn’t apparent, reconsider the purpose of the written communications.
3. **Getting engagement:** Provide information in a clear, succinct and engaging way – omit unnecessary words, consider visual elements (images, graphs, infographics, etc.) and breakout boxes. Eliminate long passages of text by adding bolded sub-headings.
4. **Key messages:** Place key messages upfront – never assume someone will read to the end.
5. **Call to action:** Include a clear call to action – contact details, an event, a website, etc.
6. **Consistency:** Use a consistent style (as per this guide) to enhance readability and convey AWI’s professionalism.

**More information**

If you have any questions regarding this writing style guide, please contact:

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**Acronyms**

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| **For one word states** | One worded states (Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania) are generally not shortened (for example, Queensland is always Queensland, not Qld) except where space is limited and to assist the flow of sentences. In such cases, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania can be written as Qld, Vic and Tas, respectively. |
| **How to use a common acronym** | Place it directly after the full name, but only if it is used again in the same story.  Example: Making More From Sheep (MMFS), rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus (RHDV). |
| **When no spelling out is required** | Acronyms can be used in the first instance for Western Australia (WA), New South Wales (NSW), South Australia (SA), Northern Territory (NT), and Australian Capital Territory (ACT), unless the context makes it unclear what’s being referred to, in which case the full name should be spelt out.  Some acronyms are so common for the particular audience that using the full term is not needed and only the acronym is used.  Example, the acronym ASBV is fine for a publication targeted at stud Merino breeders. |

**Ampersands**

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| **Only in a title** | Only use ampersands (&) when they are part of a name/title.  Example: Meat & Livestock Australia. |

**Bolding**

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| **When to use bolding** | Bolding should generally be limited to headings, sub-headings, and table and figure titles. In text, bolding should be used sparingly. |

**Bullet lists**

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| **Where each bullet point is a sentence** | In this case, bullet points are to be treated like normal sentences, i.e. start in caps and end in a full stop. The lead-in paragraph should be followed by a colon.  Example:  There are several ways to benefit from using RabbitScan:   * Develop a property or local area map of rabbit activity to guide control efforts. * Work together with your neighbours to undertake coordinated control. * Notify your local landholder group about rabbit activity and disease presence. |
| **Where each bullet point is a short phrase/sentence fragment** | In this case, the lead-in paragraph should be followed by a colon. Each dot point should start with a lower case letter and a full stop should be used at the end of the list.  Example:  The most frequent deaths resulted from accidents involving:   * side by side vehicles * quad bikes * tractors.   Only use semi colons or a full stop after each bullet point if necessary for clarification. |
| **Where there are two levels of indentation** | The colon should be at the end of the main lead-in only, not for the bulleted lead-ins.  Example:  These features are summarised as follows:   * physical characteristics * climate variability * terrain * environmental characteristics * biodiversity * water resources. |
| **Use for lists containing at least two points** | Avoid using bullet lists for one item. |

**Capitals**

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| **Breed names** | Breed names are proper nouns and as such should be written in upper case.  Example: Merino, Dorset. |
| **Generic terms for proper nouns** | When proper nouns are abbreviated to their generic elements, keep them capitalised. Example: ‘A Department of Agriculture spokesperson said’, then ‘Several years later, the Department released…’. |
| **Groups of nations** | Names that designate a group of nations geographically are always capitalised.  Example: South-East Asia, Central America. |
| **If in doubt** | When in doubt to use upper or lower case, use lower case – except for proper nouns and AWI program names (examples: Lifetime Ewe Management, Making More From Sheep), with ‘program’ or ‘project’ in lower case.  Example: ‘the Merino Lifetime Productivity project’. |
| **Proper noun** | Capital letters should be used at the start of a sentence or to denote a proper noun. |
| **Stray capitals** | Stray capitals should be avoided.  Example: Walk Over Weighing should be avoided. Rather, use walk over weighing. |
| **Titles of publications and headings within publications** | AWI uses minimal capitalisation in titles of publications and headings within publications.  Example: *Why stay in wool sheep?*  The exception is corporate publications when maximal capitalisation (capitalising all words in a title other than prepositions and conjunctions) is used.  Example: *AWI Annual Report 2023–24*.  Titles of publications should be italicised when referring to them in written communications. |

