

Basic elements

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About this guide

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) must represent itself consistently across all communication mediums. Consistency breeds familiarity, which in turn helps us positively engage with various stakeholders and build productive relationships.

Additionally, DHA should represent its core values at all times and communicate in a way that best serves the business for long-term success.

To help us achieve this we have developed a comprehensive suite of guides that outline key principles for brand communications.

This guide aims to:

- devise and establish suitable design criteria and guidelines for DHA
- supply written and graphic direction for the creation of all branded material
- instil and maintain accuracy and reproduction quality of design standards
- provide consistency in the presentation of all marketing communication material.

Flexibility

This guide is meant to be just that. Naturally, situations will occur when an item will be introduced for which there are no specific design specifications. In such scenarios the same basic principles and design style captured in this guide should be observed.

Any departure from these standards must be approved in advance by Marketing Communication.

Usage and sign-off process

Whether marketing communication material is produced in-house or via third-party agencies, the material must be signed-off prior to any production or publication.

Communications should be directed to:

**Marketing and Brand
Defence Housing Australia
26 Brisbane Ave
Barton ACT 2600
marketing@dha.gov.au**

Overview

DHA is one of the country's most successful Government Business Enterprises, established in 1988 to provide housing and related services to Defence members and their families.

In fulfilling our role, we contribute to Defence retention, recruitment and operational goals. We are also very active in Australian residential housing and investment markets, with award-winning development, construction, acquisition and leasing programs.

We are one of the largest property managers in Australia, with approximately 18,500 properties under management, worth around \$10 billion. Approximately 13,000 properties are managed on behalf of investors.

We are a major residential land developer, with more than \$1 billion committed to projects in most capital cities and many major regional centres. We also undertake a range of development projects on behalf of government organisations, including the Department of Defence.

We are committed to creating vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities that bring Defence members and new homeowners together—places they are proud to call home.

Visit dha.gov.au to find out more.

Vision, mission and values

Vision

Excellence in Defence housing and related services.

Mission

To deliver efficiently, housing and related services that meet Defence operational and personnel requirements.

Values

- Courage
- Unity
- Passion
- Respect
- Balance
- Integrity

Key stakeholders

DHA communicates with a variety of stakeholders both internally and externally. When creating material, the respective stakeholders must be considered at all times, particularly in terms of the written word and tone of voice.

Key stakeholders include:

- Defence members and their families
- prospective investors
- current investors
- home buyers
- communities surrounding DHA developments
- local councils
- business partners
- DHA employees and contractors
- Department of Defence
- Australian Government
- Defence community groups
- Ministers.

Overview

DHA is fast becoming a household name. Consistent use of the logo and colour palette will enhance brand recall across key stakeholders.

1. DHA master logo

The DHA master logo must be used in all instances that a logo is required, as long as space and colour reproduction allows.

The three colours in the logo represent the three services of the Defence force: Army, Navy and Airforce. The peak design of the logo represents housing roof lines, which is our core business.

2. Primary colour palette

The primary colour palette consists of three distinct colours that make up the DHA master logo.

3. Secondary colour palette

The dark pairs are darker versions of the DHA primary colours. As extensions to the DHA primary colour palette, complementary colour options help designers create a more diverse suite of branded material within brand guidelines.

Colour references are based on *Pantone Plus Series Colour Bridge, 2013*.

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Overview

The colour DHA master logo must be used wherever possible. Designers should consider the use of the logo at the concept stage of developing material.

However, having a range of reproduction options will ensure that the DHA brand can be represented in cases where unavoidable restrictions apply.

1a. Colour DHA master logo

To be prioritised and must be used where possible.

1b–1c. Mono and reversed options

To be used where colour reproduction is not possible or where surfaces to be branded are coloured.

2a. Colour no text option

This should only be used where the minimum size for the colour master logo is not achievable. Refer to logo sizing section on page 8.

2b–2c. Mono and reversed no text options

To be used where colour reproduction is not possible or where surfaces to be branded are coloured. These should only be used where the minimum size for the master logo is not achievable. Refer to logo sizing section on page 8.

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3a. Colour stacked logo

This should only be used where space dictates that the colour master logo cannot be used.

3b–3c. Mono and reversed stacked logo

To be used where colour reproduction is not possible or where surfaces to be branded are flat colours other than white.

4a. Colour stacked logo no text

As in (3a), this should only be used where a logo is absolutely necessary, but space renders this variation the only option.

4b–4c. Mono and reversed stacked logo no text

To be used where colour reproduction is not possible or where surfaces to be branded are flat colours other than white.

5a. Chevrons only

As in (4a), this should only be used when DHA branding is necessary, but there is severely limited space.

5b–5c. Mono and reversed chevrons

To be used where colour reproduction is not possible or where surfaces to be branded are coloured.

Logo sizing

Refer to logo sizing section on page 10.

Quick reference guide

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Print advertising	Always	If no alternative	Never	Never	Never	If no alternative
Printed direct mail	Always	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never
Stationery	Always	Never	Never	Never	Never	If no alternative
Other printed material	Always	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never
Signage	Always	If no alternative	If no alternative	If no alternative	Never	Never
Merchandise	Always	If no alternative	If no alternative	If no alternative	If no alternative	If no alternative
Desktop websites	Always	If no alternative	Never	Never	Never	Never
Mobile and device sites	Always	If no alternative	If no alternative	If no alternative	If no alternative	Never
Electronic direct mail	Always	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never
Online advertising	Always	If no alternative	If no alternative	If no alternative	Never	Never

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NOTE: 47E

All other logo options need Marketing Communication approval prior to use.

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Overview

Defining a clear space around the DHA logo ensures it will be presented to its best effect. The clear space should be kept free of text, other graphical elements and colour. It defines the minimum distance from the edge of printed material. DHA clear space rules should take precedence over any other third-party brand guidelines.

There will be circumstances where the logo may appear more balanced if clear space is not uniform around the entire logo. Designers should use their judgement to determine how the logo works best, adhering to clear space minimums, but not allowing the logo to float in too much white space.

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Overview

It is essential that the DHA master logo is represented in its intended format at all times. The following list is a basic guide of what not to do. Designers should note that the list does not cover every conceivable misuse. Considered, professional judgement needs to be taken.

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Overview

The DHA fonts have been chosen for both practical and aesthetic reasons. In determining the font, consideration was given to readability, legibility, personality, reproduction, weight options, glyphs, availability and application requirements.

Font colour

The font colour should be 90 per cent black (C0 M0 Y0 K90 | R65 G65 B65) when set on a white background, or 100 per cent white when set on a coloured background. Using 90 per cent black reduces the harshness of pure black text while retaining readability. For internal documents where these options may not exist, refer to the DHA written style guide.

Primary font

Helvetica Neue is the chosen font for all external publications except where a separate style guide has been developed. This includes material that may be available online, but does not include websites or coded material. Examples include brochures, reports, signage, flyers etc.

Access to the Helvetica Neue font may be limited. Please contact Marketing Communication for further information.

Helvetica Neue

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

1. Helvetica Neue 45 Light
2. *Helvetica Neue 56 Roman Italic*
3. **Helvetica Neue 65 Medium**
4. **Helvetica Neue 75 Bold**

Secondary font

Arial is the chosen font for all internal communication. Examples include internal memos, file notes, letters, forms, policy documents, electronic direct mail, etc.

Arial is issued as standard across all Microsoft Windows™ systems, is available on the DHA network and is a web-safe font widely accepted as being easy-to-read on screen.

Arial

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

1. Arial Regular
2. *Arial Italic*
3. **Arial Bold**

Overview

Depending on the type of communication and the target market, the choice of photography will vary significantly. The following are generic points for a photographic style that will suit imagery whether it's aimed at Defence members, investors or development specific marketing.

NOTE: It is essential that photographic briefs and images are reviewed and approved by Marketing Communication prior to publication.

Photographic imagery should:

- be uplifting, welcoming, warm and optimistic
- use natural light and warm, vibrant colours
- display authentic emotion from everyday people
- display real scenarios and relaxed expressions
- display contemporary wardrobing and propping
- focus on happy, settled families
- show Defence members in uniform, whilst the rest of the family in casual apparel
- tell a story.

Photography should not be:

- too dark
- too busy
- uncomfortably staged
- awkwardly cropped
- contrived
- stock images unless no other option is available.



Natural light



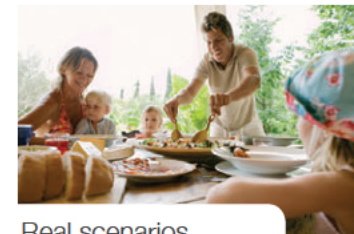
Authentic emotion



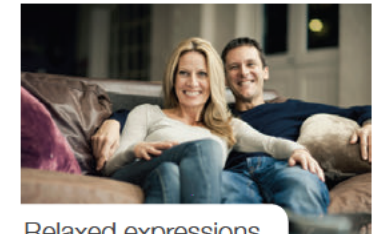
Everyday people



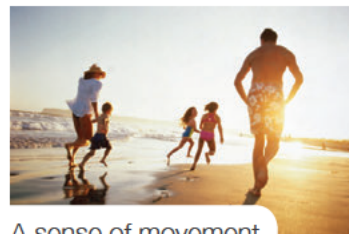
Vibrant, warm colour



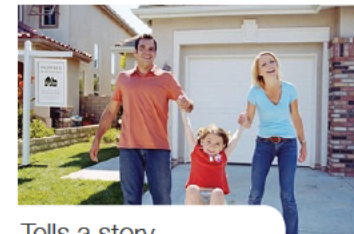
Real scenarios



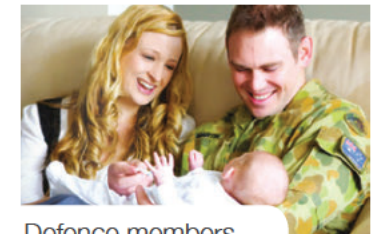
Relaxed expressions



A sense of movement



Tells a story



Defence members



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DHA style guide and brand guidelines

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

On this page, you'll find an overview of our style guide and brand guidelines, and quick links to different sections of the style guide.

