

## CF's A-Z of Writing and Style Tips

### Archaic

- Avoid archaic constructions such as amongst, whilst, amidst: instead favour among, while and amid if you use these words.

### Ampersand - &

- Don't use this in place of 'and' - unless it's a company name - Bloggs & Sons - or you are struggling with the word count on an application form!

### And

- There was a time when it was 'wrong' to start a sentence with 'and' or 'but'. This is no longer the case.
- And sometimes it can be very emphatic and effective. But use sparingly.

### Bullet points

- Use bullet points to break up the density of text and to illustrate your points clearly.

### Clichés

- Avoid them!
- Phrases such as "thinking outside the box" are now so hackneyed that they have the effect of switching readers off rather than engaging them.

### Colons

- These should be used to define a quote. Our research scientist said: "our ground-breaking work is helping to identify a cure for xxx disease."
- Or to define a list (using colon and semi-colons). e.g. Immediate and future plans were developed with consumers input: admission to hospital for treatment of leg ulcers; review and home follow-up by a Community Educator; consumer to participate on discharge in the Ambulatory Program; telehealth monitoring for blood pressure with result sent through the GP; Meals on Wheels to be organised prior to discharge; and family to manage client's shopping.

### Data

- Only include relevant data – unnecessary data creates confusion.

### Discreet

- Means careful in one's actions and choice of words.

### Discrete

- Means individually distinct: There are three discrete projects in our 2020-2022 strategy: x,y and z.

### Effective

- Successful in producing the desired or intended results.

### Efficient

- Achieving maximum productivity with minimum wasted effort or expense.

### Fewer than versus Less than

- Fewer than is for numbers – fewer than 15 people attended the event
- Less than is for quantities – the fees for this account are less than one per cent.

### Government

- The word government does not need a capital 'G' unless it is used as the first word of a sentence or part of a title – e.g. The Government of New South Wales

### Has/Have

- Most companies, corporations (**collective nouns**) are singular and take singular verbs. So, “The company is planning to hold a Christmas party”, NOT: “The company are planning.”
- XXX Org has been serving clients since 1968
- XXX Org has a child protection policy

### Its/It's

- Distinguish between its – possessive – as in hers, its and his versus it's = it is.

### Jargon

- Be careful with jargon – don't assume that funders will understand jargon that is specific to the sector you work in. Like an in-joke, it doesn't mean much to others and can alienate the reader. By the same token spell out acronyms the first time you use them.

### KISS - Keep it simple stupid

- Avoid over-complicated sentences – aim for clear and concise sentences; these tend to be more powerful.

### Long versus short

- avoid using long words where a shorter one would do – e.g. change rather than modification.

### Motherhood statements

- AVOID! Wiktionary definition: A vague, feel-good platitude, especially one made by a politician, that few people would disagree with. For example: “Our country must contribute to world peace.” These kinds of statements generalise and lack an appropriate evidence base.
- Instead, use meaningful stats, facts, case studies and concrete examples.

### None of

- Takes the singular verb – None of us is available to attend the conference.

### Numbers

- One to nine should be spelled out, with 10 onwards in figures.
- Ages should always be in figures, e.g. “the 5-year-old boy”.
- With ordinals, spell out up to tenth, and then use figures for 11th onwards.

### Oxymorons

- Think about what you are writing: does it make sense?
- Some words really fight each other. “A comprehensive selection”, “faintly repulsive”, “slightly lethal” “quite unique”.

### Passive voice versus Active

Use the **Active** voice wherever possible – and avoid the Passive voice.

- The Passive Voice is identified by a part of the verb ‘to be’ and a past participle e.g: **An evaluation program was conducted by** the organisation. Turn around and instead say: **We conducted an evaluation program.**
- You can often spot the passive voice by the use of the word “by” e.g: The report **was written by** several members of the partnership organisation. Turn this around and instead say: Several members of the organisation wrote the report.

### Plain English

- Avoid technical/scientific language unless the application is being peer-reviewed.

### Practice (makes perfect)

- Practice (noun) makes perfect if you practise (verb) every day.

### Preventive

- Preventive is much more common than preventative.

### Principal/Principle

- Principal: The main cause or the head of a school or other institution.
- Principle: something worth sticking to

### Qualitative and quantitative

- **Qualitative:** relating to measuring, or measured by the quality of something rather than its quantity.
- Examples of qualitative measures: Surveys, feedback forms, interviews, case studies
- **Quantitative:** relating to measuring, or measured by the quantity of something rather than its quality.
- Examples of quantitative measures: Data such as numbers of clients, beneficiaries, incidences of service provision.

## Regarding

- Simpler to say about

## Short paragraphs

- Better than long. But vary sentence lengths.

## Sub-headings

- Break up text into readable sections - create white space. See also bullet points.

## Tautology

- Avoid constructions such as “past history”, “quite unique”; “radical transformation”; “first established”; “originally founded”, “totally destroyed”, “value judgments”, “total extinction”. In all these cases, we are saying the same thing with two words, when one word does the job.

## Unique

- Be careful – is the programme or model really unique? Can you substantiate this claim? Or is there something similar, if not in Australia, elsewhere in the world?

## Verbs

- Wherever possible use a verb - a doing word – in place of a noun and bring a sentence alive e.g: NOT: The Government **will allow for the provision** of more home care packages. INSTEAD: The Government **will provide** more home care packages
- NOT: City banks **are considering the introduction of new fees**. INSTEAD: City banks **may introduce new fees**.

## W is for Waffle

- Avoid waffly phrases such as ‘At this point in time,’ ‘At the end of the day’ ‘Due to the fact that’, ‘It is important to note that’.

## X-Ray

- Hyphenated

## Zero Tolerance

- Zero tolerance is a way to eliminate undesirable behaviour among employees and provide an automatic punishment for violating company rules.
- A zero-tolerance policy (hyphenated).