**Commas**

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| **Use of commas** | Try to avoid use of the Oxford comma (a comma before the word 'and') unless an Oxford comma helps avoid ambiguity.  Example of avoiding the Oxford comma: AWI’s three most popular social media channels are Facebook, X and Instagram.  Example of including the Oxford comma for clarity: Other options include growing a crop, establishing new pasture, making hay, and creating silage. |
| **Commas around names and titles** | Commas should not be used when introducing someone's name in an article.  Example: Victorian woolgrower Joe Bloggs increased lamb survival rates on his property by 15% in 2024.  There is an exception to this: commas should be used when introducing both the name and formal job title of an interviewee, particularly if it's a long-winded title.  Example: AWI’s General Manager, Grower Services & Market Intelligence, Stephen Feighan, said the manual addresses shearing shed safety. |

**Currencies**

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| **Expression** | When referring to particular currencies, express them in full; don’t abbreviate them. For example: “The Australian dollar was floated in 1983” rather than “The A$ was floated in 1983”.  The use of an A in front of the dollar symbol (to indicate Australian dollars) should only be used when the currency might be confused for another country’s dollar. The currency should be shortened when referring to an actual amount.  Example: A$12 million. |

**Dates and time**

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| **Expression** | Don’t use commas or ordinal indicators (e.g. st, th, nd, rd) in dates.  Example: 12 March 2025  However, if you include the name of a day, add a comma after it.  Example: Wednesday, 12 March 2025 |

**Dates and time (continued)**

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| **Financial years** | Use an en dash (–) to denote financial years. Do not use a slash (/), em dash (—) or hyphen (-).  Example: 2023–24. |
| **Time** | Time should always be written in full for consistency and to avoid confusion.  Example: 2:30 pm or 10:30 am  If there’s a time range (for example, on an event flyer), the times should be written in full and separated by space either side with an en dash (–) in the middle.  Example: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm |

**Footnotes**

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| **Footnotes** | A footnote should be marked with an asterisk within the body text, with relevant explanations to be included at the bottom of the page (not in italics). However, if there are many footnotes then a numbering system can be used. |

**Hyphens and dashes**

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| **Use of hyphens** | Hyphens are used to help the reader grasp the meaning of a phrase quickly and easily. The decision to use a hyphen should be based on the context in which the word or words appear.  Examples: AWI-funded project, high-quality feed, long-term forecast, 80-page booklet, Forbes-based, 45-minute webinar, on-farm safety, value-added service, long-acting drench, two-year-old. |
| **Number ranges** | The en dash (–), not em dash (—) or hyphen (-), should be used for number ranges (e.g. 10–15 kg DM/ha) or in terms where both words have equal value or weighting.  Example: Murray–Darling Basin. |
| **Punctuation** | If you are using a dash for punctuation, use an en dash (–) not an em dash (—) or a hyphen (-). |

**Names and titles**

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| **Job titles** | Only use caps for a person’s job title and only use the title once.  Example: AWI National Extension Manager, Emily King |
| **Salutation** | When introducing people in a story, use their title if it is a professional title (e.g. Dr or Professor), but not Mr, Ms, Mrs, and then their first and last name. After that, use their first name only if it is an AWI employee, but continue with the title if it is an external person. Do not use a full stop after an abbreviated title. |

**Lists**

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| **Format of numbered lists** | Each number should be followed by a full stop.  Example: 1.  The numbers should be left justified and not indented. |