DHA style guide

The style guide helps us:

- ensure consistency in our written communication
- enhance our reputation and credibility
- ensure we are clearly understood
- improve our stakeholder engagement.

Contact the Communication and Media team if you have any questions about written style or if you would like someone to review your written work. We can also help you plan and draft documents or online content.

Brand guidelines

These guidelines:

- establish suitable design criteria for DHA
- provide graphic direction to create consistent and professional branded material
- help you instil and maintain accuracy and reproduction quality of design standards
- promote consistency in the presentation of all marketing communication material.

Whether you produce marketing communication material in-house or via third-party agencies, you must get the material signed-off before production or publication.

Please contact Communication and Media if you:

- have questions about the DHA logo
- would like approval on logo, style and colour application
- need access to DHA logo files.

The standard for Australian Government writing and editing

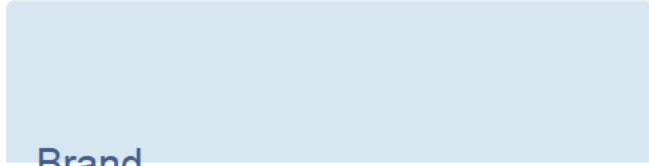
Style Manual is for everyone who writes, edits or approves Australian Government content. Use it to create clear and consistent content that meets the needs of users.

[workbox Style Manual](#)

Produce clear, accurate and consistent DHA documents following our style and brand.

Employee essentials

Brand



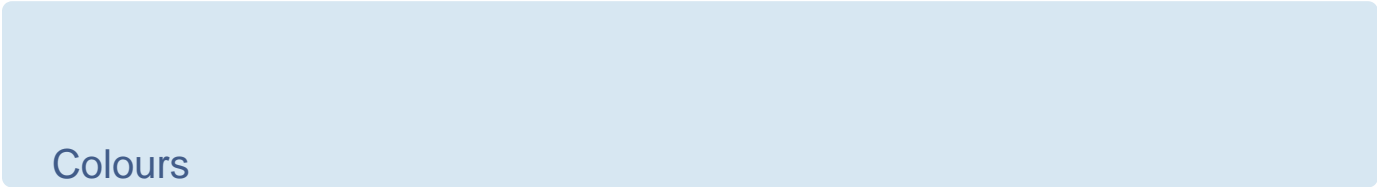
Brand guidelines

These guidelines:

- establish suitable design criteria for DHA
- provide graphic direction to create consistent and professional branded material
- help you accuracy and reproduction quality of design standards
- promote consistency in the presentation of all marketing communication material.

If you produce marketing communication material in-house or via third-party agencies, you must get the material signed-off before production or publication.

DHA style guide - colours



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DHA style guide - fonts

Fonts

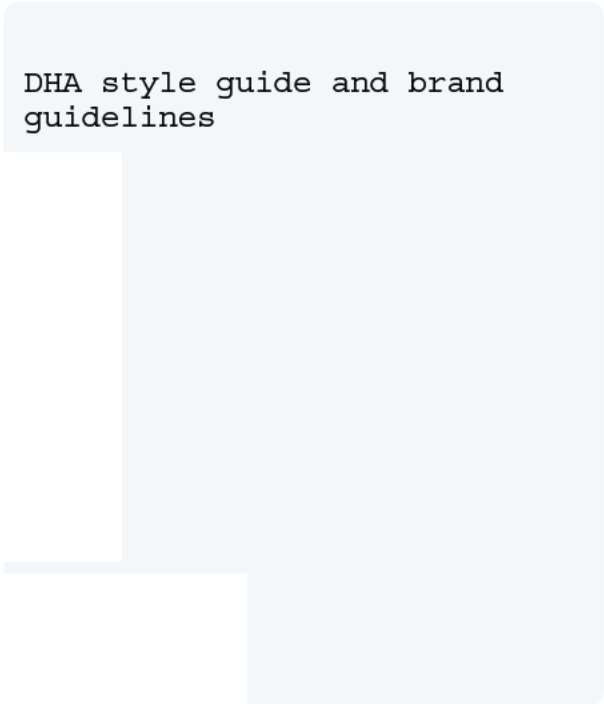
On this page, you will find details of DHA's corporate fonts and font colours that you should apply to all documents and products you develop.

We use these fonts because they are the most accessible. They also work best with the image that we want to give, both internally and externally, of DHA.

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Font colour
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DHA style guide - photo style

Photo style

On this page, you will find guidelines about the photographs you should use in your communication products.

Choice of photography will vary significantly depending on the type of communication and the target audience. The following are generic points for a photographic style that will suit imagery whether it's aimed at Defence members, investors or development specific marketing.

Photographic imagery should:

- represent the diversity of our communities
- be uplifting, welcoming, warm and optimistic
- use natural light and warm, vibrant colours
- display authentic emotion from everyday people
- display real scenarios and relaxed expressions
- display contemporary wardrobe and props
- focus on happy, settled families
- show Defence members in uniform and the rest of the family in casual apparel
- show diversity
- tell a story.

Photography should not be:

- too dark
- too busy
- uncomfortably staged
- contrived
- stock images unless no other option is available.

Please get photographic briefs and images reviewed and approved by [Communication and Media](#) before publishing.

[View photo lighting style references](#)

DHA style guide and brand guidelines



Natural light



Authentic emotion



Everyday people



Vibrant, warm colour



Natural light



Relaxed expressions



A sense of movement

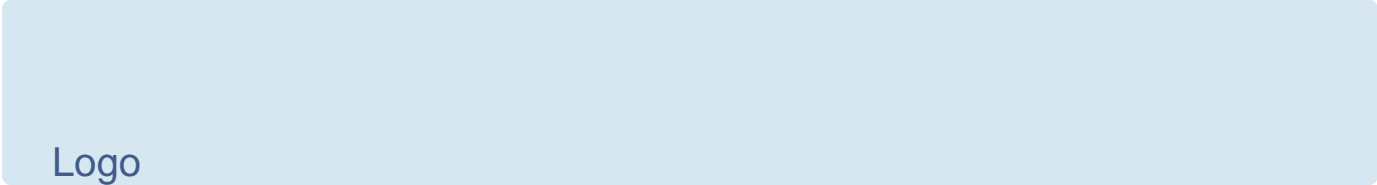


Tells a story



Defence members

DHA style guide - logo



Logo

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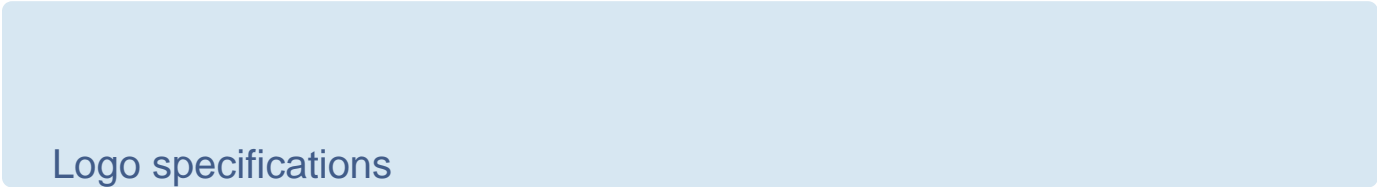
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DHA style guide and brand guidelines

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DHA style guide - logo specifications



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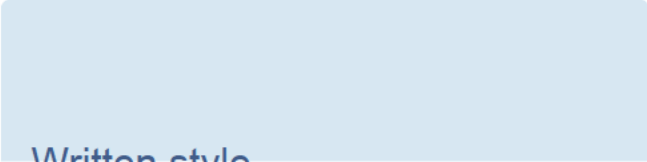
Please note all colour references are based on Pantone Plus Series Colour Bridge, 2013.

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Written style



Written style

DHA style guide

The style guide helps us:

- ensure consistency in our written communication
- enhance our reputation and credibility
- ensure we are clearly understood
- improve our stakeholder engagement.

DHA style guide quick reference

Quick reference

When you're producing written content for DHA, you must follow our style conventions to make sure your content is clear, engaging and consistent with the rest of DHA. The [Australian Government Style Manual](#) will provide you with the guidance you need. However, this page gives you quick tips about common questions and issues you'll encounter.

Grammar and punctuation conventions

DHA singular

DHA is a singular noun, not plural. Use singular verb forms.

DHA are preparing a report ❌
DHA is preparing a report ✅

Acronyms and initialisms

Try to avoid too many acronyms. If you do need to use them, write them in full the first time followed by the acronym or initialism in brackets. You can then use the acronym throughout the document.

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) is a Government Business Enterprise (GBE).

Bullet points

Finish the lead-in sentence with a colon (:) or a full stop. If each point is a full sentence, start each point with a capital letter and finish each point with a full stop. If each point is a sentence fragment or a single word, start each point with a lower case letter (except for proper names that start with a capital) and only add a full stop to the final point.

Either way, do not add a comma (,), semicolon (;) or 'and' after any of the points.

Our values are the APS values:

- impartial
- committed to service
- accountable
- respect
- ethical. **(sentence fragments)**

We promote our property investment program in several ways:

- Detailed information is on our website.
- Advertising campaigns maintain brand awareness and stimulate future demand.
- Events for lessors provide opportunities to answer questions and maintain relationships. **(full sentences)**

Dashes

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Use hyphens (-) to join words or to join prefixes to words.

Use slightly longer en rules (–) without a space on either side to indicate spans.

Use en rules with a space on either side to introduce parenthetical (or non essential) information that is related to the main sentence.

pre-eminent, up-to-date report (**hyphen**)
2014–15 April–May (**unspaced en rule**)
One of our values is respect – we collaborate, are ready to listen and learn, and show respect for each other, our customers, stakeholders and the community. (**spaced en rule**)

Dates

Write dates with no commas as day (optional), date, month, year.

Monday 17 February 2014

Preferred spelling

Use the [Macquarie Dictionary](#) and set your spell-checking tool to Australian English..

Formatting

Templates for Word documents and PowerPoint presentations are available in each program. To access the templates click 'New' and select the 'Shared' tab.

Apostrophes

An apostrophe can show:

- possession
- missing letters in a word.

it is = it's (**letter missing**)
DHA's style guide (**possession**)

Capital letters

Only use capital letters at the beginning of full proper names or titles, to start sentences and for acronyms.

Lieutenant Smith (**use capital L**)
the lieutenant (**use lower case l**)

Numbers

Spell out 'one' and 'zero', then use numerals for the rest. Use commas to separate numerals of 4 or more digits. Always spell out the units of measurement.

Avoid starting sentences with a number. Rephrase it.

1,000 20,000 (**numbers**)
8 kilometres 24 hectares (**units of measurement**)
5 properties are available. ❌
We have 5 properties available. ✅

Times

For most documents, use numerals and lower case 'am' and 'pm' with a space between them. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes.

8 am 12 pm 4:45 pm

If you are writing a Defence-specific document and wish to use 24-hour time, use it consistently throughout.

Quotation marks

Use single quotation marks to enclose quoted text or direct speech. Use double quotation marks for quotes within quotes.

The judges found our report was 'very well written' and included 'all the required information'. **(quoted text)**
'I said to my husband, "DHA would be a great investment solution for us" and he agreed,' explained Sue. **(quote within a quote)**

Voice and tone

Active voice

Make sure *who* does *what* is clear. Put the *who* first.

It was decided (passive) ❌
DHA decided (active) ✅

Plain English

Choose everyday words, write short sentences, be precise, speak directly to your audience (using 'you' and 'we') and use active rather than passive voice.

Tone of voice

Tone of voice is important because it projects DHA's personality, reinforces our values and brand, and affects how people relate to us.

Our tone of voice is professional, genuine and approachable.

As much as possible, use 'we' instead of 'DHA' and 'you' rather than 'applicants', 'staff' or 'contractors' to refer to the people who are reading your content.

Writing

Writing

On this page you'll find some tips on planning and drafting content that is clear, concise and effective.

Writing

Good writing is clear, concise and targeted to your audience and purpose.

This means being clear about your purpose and audience before you start writing and:

- using the right tone of voice
- writing in plain English
- using correct spelling and grammar
- applying DHA's preferred punctuation and style.

Questions to ask before you start writing

What do I want to achieve?

Being clear about why you are writing helps you stay focused and plan your work to achieve your aim. For example, you may want to inform, explain or promote.

Who is my audience?

Understanding your audience helps you present information in a way that makes sense to them and meets their needs.

Before you begin work, consider:

- **who** will read the text
- **why** they'll read it
- **where** and **when** they'll read it
- **what** skills and experience they'll bring
- **how** they're likely to respond.

How much detail do I need to include?

Depending on your audience, you may need more or less detail. Getting to the point quickly helps make your writing more engaging and meaningful.

Which way of communicating is best?

Understanding which media or channel works best for your purpose and audience helps you successfully target your work. For example, you could use an email, letter, briefing paper, webpage, brochure or fact sheet.

Tone of voice

The tone of voice you use projects DHA's personality, reinforces our values and brand, and affects how people relate to us.

Our tone of voice is professional, genuine and approachable.

This means we are:

- welcoming, warm and optimistic

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

- professional, genuine and trustworthy
- confident, knowledgeable and empathetic.

It means we are not:

- overly technical or jargonistic
- pushy or hard-sales focussed
- long-winded or bureaucratic
- arrogant or condescending
- militaristic.

How to create the right tone

- Speak directly to your audience using first and second person pronoun - 'We' or 'I' and 'You'. For example, write 'We are introducing ...', 'I encourage you to ...', 'You will find more detailed information in Online Services'.
- Use active voice sentence construction, so it is clear *who* is doing *what*.
- Use everyday words. Write how you would speak to a colleague or friend, rather than using language that is overly formal, bureaucratic or full of jargon
- Be positive and precise. Politely say what you mean, and avoid waffle and ambiguity.

Mostly, it comes down to writing in [plain English](#).

Adapt your writing style for different audiences

We are flexible about our writing style depending on the context, audience and level of familiarity. While we always want to be engaging and come across as professional, genuine and approachable, we must adjust our writing to suit the audience and purpose.

It may help to imagine a [sliding scale](#) from formal to creative. For example, a legal document or procurement contract is quite formal, while a community newsletter is more welcoming and conversational, and an investor brochure is more creative and commercial (in both written style and visual presentation).

Grammar and spelling

Grammar and spelling

On this page, you will find a quick guide on grammar and spelling to help you produce content that is clear and accurate. You will also find some definitions of parts of speech and how to use them correctly to help you understand the structure of English.

Spelling and grammar

Accurate spelling and grammar are important because:

- Your writing is clearer and easier to read and understand.
- Your documents are more likely to achieve the results you want.
- Your work reinforces DHA's professional reputation.

Check our [common grammar and spelling](#) guide for common issues.

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Parts of speech

Understanding the basics of speech helps you put words together accurately and effectively.

Pronouns

Stand in for nouns (*I, you, we, he, she, they, it*).

Nouns

Provide names for tangible and visible things (house, contractor, information, DHA).

Adverbs

Modify verbs, adjectives and other adverbs (answer *promptly, very soon*).

Adjectives

Describe nouns (a new street, a commercial development, a style guide).

Conjunctions

Join parts of sentences together (*and, but, or, since, if, although*).

Verbs

Express actions or processes (*write* a book, *built* a team).

Prepositions

Indicate relationships with nouns (*after lunch*, *under no circumstances*).

Preferred spelling

Use the Macquarie Dictionary to check Australian spelling.

organise (**-ise** not -ize)
analyse (**-yse** not -yze)
travelled (**-lled** not -led)
colour (**-our** not -or)
dialogue (**-ogue** not -og)
focused (**-sed** not -ssed)

Verb agreement

Match verbs to their subject in terms of singular or plural.

The room is vacant. (**singular**)
The rooms are vacant. (**plural**)

Is staff singular or plural?

In some cases, either singular or plural can be used depending on whether you mean the group as a whole or the individual members of the group. The same applies for 'family'.

The staff **is** productive.
Staff **are** voting on the Enterprise Agreement.
The family **is** the basic social unit
The family **are** not commenting.

Are organisations singular or plural?

Generally, use the singular form of verbs when referring to a government agency, group or other organisation as a single (collective) entity.

DHA **are** preparing a report. ❌

DHA **is** preparing a report. ✅

The government **have** announced. ❌

The government **has** announced. ✅

The department **were** investigating. ❌

The department **was** investigating. ✅

Editing and proofreading

A fresh pair of eyes often catches mistakes that are easy to miss when you're reviewing your own work. It is always a good idea to ask a colleague to check your document, or send it to Communication and Media for editing, proofreading or design.

Experienced editors add value to documents. They improve your work by checking clarity, grammar, spelling, tone, punctuation and style. They can also help make sure your structure and arguments are clear and logical.

There are different levels of editing including:

- copy edits that check your work is clear and consistent, with accurate spelling and grammar
- more substantive edits that also help you with logical structure and whether your content suits the intended purpose
- proofreading that checks for any outstanding mistakes, layout and formatting issues.

Contact [Communication and Media](#) for editing help.

Common grammar and spelling questions

On this page you will find lots of good tips on common grammar and spelling questions.

'Affect', 'effect' or 'impact'?

'Affect' is a verb that means meaning 'to influence'. 'Effect' is a noun meaning a result. Don't use 'impact' as a verb (e.g. 'this will impact your work hours'). You can usually replace this with 'affect'.

How will it **affect** my work hours?
It will have an **effect** on the decision.

'A' or 'an'?

This depends on the first sound of the next word. If it's a vowel sound (a, e, i, o, u) then use 'an'. You can check by saying the word out loud.

an issue
an hour (because the first sound is pronounced '**our**')
an MC (because the first sound is pronounced '**em**')

'Alternate' or 'alternative'?

'Alternate' means 'by turns' or 'every second one' (such as alternate weekends).
'Alternative' means 'one option'.