**Numbers, units and quantities**

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| **Celsius** | Express as 120°C. |
| **Financial years** | Financial years should be expressed with an en dash (–), not a slash (/) or a hyphen (-).  Don’t use FY24 or FY2024.  Example: 2023–24. |
| **Four or more digits** | Use a comma for numbers with four or more digits.  Example: 4,000 ewes or 250,000 tonnes. |
| **Less than 10** | Nil to nine are written in words. |

**Numbers, units and quantities (continued)**

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| **More than 10** | Numbers from 10 onwards are written in numerals.  If a range contains both, use digits for consistency  Example: 7–12 |
| **Number ranges** | Number ranges should use the en dash (–), not a slash (/) or a hyphen (-).  Example: 10–15 kg DM/ha. |
| **Phone numbers** | Don’t use brackets around area codes.  Example: 02 8295 3100  Only use the country code (i.e. +61 for Australia) if the publication is specifically intended for an international audience.  Example: +61 2 8295 3100 |
| **Rankings** | Numbers indicating a position/ranking are written as words in the text.  Example: Joe Bloggs achieved first place in the competition (not 1st place). |
| **Spacing** | All units should have a space between the numeral and the unit.  Example: 200 ha, 7 km, except the percentage symbol (%): 15%.  A space should also be inserted when referencing a unit of measurement per another unit of measurement.  Example: 6 DSE/ha. |
| **Start of sentence** | Avoid starting a sentence with a numeral. Either spell it out in words or re-write the sentence. |

**Percentage**

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| **Expression** | When expressing a percentage, write % after the number. For example: 89% (not 89 per cent). |

**Punctuation**

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| **Ellipsis points** | These consist of three full stops with no space before or after. Ellipsis points are used to indicate an omission of words or a pause in thought or speech in a direct quote.  Example: “The event…was successful.” cut down from the original “The event was hosted by Emily King and was successful.” |
| **Exclamation marks** | Avoid the use of exclamation marks. |
| **Latin abbreviations** | Use full stops with i.e. and e.g. |
| **Slash** | When using a forward slash for single words, do not use spaces either side of the slash (e.g. …and/or…) but if there are multiple words then use a space both sides of the slash (e.g. …barber’s pole worm / scour worm…). |

**Quotes**

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| **Direct quotes** | For direct quotes use double quotation marks.  Example: “This is a significant step forward for the industry,” he said.  There is no need to close quotation marks if you are not referencing the speaker and they continue to be quoted in the next paragraph.  For example:  “This is a significant step forward for the industry.  “It will contribute to long-term prosperity for all woolgrowers.”  Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes.  Example: “But his advice was ‘don’t apply it on the lower leg’ so I have never done it since.” |
| **Property names** | Property names use single quotes in the first instance only. For subsequent references no quotation marks are required.  Example: Joe Bloggs and his wife, Jane, live at ‘Glenorie’ in central NSW. Glenorie is a 500 ha property with 52 watering points. |

**Quotes (continued)**

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| **Single quotes** | Never use double quote marks unless it is someone’s quote. In all other cases, use single quote marks.  Example: Below are two sets of ‘before and after’ photos, rather than Below are two sets of “before and after” photos. |

**Scientific terms**

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| **Expression** | Unless you’re writing a technical or scientific communication, scientific names of plants, animals or diseases don’t need to be included and you should use only the common names.  If the scientific name is required, it should be included after the common name in brackets, and italicised.  Example: AWI has been investing in a management guide for utilising Anameka™ saltbush, a more palatable and higher-quality cultivar of Old Man Saltbush (*Atriplex nummularia*). |

**Spelling, American**

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| **American spelling** | American spelling is only used when it forms part of the actual title of an organisation or publication.  Example: World Trade Organization is to be used not World Trade Organisation.  The other exception is if the communication is targeted at an American audience – in this case, American spelling is used. Otherwise, use Australian spelling.  Example: recognise, not recognize.  Spell check should be turned on and set to English (Australian). |