They visit on **alternate** weekends.
The **alternative** is to visit once a month.

'Among' or 'between'?

Use 'among' when talking about more than 2 things.
Use 'between' when talking about 2 things.

'Compared with' or 'compared to'?

Use 'compared with' to point out differences.
Use 'compared to' to show similarities.

'Complement' and 'complementary'

Use 'complement' and 'complementary' to explain when something adds to, balances, improves or completes something else.

This new program will **complement** our existing services.
These **complementary** programs will work together.

'Compliment' and 'complimentary'

Use 'compliment' as praise or on a 'with compliments' slip.
Use 'complimentary' to describe something that is free.

The feedback about our work was a nice **compliment**.
Please include a 'with **compliments**' slip with the letter.
This meal comes with a **complimentary** drink.

'Dependant' or 'dependent'?

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

'Dependant' is a person (usually a family member) who is supported by someone else. 'Dependent' means 'relying on something or someone'.

Your 12-year-old is your **dependant**, but she may also be **dependent** on you for her entire life.

Your promotion is **dependent** on your work performance.
A Service Residence is the main type of housing offered to Defence members with **dependants**.

'Fewer' or 'less'?

Use 'less' for things you can't count individually (mass nouns) and 'fewer' for things you can count (count nouns).

less money, **fewer** dollars
less stress, **fewer** mistakes
less water, **fewer** litres

'It's' or 'its'?

Use 'it's' when you mean 'it is'. Use 'its' when talking about possession.

It's time to leave. (**it is**)
Its roof is damaged. (**possession**)

'Principle' or 'principal'?

'Principles' are basic rules or beliefs.

'Principals' are the main or most important person.

'Stationery' or 'stationary'?

'Stationery' means writing materials.

'Stationary' means not moving.

'That' or 'which'?

Use 'that' for information that is essential for your sentence to be complete and make sense. Use 'which' after a comma to introduce extra information that isn't essential but adds related detail.

DHA is an organisation **that** looks after the housing needs of Defence members and their families.

This guide is largely based on the Style manual for authors, editors and printers, **which** contains detailed information on preferred Australian government style.

Can I finish a sentence with a preposition?

While prepositions normally come before nouns, it is fine to finish a sentence with a preposition.

The investment will pay off.
This is the report we were waiting for.

Can I split infinitives?

As long as your meaning is clear, it is fine to split the infinitive. However, don't put too many words between the 'to' and the rest of the infinitive (the thing you are doing).

to boldly go (**split**)
to go boldly (**not split**)

to quickly convert (split)
to convert quickly (not split)

to strongly argue (split)
to argue strongly (not split)

Can I start a sentence with ‘and’, ‘but’ or ‘because’?

Our preference is not to start sentences with ‘and’, ‘but’ or ‘because’. The simplest solution is often just to drop those words from the start of your sentence. Other options are to join the sentences together or link the sentences with alternative words such as ‘In addition,’ or ‘However,’.

Can I use ‘they’ instead of ‘he or she’?

You can use ‘they’ instead of ‘he or she’, and ‘their’ instead of ‘his or her’. This is gender-neutral and less cumbersome than repeating ‘he or she’ throughout your document.

Is ‘data’ singular or plural?

Treat ‘data’ as a plural noun - use plural verbs.

These data come from different sources.

Punctuation and style

On this page, you'll find a guide on using correct and consistent punctuation so your content is professional, clear and easy to understand.

When you're producing written content for DHA, you must follow our style conventions to make sure your content is clear, engaging and consistent with the rest of DHA. The [Australian Government Style Manual](#) will provide you with the guidance you need. However, this page gives you quick tips about common questions and issues you'll encounter.

A

Punctuation and style - A

Abbreviations

Abbreviations and contractions generally don't need a full stop. There are a few exceptions like:

- when the abbreviation ends a sentence
- when it's an abbreviation of some Latin expressions.

etc. (abbreviation of *et cetera*)
e.g. (abbreviation of *exempli gratia*)
The Hon (abbreviation of 'The Honourable')
Dr (abbreviation of 'Doctor')

Don't use a full stop with names with initials or with titles or Names with initials do not include full stops.

JR Smith John R Smith
Mr James J Smith
Dr Mary Brooke

Acronyms

Write in full the first time, followed by the acronym in brackets. You can then use the acronym throughout the document.

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) is a Government Business Enterprise (GBE).
Defence Housing Australia's (DHA) newest residential development in Sydney.

Try to avoid too many acronyms for external documents and general public information. In internal documents there is no need to spell out DHA the first time.
For generic terms and commonly used names/titles that are in lower case, but also have common acronyms, you can still add the acronym in brackets.

See a property manager (PM) for a form.
This is in line with the consumer price index (CPI).

Addresses

Abbreviating addresses, states and territories

In text-based documents, write the address out in full. Always spell out the states and territories in your text.

The residents are located on Heysen Street.
We have been working with our business partners in New South Wales

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

For stationery or address blocks, use shortened forms such as St (Street) or PO (Post Office) with no full stops or commas. Use postal standards for shortened forms of states and territories (all capitals with no full stops). Only use a single space, not double, between the suburb, state or territory and the postcode.

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Crace ACT 2911

Level 3
120 Bay St
Port Melbourne VIC 3207

PO Box 4
Canberra ACT 2600

Apostrophes

Apostrophes have 2 main uses. They show omission (when letters have been removed) and possession.

Omission

Use apostrophes to show when letters are missing. Place the apostrophe where the missing letter or letters belong.

don't (do not)
it's (it is, it has)
let's (let us)
you're (you are)

Possession

Use apostrophes to show possession. The position of the apostrophe depends on whether your word is singular or plural. To show singular possession, place the apostrophe before the possessive 's'.

DHA's property investment program
the lens's range
the child's playhouse
James's career

To show plural possession, first make the word plural then immediately add the apostrophe. Don't follow it with an 's'.

the states' budgets
the departments' agreement
the children's playground

When not to use apostrophes

Don't use apostrophes in possessive pronouns.

its your
yours our
ours his
hers theirs

Don't use apostrophes to make a word or acronym plural.

PDA's ❌
PDAs ✔️

URL's ❌
URLs ✔️

1990's ❌
1990s ✔️

Punctuation and style - B

Brackets

Use round brackets to enclose information that is not essential but adds some context or explanation. Your sentence should make sense without the bracketed text.

Our logo (which was recently updated) includes text and symbols.
Our logo includes text and symbols.

Punctuation and round brackets

Unless the brackets contain a full sentence, place punctuation (like commas) outside the brackets.

Our logo includes our name (Defence Housing Australia), our acronym (DHA) and three chevrons (coloured v-shaped symbols that represent roof lines).

Square brackets

Use square brackets to show you have edited or added extra information to quoted text.

'Ermington [in Sydney] has a rich, productive history that dates back to the arrival of Europeans back in 1972.'

Use square brackets around the term 'sic' to indicate a spelling or factual mistake in the original text you are quoting

'DHA has properties in Sydney [sic] and Melbourne.'

If possible, rewrite the quote in your own words to avoid the mistake.

Punctuation in bullet points

Place a colon (:) after the main lead-in words to indicate the link to the points below. If the lead-in is a full sentence, you can use a colon or a full stop.

In all cases, there is no 'and' after the second last point. However, if you need to specify a choice between the points, you can add 'or' to the end of the second last bullet point.

Structure of bullet points

Use parallel structure (a similar grammatical form) for each point, such as starting each with an 'ing' word.
For sentence fragments or single words, start each point with a lowercase letter (unless it begins with a proper name that needs a capital letter) and only add a full stop to the final point. Don't add commas or semicolons at the end of each point.

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

We promote our property investment program by:

- providing information on our website
- advertising to maintain brand awareness and stimulate future demand
- hosting investment seminars.

You need to bring either your:

- passport
- drivers licence, or
- latest tax return.

Bullet pointed full sentences

For full sentences, start each point with a capital letter and end each with a full stop (normal sentence punctuation).

We promote our property investment program in several ways:

- Detailed information is on our website.
- Advertising campaigns maintain brand awareness and stimulate future demand.
- Events for lessors provide opportunities to answer questions and maintain relationships.

Bullet pointed stand-alone lists

For stand-alone lists start with capital letters but have no punctuation at the end of any points. A stand-alone list of full sentences has normal sentence punctuation for each point. These lists generally follow a heading and do not have a lead-in sentence.

Benefits of a DHA investment property

- Guaranteed rent
- Long-term lease
- DHA Property Care
- Quality properties

C

Punctuation and style - C

Capitals

Use minimal capitalisation, or sentence case. This means only capitalising:

- the first word in a sentence or heading
- proper names of people, places, programs and things, as well as titles that already have capitals
- acronyms.

Drop the capital when shortening names to the generic term.

Lieutenant Smith the lieutenant

Minister for Finance the minister

ADF

'Government'

Only capitalise 'government' when it is the first word in a sentence when referring to the full formal title.

The Australian **Government** is responsible for national issues.

The New South Wales **Government** is responsible for state issues.

The two **governments** work together on some issues.

The *Style Manual* is a guide for **government** publications.

This document explains **government** policy on that issue.

Our role is to serve the **government** of the day.

States and territories

Capitalise the full, specific names for the states and territories.

New South Wales
Queensland
Western Australia

Capitalise the abbreviations as per postal standards.

NSW VIC NT WA

TAS QLD ACT SA

Don't capitalise generic or plural references.

We operate in all states and territories.

Publication titles and headings

Only capitalise the first letter of the first word of publication titles and any proper names.

I just read the *Guide to relocation services*.

Colons

You can use a colon (:) at the end of the lead-in words before a bulleted list.

We have 3 corporate colours:

- red
- light blue
- dark blue.

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Colons also indicate that a list or series of items follows within the sentence.

We have 3 corporate colours: red, light blue and dark blue.

You can also use colons to introduce related or contrasting information within a sentence.

We are proud of our report: it won an award.

However, it is often simpler to replace the colon with a full stop to create two separate sentences.

Semicolons

Semicolons (;) can be used to separate longer or complex items in lists within a sentence. 'Complex' means one or more of the items in the list has a comma (,) or an 'and'.

Introduce the list with a colon (:), separate each item with a semicolon and then add 'and' before the final item.

DHA Property Care for lessors (landlords) includes the following services: tenant and property management; repair and maintenance; emergency repair and maintenance; annual rent review; and restoration at lease end.

However, it is usually better to split longer or complex lists into bullet points. Listing each item as a separate point makes the distinction clearer, is easier to read. Don't use semicolons at the end of each item.

DHA Property Care for lessors (landlords) includes the following services:

- tenant and property management
- repair and maintenance
- emergency repair and maintenance
- annual rent review
- restoration at lease end.

Semicolons can also link two parts of a sentence. However, these semicolons can either be replaced with an 'and' or a full stop to create 2 simpler sentences.

We expect approval next week; then work can start.
We expect approval next week. Then work can start.

Commas

A comma indicates a slight pause in a sentence. Use commas to punctuate short lists or strings of adjectives in sentences.

AE2 Ermington offers a spacious, natural-living environment.
We value respect, integrity, passion, unity, balance and courage.

As a general rule, avoid unnecessary commas at the end of a list before the final 'and' (known as serial or Oxford commas).

Sometimes you need to include a final comma for clarity – for example, when one or more items in the list has a comma or an 'and'.

To meet our Defence housing obligations, we are active in Australian residential housing markets, acquiring and developing land, and constructing and purchasing houses.

Commas are also important to avoid ambiguity.

He thanked his parents, the Chief Minister and the CEO.
(The Chief Minister and CEO are his parents.)
He thanked his parents, the Chief Minister, and the
CEO. (He thanked his parents as well as the Chief
Minister and the CEO.)

Currency

Use numerals combined with symbols with no spaces in between. Use commas to separate figures of more than 4 digits.

\$150 \$20,000 \$500,000

For larger amounts, use the word 'million' or 'billion' rather than showing the whole number in digits. Add single space before the word 'million' or 'billion'.

\$5.5 million \$150 million \$2 billion

In tables or when space is limited, use the shortened form 'm' or 'b' (with no space before and no full stop after).

\$5.5m \$150m \$2b

If you need to distinguish between Australian dollars and other currencies, add the relevant letters before the dollar symbol.

A\$5.5m NZ\$150m US\$2b

D-F

Punctuation and style - D-F

Dashes

Hyphens

Hyphens are short dashes (-). Use them to join two or more words that act as one or to attach prefixes to words. Check the Macquarie Dictionary if unsure about whether a term is two words, one word or hyphenated.

24-hour service
long-term goal
up-to-date report
non-essential information
pre- and post-2014

You can also use them to clarify meaning when it could be ambiguous.

recover (retrieve) but re-cover (cover again)

Avoid splitting hyphenated words over lines or pages.

En rules

En rules (–) are slightly longer dashes. Use them without spaces on either side to indicate spans or show associations.

Insert an en rule by pressing Ctrl + minus key on the number pad or Ctrl + 0 1 5 0 (successively) on the number pad – depending on the platform you're working on.

2014–15 (span)
24–26 Brisbane Ave (span)
Commonwealth–state (association)

Use an en dash with a space on either side to introduce content to a sentence that is not essential to the meaning of the sentence – in the way you would use brackets.

One of our values is respect – we collaborate, are ready to listen and learn, and show respect for each other, our customers, stakeholders and the community.

Our vast portfolio of properties – from apartments and townhouses to houses with yards – reflects the diversity of families that call our developments home.

Our role is important – we create a place for families to call home.

Ellipsis points

Ellipsis points are 3 full stops, with a space either side (...). Use ellipses to show where you have omitted words from quoted sentences or paragraphs.

'Plain English is faster to write and read. Importantly, plain English is also easier to understand ... government policy is to use plain English.'

In creative writing, ellipsis points may be used to indicate a pause, show indecision or build suspense.

Forward slashes

Forward slashes (/) show alternatives. Don't use a space on either side of a forward slash

and/or
male/female

You can also use them as a substitute for 'per' or 'an' when abbreviating units of measurement.

80 km/hour

Full stops (single space after)

Use only one space (not 2) after a full stop or other punctuation at the end of a sentence.

This is the end of the first sentence. Notice the one space after the full stop.

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Punctuation and style - I - N

Inclusive writing

Keep diversity in mind and use inclusive terms to avoid discriminatory language.

Indigenous Australians

For generic references, use Indigenous (with a capital 'I') to cover all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Gender

Use gender-neutral titles wherever possible.

principal	head master
police officer	policeman
camera operator	cameraman

Use they/them pronouns if:

- you don't know the gender of the person you're talking about
- their gender is not relevant or important in the context

You can also address them directly as 'you'.

The client must fill out their application correctly.
Make sure you fill out your application correctly

Initials

Do not add full stops between letters in initials.

JR Smith
George W Bush

Numbers, dates and times

Words or numerals

Use numerals for all numbers except for one and zero. Try not to start sentences with a number. If you can't avoid it, spell the number out.

You need contact details for 3 referees.
We have done a lot in just one month.
Thirty-five years have passed.

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Use words for ordinal numbers – that is, numbers that express rank or order, like 'first' or 'third' – up until 'ninth'. Use numerals for ordinal numbers from '10th' on.

Employee wellbeing comes first for us.
He just celebrated his 21st birthday.

Spell out and use hyphens for fractions.

Two-thirds of tenants are satisfied.

Punctuation in numbers

Use commas to separate numerals of 4 or more digits.

1,000
20,000
258,000

Time

Use lowercase 'am' or 'pm' with a space before it. If you're referring to a whole hour, you don't need to use zeros.

If you need to use 24-hour time, use it consistently throughout the whole document and don't use 'am' or 'pm'. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes.

8 am
12:30 pm
They called the meeting at 18:45.

Dates

Write dates as day of the week, date, month and year, in that order. Don't use commas.

Monday 17
February 2014

Use en dashes with no spaces either side for financial years, not forward slashes.

2014/15 ❌ 201
4–15 ✅

Punctuation and style - P-Q

Roles, titles and honourifics

Write people's title as role, title, name, in that order, separated by commas. If someone is acting in a role, capitalise the 'A' and spell out 'Acting'.

Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Marise Payne
DHA Managing Director, Mr Barry Jackson
Acting Managing Director, Mr Brett Jorgensen

Directions

Use capitals if abbreviating the points of the compass but not when spelling them out in full. Hyphenate them when they're combined. If a name has developed a semi-official status, it can have capitals.

W SE SE QLD west south-east south-east
Queensland
Central Australia

Block quotes

Indent quotes that are longer than 30 words can be indented and set a point size smaller than the main text. These are called block quotes and are usually introduced with a colon. Don't use quotation marks for block quotes. .

The guide says:
Quotation marks are also called quote marks, quotes or speech marks; they used to be called inverted commas but that term appears to be falling out of favour. Their primary function is to show direct speech and the quoted work of other writers.

Quotes

Use single quotation marks to enclose quoted text or direct speech. Use double quotes only when you're quoting within a quote.

The judges found our report was 'very well written' and included 'all the required information'.
Their feedback was, 'Your report is very well written and includes all the required information.'
'It was a memorable speech,' he said. 'No one can forget a speech that starts with "I have a dream" and ends with "We are free at last".'

When you're quoting speech, enclose the quoted text and the closing comma inside the quotation mark, then continue with the sentence. If other punctuation (like a question mark or exclamation mark) is part of the quoted text, place it inside the closing quotation mark. If the quote is complete and ends the sentence, place the full stop inside the closing quotation mark.

'DHA is a great investment solution for us,' Sue said.
'Would DHA be a good investment solution for us?'
asked Sue.
'DHA was a great investment solution for us.'

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Punctuation and style - R-U

Referencing

Author citations

Use the **author–date system**. For in-text citations, write the last name of the author and then the year. Don't use a comma.

For reference lists, cite the last name of the author followed by their initials, and then the year in brackets. Don't use punctuation.

After the year, write the title of the publication, the publishing house and the publishing location. Use commas to separate them and a full stop at the end.

In-text citation

This approach (Merry 1997) suggests that ...

Reference list

Merry G (1997) Food poisoning prevention, McMillian Education Australia, Melbourne.

If there is more than one author, present them alphabetically.

Citations for tables and figures

When you are referring to tables or figures as in-text citations, place them in brackets.

There were no statistically significant differences between the sample and the population on the key property and lease variables (Figures 6 to 10). Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with 27 characteristics of their current property (Table 2).

Footnotes or endnotes

Try to avoid using footnotes end notes, but if you really need them, use footnotes rather than endnotes.