**Tables and figures**

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| **Figure and table headings** | Figure and table headings should be bolded (not italicised or underlined) and sequentially numbered followed by a colon, the title and no full stop.  Example: **Figure 1: Seasonal outlook** and **Table 1: Property records** |
| **In-text references** | When referring to a figure or table within text, use brackets to direct reader to the graphic.  Example: Wool prices have risen by xx% in 2024 (Figure 1). OR Figure 1 shows the xx% rise in wool prices in 2024. |
| **Justification of data and words** | Numbers used in tables should be either centre justified or right justified, depending on what looks best for the data. Words should be left justified. |
| **Placement** | Headings are to appear above the table and below the figure. |
| **Sources** | Include a source under the table or figure with no full stop.  Example: Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics |

**Voice**

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| **Active and passive** | While both active and passive voices are grammatically correct, AWI’s preference is to use sentences written with the ‘active voice’ as they are more direct. These are sentences where the ‘who’ or ‘what’ acts.  Example: AWI issued the Annual Report last week.  In contrast, the passive voice states who or what is responsible for the action at the end of the sentence.  Example: The Annual Report was issued by AWI last week. |
| **Exceptions where passive voice is appropriate** | A passive voice is acceptable in some cases, such as when the ‘who’ or ‘what’ performing the action isn’t known or is irrelevant.  For example: The budget was finalised. |

**Web addresses**

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| **Cross check** | Check that each web address referenced in the publication works. |
| **Expression** | Should be written as simply as possible and with neither full stops or slashes at the end nor ‘www’ at the beginning. Always use a vanity (short) URL if possible.  Example: wool.com/btb not https://www.wool.com/news-events/beyond-the-bale/ |
|  | Internal web addresses:  AWI web addresses should always be expressed using a vanity URL.  Example: wool.com/networks  Contact the AWI Digital team to arrange a vanity URL if one does not already exist for the desired page. |
|  | External web addresses:  For print media, try to avoid long URLs as best as possible.  For digital media, use a direct hyperlink to send readers to the desired page as efficiently as possible. |

**Appendix A: Expression of common words**

The following table highlights common words and the way they should be expressed in AWI publications. This list is evolving and is regularly updated.

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| **Correct** | **Incorrect** |
| advisor | adviser |
| average, avg. | ave. |
| barber’s pole worm | Barber’s pole worm, barbers pole worm |
| benefit-cost analysis | benefit/cost analysis, benefit:cost analysis |
| birthweight | birth weight |
| carcase | carcass |
| condition scoring, condition score | body condition scoring, body condition score |
| containment feeding | confinement feeding |
| coordinator, coordinating | co-ordinator, co-ordinating |
| crossbred, cross-breeding | cross bred, crossbreeding |
| email | e-mail |
| fact sheet | factsheet |
| feedbase | feed base |
| feedlot | feed lot |
| fetus | Foetus |
| first-cross or second-cross | first cross or second cross |
| flystrike | fly strike |
| focused, focusing | focussed, focussing |
| footrot | foot rot |
| ground cover | groundcover |
| ill thrift | illthrift, ill-thrift |
| LifetimeWool | Lifetimewool, lifetimewool, Lifetime Wool |
| liveweight | live weight, live-weight, bodyweight, body weight |
| long-term | long term |
| Merino, Merinos | merino, merinos |
| MERINOSELECT | Merino Select |
| post mortem | post-mortem |
| program | programme |
| redlegged earth mite | red legged earthmite, red legged earth mite, Red Legged Earthmite |
| sheepmeat | sheep meat |
| south-west, north-west, etc. | south west, north west or South West, North West |
| sub clover | sub-clover, subclover |
| TIMERITE | TimeRite, Time Rite, timerite |
| wool classer, wool classing | woolclasser, woolclassing |
| wool handler, wool handling | woolhander, rouseabout, woolhandling |
| Wool growing | woolgrowing, woolgrowing (except when used as an adjectice, i.e. "wool-growing property" |
| Wool grower | woolgrower |
| xx-year-old, e.g. two-year-old | xx year old |
| xx/year or twice a year | xx per annum |