Number footnotes continuously throughout your document. Place the footnote:

- at the end of the sentence or clause rather than immediately after the words they relate to
- before punctuation marks (except for full stops)
- in 'superscript' format with no space before.

There were no statistically significant differences¹ between the sample and the population on the key property and lease variables. ❌

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

There were no statistically significant differences between the sample and the population on the key property and lease variables.¹ ✓

For the footnote itself (the explanation at the bottom of the page), use the same font as your text, but in a smaller point size (6 to 8 pt is normal).

Salutation and sign-offs

Match the level of formality to your audience, but always be polite.

If you can't find out the person's name

To whom it may concern Regards/Yours sincerely

For formal communication, such as a letter to the minister

Dear [title] Yours sincerely

When you know the person's name

Dear Maria Regards

If you deal with the person often

Hello/Hi Maria Thanks/Regards

For internal messages (such as all staff emails)

Dear colleagues Thanks/Regards

No punctuation after salutations or sign-offs

Do not add commas or other punctuation to salutations or sign-offs.

Symbols!

For text-based documents, spell out words in full rather than using symbols.

& ✗ and ✓

e.g. ✗ For example ✓

i.e. ✗ That is ✓

km ✗ kilometres ✓

The exceptions are:

- where space is limited such as in tables
- where a symbol (such as '&') is already part of the formal title
- when you're using the percentage sign (%) or the sign for degrees Celsius (°C)

Don't use a space between numbers and the percentage sign.



Preferred terms

Punctuation and style - preferred terms

Don't write this	Write this instead
ADF personnel	Defence members and their families
air conditioning	air-conditioning
amongst	among
& (unless it's part of an official name or title)	and
BBQ or barbeque	barbecue
co-ordinate	coordinate
the department	Defence
e-mail or E-mail	email
focused	focussed
fora	forums
(sold to the) general public	(sold on the) open market
hardcopy	hard copy
Internet or Intranet (with capital 'I')	internet or intranet
key words	keywords
master planned	masterplanned
over	more than (when referring to amounts or quantities)
on line or on-line	online
onsite or on site	on-site
purchasers	buyers
Programme	program
sale and leaseback	property investment program
stage 1	stage one
States and Territories (capitalised)	states and territories
web page	webpage
web site or web-site	website
well-being or well being	wellbeing
whilst	while
WWII or World War II	second World War

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Abbreviations to apostrophes

Punctuation and style - A

Abbreviations

Abbreviations and contractions generally don't need a full stop. There are a few exceptions like:

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- when it's an abbreviation of some Latin expressions.

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yours our
ours his
hers theirs

Don't use apostrophes to make a word or acronym plural.

PDA's ❌
PDAs ✅

URL's ❌
URLs ✅

1990's ❌
1990s ✅

Brackets and bullet points

Punctuation and style - B

Brackets

Use round brackets to enclose information that is not essential but adds some context or explanation. Your sentence should make sense without the bracketed text.

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Our logo includes text and symbols.

Punctuation and round brackets

Unless the brackets contain a full sentence, place punctuation (like commas) outside the brackets.

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DHA style guide and brand guidelines

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- Guaranteed rent
- Long-term lease
- DHA Property Care
- Quality properties

Capitals, colons, commas and currency

Punctuation and style - C

Capitals

Use minimal capitalisation, or sentence case. This means only capitalising:

- the first word in a sentence or heading
- proper names of people, places, programs and things, as well as titles that already have capitals
- acronyms.

Drop the capital when shortening names to the generic term.

Lieutenant Smith the lieutenant

Minister for Finance the minister

ADF

'Government'

Only capitalise 'government' when it is the first word in a sentence when referring to the full formal title.

The Australian **Government** is responsible for national issues.

The New South Wales **Government** is responsible for state issues.

The two **governments** work together on some issues.

The *Style Manual* is a guide for **government** publications.

This document explains **government** policy on that issue.

Our role is to serve the **government** of the day.

States and territories

Capitalise the full, specific names for the states and territories.

New South Wales
Queensland
Western Australia

Capitalise the abbreviations as per postal standards.

NSW VIC NT WA

TAS QLD ACT SA

Don't capitalise generic or plural references.

We operate in all states and territories.

Publication titles and headings

Only capitalise the first letter of the first word of publication titles and any proper names.

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

I just read the *Guide to relocation services*.

Colons

You can use a colon (:) at the end of the lead-in words before a bulleted list.

We have 3 corporate colours:

- red
- light blue
- dark blue.

Colons also indicate that a list or series of items follows within the sentence.

We have 3 corporate colours: red, light blue and dark blue.

You can also use colons to introduce related or contrasting information within a sentence.

We are proud of our report: it won an award.

However, it is often simpler to replace the colon with a full stop to create two separate sentences.

Semicolons

Semicolons (;) can be used to separate longer or complex items in lists within a sentence. 'Complex' means one or more of the items in the list has a comma (,) or an 'and'.

Introduce the list with a colon (:), separate each item with a semicolon and then add ' ; and ' before the final item.

DHA Property Care for lessors (landlords) includes the following services: tenant and property management; repair and maintenance; emergency repair and maintenance; annual rent review; and restoration at lease end.

However, it is usually better to split longer or complex lists into bullet points. Listing each item as a separate point makes the distinction clearer, is easier to read. Don't use semicolons at the end of each item.

DHA Property Care for lessors (landlords) includes the following services:

- tenant and property management
- repair and maintenance
- emergency repair and maintenance
- annual rent review
- restoration at lease end.

Semicolons can also link two parts of a sentence. However, these semicolons can either be replaced with an 'and' or a full stop to create 2 simpler sentences.

We expect approval next week; then work can start.
We expect approval next week. Then work can start.

Commas

A comma indicates a slight pause in a sentence. Use commas to punctuate short lists or strings of adjectives in sentences.

AE2 Ermington offers a spacious, natural-living environment.
We value respect, integrity, passion, unity, balance and courage.

As a general rule, avoid unnecessary commas at the end of a list before the final 'and' (known as serial or Oxford commas).

Sometimes you need to include a final comma for clarity – for example, when one or more items in the list has a comma or an 'and'.

To meet our Defence housing obligations, we are active in Australian residential housing markets, acquiring and developing land, and constructing and purchasing houses.

Commas are also important to avoid ambiguity.

He thanked his parents, the Chief Minister and the CEO.
(The Chief Minister and CEO are his parents.)
He thanked his parents, the Chief Minister, and the CEO.
(He thanked his parents as well as the Chief Minister and the CEO.)

Currency

Use numerals combined with symbols with no spaces in between. Use commas to separate figures of more than 4 digits.

\$150 \$20,000 \$500,000

For larger amounts, use the word 'million' or 'billion' rather than showing the whole number in digits. Add single space before the word 'million' or 'billion'.

\$5.5 million \$150 million \$2 billion

In tables or when space is limited, use the shortened form 'm' or 'b' (with no space before and no full stop after).

\$5.5m \$150m \$2b

If you need to distinguish between Australian dollars and other currencies, add the relevant letters before the dollar symbol.

A\$5.5m NZ\$150m US\$2b

Dashes to full stops

Punctuation and style - D-F

Dashes

Hyphens

Hyphens are short dashes (-). Use them to join two or more words that act as one or to attach prefixes to words. Check the Macquarie Dictionary if unsure about whether a term is two words, one word or hyphenated.

24-hour service
long-term goal
up-to-date report
non-essential information
pre- and post-2014

You can also use them to clarify meaning when it could be ambiguous.

recover (retrieve) but re-cover (cover again)

Avoid splitting hyphenated words over lines or pages.

En rules

En rules (–) are slightly longer dashes. Use them without spaces on either side to indicate spans or show associations.

Insert an en rule by pressing Ctrl + minus key on the number pad or Ctrl + 0 1 5 0 (successively) on the number pad – depending on the platform you're working on.

2014–15 (span)
24–26 Brisbane Ave (span)
Commonwealth–state (association)

Use an en dash with a space on either side to introduce content to a sentence that is not essential to the meaning of the sentence – in the way you would use brackets.

One of our values is respect – we collaborate, are ready to listen and learn, and show respect for each other, our customers, stakeholders and the community.

Our vast portfolio of properties – from apartments and townhouses to houses with yards – reflects the diversity of families that call our developments home.

Our role is important – we create a place for families to call home.

Ellipsis points

Ellipsis points are 3 full stops, with a space either side (...). Use ellipses to show where you have omitted words from quoted sentences or paragraphs.

'Plain English is faster to write and read. Importantly, plain English is also easier to understand ... government policy is to use plain English.'

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

In creative writing, ellipsis points may be used to indicate a pause, show indecision or build suspense.

Forward slashes

Forward slashes (/) show alternatives. Don't use a space on either side of a forward slash

and/or
male/female

You can also use them as a substitute for 'per' or 'an' when abbreviating units of measurement.

80 km/hour

Full stops (single space after)

Use only one space (not 2) after a full stop or other punctuation at the end of a sentence.

This is the end of the first sentence. Notice the one space after the full stop.

Inclusive writing and numbers, dates and times

Punctuation and style - I - N

Inclusive writing

Keep diversity in mind and use inclusive terms to avoid discriminatory language.

Indigenous Australians

For generic references, use Indigenous (with a capital 'I') to cover all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Gender

Use gender-neutral titles wherever possible.

principal	head master
police officer	policeman
camera operator	cameraman

Use they/them pronouns if:

- you don't know the gender of the person you're talking about
- their gender is not relevant or important in the context

You can also address them directly as 'you'.

The client must fill out their application correctly.
Make sure you fill out your application correctly

Initials

Do not add full stops between letters in initials.

JR Smith
George W Bush

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Numbers, dates and times

Words or numerals

Use numerals for all numbers except for one and zero. Try not to start sentences with a number. If you can't avoid it, spell the number out.

You need contact details for 3 referees.
We have done a lot in just one month.
Thirty-five years have passed.

Use words for ordinal numbers – that is, numbers that express rank or order, like 'first' or 'third' – up until 'ninth'. Use numerals for ordinal numbers from '10th' on.

Employee well-being comes first for us. He just celebrated his 21st birthday.

Spell out and use hyphens for fractions.

Two-thirds of tenants are satisfied.

Punctuation in numbers

Use commas to separate numerals of 4 or more digits.

1,000
20,000
258,000

Time

Use lowercase 'am' or 'pm' with a space before it. If you're referring to a whole hour, you don't need to use zeros.

If you need to use 24-hour time, use it consistently throughout the whole document and don't use 'am' or 'pm'. Use a colon to separate hours from minutes.

8 am
12:30 pm
They called the meeting at 18:45.

Dates

Write dates as day of the week, date, month and year, in that order. Don't use commas.

Monday 17 February
2014

Use en dashes with no spaces either side for financial years, not forward slashes.

2014/15 ❌ 2014
–15 ✅

Roles, titles and quotes

Punctuation and style - P-Q

Roles, titles and honourifics

Write people's title as role, title, name, in that order, separated by commas. If someone is acting in a role, capitalise the 'A' and spell out 'Acting'.

Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Marise Payne
DHA Managing Director, Mr Barry Jackson
Acting Managing Director, Mr Brett Jorgensen

Directions

Use capitals if abbreviating the points of the compass but not when spelling them out in full. Hyphenate them when they're combined. If a name has developed a semi-official status, it can have capitals.

W SE SE QLD west south-east south-east
Queensland
Central Australia

Block quotes

Indent quotes that are longer than 30 words can be indented and set a point size smaller than the main text. These are called block quotes and are usually introduced with a colon. Don't use quotation marks for block quotes. .

The guide says:
Quotation marks are also called quote marks, quotes or speech marks; they used to be called inverted commas but that term appears to be falling out of favour. Their primary function is to show direct speech and the quoted work of other writers.

Quotes

Use single quotation marks to enclose quoted text or direct speech. Use double quotes only when you're quoting within a quote.

The judges found our report was 'very well written' and included 'all the required information'.
Their feedback was, 'Your report is very well written and includes all the required information.'
'It was a memorable speech,' he said. 'No one can forget a speech that starts with "I have a dream" and ends with "We are free at last".'

When you're quoting speech, enclose the quoted text and the closing comma inside the quotation mark, then continue with the sentence. If other punctuation (like a question mark or exclamation mark) is part of the quoted text, place it inside the closing quotation mark. If the quote is complete and ends the sentence, place the full stop inside the closing quotation mark.

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

'DHA is a great investment solution for us,' Sue said.
'Would DHA be a good investment solution for us?' asked Sue.
'DHA was a great investment solution for us.'

Referencing, salutations and symbols

Punctuation and style - R-U

Referencing

Author citations

Use the [author–date system](#). For in-text citations, write the last name of the author and then the year. Don't use a comma.

For reference lists, cite the last name of the author followed by their initials, and then the year in brackets. Don't use punctuation.

After the year, write the title of the publication, the publishing house and the publishing location. Use commas to separate them and a full stop at the end.

In-text citation

This approach (Merry 1997) suggests that ...

Reference list

Merry G (1997) Food poisoning prevention, McMillian Education Australia, Melbourne.

If there is more than one author, present them alphabetically.

Citations for tables and figures

When you are referring to tables or figures as in-text citations, place them in brackets.

There were no statistically significant differences between the sample and the population on the key property and lease variables (Figures 6 to 10).
Participants were asked to rate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with 27 characteristics of their current property (Table 2).

Footnotes or endnotes

Try to avoid using footnotes end notes, but if you really need them, use footnotes rather than endnotes.

Number footnotes continuously throughout your document. Place the footnote:

- at the end of the sentence or clause rather than immediately after the words they relate to
- before punctuation marks (except for full stops)
- in 'superscript' format with no space before.

There were no statistically significant differences¹ between the sample and the population on the key property and lease variables. ❌

There were no statistically significant differences between the sample and the population on the key property and lease variables.¹ ✅

For the footnote itself (the explanation at the bottom of the page), use the same font as your text, but in a smaller point size (6 to 8 pt is normal).

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Salutation and sign-offs

Match the level of formality to your audience, but always be polite.

If you can't find out the person's name

To whom it may concern Regards/Yours sincerely

For formal communication, such as a letter to the minister

Dear [title] Yours sincerely

When you know the person's name

Dear Maria Regards

If you deal with the person often

Hello/Hi Maria Thanks/Regards

For internal messages (such as all staff emails)

Dear colleagues Thanks/Regards

No punctuation after salutations or sign-offs

Do not add commas or other punctuation to salutations or sign-offs.

Symbols!

For text-based documents, spell out words in full rather than using symbols.

& ❌ and ✔️

e.g. ❌ For example ✔️

i.e. ❌ That is ✔️

km ❌ kilometres ✔️

The exceptions are:

- where space is limited such as in tables
- where a symbol (such as '&') is already part of the formal title
- when you're using the percentage sign (%) or the sign for degrees Celsius (°C)

Don't use a space between numbers and the percentage sign.



Punctuation and style - preferred terms

Punctuation and style - preferred terms

Don't write this	Write this instead
ADF personnel	Defence members and their families
air conditioning	air-conditioning
amongst	among
& (unless it's part of an official name or title)	and
BBQ or barbeque	barbecue
co-ordinate	coordinate
the department	Defence
e-mail or E-mail	email
focused	focussed
fora	forums
(sold to the) general public	(sold on the) open market
hardcopy	hard copy
Internet or Intranet (with capital 'I')	internet or intranet
key words	keywords
master planned	masterplanned
over	more than (when referring to amounts or quantities)
on line or on-line	online
onsite or on site	on-site
purchasers	buyers
Programme	program
sale and leaseback	property investment program
stage 1	stage one
States and Territories (capitalised)	states and territories
web page	webpage
web site or web-site	website
well-being or well being	wellbeing
whilst	while
WWII or World War II	second World War

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Formatting and layout

Formatting and layout

Fonts

Fonts, heading levels and body text

Use Arial for all internal publications such as memos, file notes, letters, forms, policies and email. Arial is easy to read on screen and available across our network. It is also similar to the Helvetica Neue font, which we use for external documents. Confluence uses Helvetica by default.

The heading styles below are a guide for long, A4 documents. If you are creating a simple document, you may start with a smaller heading. These are pre-set in the corporate document templates.

Heading one: Arial dark blue, 20 pt size with 18pt before and 6 pt after; multiple line space at 1.15

Heading two: Arial dark blue, bold, 14 pt size with 18pt before and 6 pt after; multiple line spacing at 1.15

Heading three: Arial dark blue, bold 12 pt size with 6 pt after; multiple line spacing at 1.15

Heading four: Arial dark blue or black, bold 10 pt size with 18 pt before and 6 pt after; multiple line spacing at 1.15

Heading five: Arial dark blue or black, italic, 10 pt size with 18 pt before and 6 pt after; multiple line spacing at 1.15

Body text: Arial black, 10pt size with 0 pt before and 10 pt after; multiple line spacing at 1.15

Disclaimer, footnote, caption: Arial black, 8 pt size with 0pt before and 10 pt after; multiple line spacing at 1.15

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Italics

Italic text should be used sparingly.

Italics lose their effectiveness when many italicised words appear on a page. Follow [Style Manual recommendations for italics](#).

Our document heading styles include italics for the fifth-level headings to help define the hierarchy.

Structure

Structuring your document

Think about your document's structure – whether it's hard copy or online – to make sure it is:

- relevant to your audience and purpose
- organised logically
- grouped and layered into bite-sized chunks
- broken up with meaningful headings and cross-references to help people scan and navigate
- well set out and designed to make it easier to understand and highlight key messages.

Depending on how long your document is, it may be helpful to include an executive summary, highlighted quotes, diagrams, graphs, tables or images.

Templates

Templates for Word documents and PowerPoint presentations are available in each program. To access the templates click 'New' and select the 'Shared' tab.

For public documents and online information, contact [Communication and Media](#).

Tables of contents

If you use our corporate templates and apply the pre-set headings, you can automatically generate a table of contents, as needed.

To create a table of contents, select the 'References' tab and click on 'Table of contents'.

Website and email addresses

Don't use 'www' in front of web addresses. If your link is at the end of a paragraph, don't use punctuation.

For more information call 02 6217 8444 or visit dha.gov.au
For more information email xxxxxxxxxxxx@xxx.xxx.xx

Emails and email signatures

Use Arial, black, 10 pt for emails. For email signatures, your name is bold with your signature block set out as follows:

Full name | Position
Section or team | Defence Housing Australia
35 Hinder St, Gungahlin ACT 2912
T. xx xxxx xxxx
M. xxxx xxx xxx (if relevant)
[\[name\]@dha.gov.au](mailto:[name]@dha.gov.au) | dha.gov.au

Always include your email signature at the bottom of emails you send from DHA.

Do not include graphics, emoticons, pictures, quotes or logos (unless specifically authorised by Communication and Media).

Emails are usually less formal than other forms of correspondence. However, remember that your emails are official records that subject to freedom of information requirements and will be open to public access after 20 years. So:

- think before you write
- use meaningful and concise subject headings
- make sure your spelling, grammar, punctuation and style is correct

- apply appropriate security classifications
- file appropriately.

Text alignment

Aligning your text

Align text to the left. This is easier to read than text that is centred, aligned to the right or fully justified.

The exception is when using numerals in tables, where you align to the right.

If numerals such as \$1,000,000 are not in a table, they should be inserted into text as needed.

Text	Numerals
Always align text to the left.	1,000,000

Indentation

Don't indent the first line of paragraphs. Align all text to the left.

Bullet point formatting

Avoid multilevel lists – that is, lists within lists – because they're distracting and hard to follow.

If you have to use multilevel lists:

- Aim for no more than 2 levels of bullet points. Only use numbered lists where you need to show priority or chronology.
- Use an en dash (–) for the second level in a bullet list, not hollow (open) bullets
- Use the same symbol, number or letter for the same level in each list.
 - First level of bullet points
 - If there is no option of an en dash, use a solid bullet point.

Captions

- Use a smaller point size than your main text (8 pt is normal).
- Only use a full stop if the caption is a full sentence.
- Place captions for tables above the table.
- Place captions for figures (graphs, charts, diagrams) below the figure.
- Place captions for photos and illustrations below the image.

Writing for the web

Writing for the web

On this page, you will find some tips to help you write clear and user-friendly web content.

Writing for the web is a bit different from writing for print publications. People read differently on screen. The way we interact with a webpage is different from the way we interact with a book – for example, we can click on links, and we scroll up and down rather than flipping a page.

When you write for the web, keep in mind:

- Most people scan information online, rather than reading it in depth.
- It takes around 25 per cent longer to read information on screen than it does to read the exact same text on paper.
- There is no beginning, middle and end like there is in print—people viewing our website may land on just about any webpage, depending on the link they have followed.

This means it's even more important to be short, sharp and scannable when writing for the web. It's also important to consider structure, distractions, links and accessibility.

Contact [Communication and Media](#) for help to write and publish information on our website.

Structuring your information

Think about the different stakeholders who will be looking for your information online. Think about what information is common to everyone and what is of interest to specific groups. Aim to structure your information into these different chunks and break it down in a way that is logical for your stakeholders to look for the information.

Most people using websites don't scroll down so aim to keep each separate web page to one topic and one screen if possible.

Speaking directly to your audience

Using 'you' and 'we' whenever possible is important when writing for the web, as a personal and less formal writing style is most effective online.

Writing short, sharp, scannable content

Think about how you can present your information to make it easy to scan online.

Web pages work best when they:

- provide the most important information on the top half of the screen
- contain around half the word count of printed documents
- have short sentences and short paragraphs
- are broken into short chunks using meaningful headings and subheadings
- use bullet point lists to help scanning

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

- have minimal punctuation, formatting and links within the text.

Making sure each page has enough context

People reading printed documents know if they start in the middle they are likely to miss context provided at the start. In contrast, people reading information online don't necessarily follow a path determined by the writer. They create their own path through browsers, search engines, links in emails and so on.

This means each webpage needs:

- enough context to make sense on its own
- clear links to further context and detail as appropriate.

Keeping your text free of distractions

Avoid using bold, italics and hyperlinks within your text as these can be distracting.

When writing for the web:

- Only use bold to highlight important messages.
- Provide links at the end of passages of text where possible, rather than in the middle of sentences where they can force people to stop and think about following the link to something else.

Meeting accessibility requirements

Australian Government websites must meet agreed standards for accessibility.

The elements that affect the way we write for the web are:

- creating content that can be presented in a simple layout – think about your information and the best way to structure it so it is clear and logical
- writing content that is 'readable and understandable' – aim your text at a 12-year-old level, use short words and avoid jargon
- providing text alternatives for non-text content – write short descriptions of images and diagrams that are necessary for people to understand your content.

Points to remember

- PDF and Word documents are generally not accessible. Content on our website will be published as HTML.
- Use headings to group related paragraphs together. Correctly use ordered heading hierarchy and don't skip heading levels e.g. h1 must be followed by h2.
- Use lists to break up long paragraphs.
- Use video transcripts.
- Make sure you follow Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). These are developed in cooperation with individuals and organisations across the world (the [World Wide Web Consortium](#)) to create a global standard. Find more details on [their website](#).

Linking from the right words

When indicating where links should go, don't use 'click here' as your linking words. Instead:

- link from keywords that describe what they link to
- use action-oriented language to encourage users to do what you would like them to do.

Read more about our organisation in the Annual Report. (**keywords**)

Register for this event now. (**action-oriented**)

Tell us what you think. (**action-oriented**)

Don't introduce too many links within your text, and try not to duplicate the options already available through the navigation menu.

Writing in plain English

Plain English

On this page, you'll find some tips you can follow to help you write in plain English.

Plain English is faster to write and read and, most importantly, it is easier to understand. It is simple and effective communication written with your audience in mind. It is not simplistic, childish or dumbed down.

Australian Government policy is to use plain English - and it is the basis of DHA's preferred voice: professional, genuine and approachable.

Plan before you start writing

Know your audience and purpose and be clear about the points you need to make.

Engage your audience

Speak directly to your audience by using 'you', 'we' and 'I', except in very formal situations.

Use short, everyday words

Write as if you are having a conversation with a colleague or friend. Read your work aloud to check if it sounds clear and natural rather than complex, old fashioned, overly bureaucratic or long-winded.

commence ❌ start ✔️

purchase/procure ❌ buy ✔️

in the event of ❌ if ✔️

Be precise and concise

Say exactly what you mean using the simplest words your audience will understand. Cut out any unnecessary words that distract from your main points.

Write short sentences

Aim for 20 words per sentence, on average. Keep to one main idea per sentence. Most long sentences can be broken up into 2 or more sentences that are easier to read and understand.

Vary paragraph lengths

Make reading more interesting by varying the length of your paragraphs. Very long paragraphs are daunting, so look for ways to break them up. Aim for one theme per paragraph. One-sentence paragraphs are appropriate at times and can add emphasis.

DHA style guide and brand guidelines

Break text into smaller chunks

Bullet point lists are an effective way of breaking up long sentences or large passages of information.

Subheadings are also useful to guide readers and provide visual relief from large sections of text.

Use active voice

Active voice is shorter and more precise than passive voice. To write in active voice, put the 'who' first.

It was decided. **(passive)** ❌

DHA decided. **(active)** ✔️

An online booking service is provided by DHA. **(passive)** ❌

DHA provides an online booking service. **(active)** ✔️



Sometimes it is appropriate to use passive voice, such as when you want to be less harsh or avoid casting blame.

You have not paid the invoice. **(casting blame)** ❌

The invoice has not been paid. **(less harsh)** ✔️

Don't turn verbs into nouns

Keep your writing clear, crisp and active by using verbs rather than turning them into nouns.

make an application ❌

apply ✔️

had a discussion ❌

discussed ✔️

undertake the implementation of ❌

implement ✔️

Spell out acronyms the first time

Spell out acronyms the first time you use them, followed by the acronym in brackets. You can then use the acronym throughout the document. Try to avoid using lots of acronyms in external documents.

We have established a subsidiary, DHA Investment Management Limited (DHA IML), to be the Responsible Entity for an unlisted property trust. DHA IML will prepare its own report.

Avoid jargon

Jargon refers to special words or expressions that are hard to understand unless you are an expert in the field. Rather than adding authority, jargon can make your writing less clear for a wider audience.

Explain jargon if you can't avoid it.

DHA is a large property manager, responsible for managing the allocation of dwellings to Defence members and the resulting tenancies. ❌

We build, buy and lease houses for Defence members and their families. We are responsible for managing around 18,500 properties including allocating and managing tenancies. ✔️

Avoid managerial or overly bureaucratic language that makes writing harder to read and less clear.

By harnessing diversity well, DHA can continue to create an inclusive environment that values and utilises the contributions of people of different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. ❌

We benefit from the varied experience and perspectives of employees with diverse backgrounds. ✔️

Avoid long strings of descriptive words

It's better to have a slightly longer but clear sentence instead of a long string of descriptive words.

There will be a new residential development pipeline protection works consultation meeting. ❌

There will be a consultation meeting about pipeline protection works for the new residential development. ✔️

Avoid double negatives and tautologies (words that mean the same thing)

Choose clear expressions rather than double negatives that are clumsy and ambiguous.

Not unlikely could mean something might happen or that something is likely to happen.

Not infrequent may mean something occurs sometimes, regularly or often.

Give direct instructions

Avoid 'should' when providing instructions. Instructions using direct language and simple sentences are clearer and easier to understand.

DHA staff should use plain English. ❌

Use plain English. ✔️

These guidelines should be observed. ❌

Apply these guidelines. ✔️

Reduce repetition by using just one word rather than two that mean the same thing.

12 month period ❌ 12 months ✔️

reason why ❌ reason ✔️

merge together ❌ merge ✔️