

TCN 707 Technical Writing Style Guide

A style manual for technical writers and editors

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Sources consulted: *The European Commission Style Guide* (seventh edition, 2011); *The World Bank Translation Style Guide* (Washington DC, 2004); *Oxford Canadian Dictionary* (second edition, 2006); *Technical Editing* (Fourth edition, 2006); *The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling* (19th edition, 2009); and Aaron Courtice Technical Communication Style Guide, (Volume 1, 2010).

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Preface

This is a disciplinary Style Guide intended primarily for technical English writers. Style in this guide refers to literary style. Canadian English usage is the standard applied in this guide.

This guide is divided into two sections; section I provides general guidelines on how technical writers should approach writing, and section II explains specific choices for writing elements.

The rationale for this guide is to document style choices that allow for consistency by all writers and editors who conform to its rules. Technical writers must write in clear, concise and simple language. This language must be consistent.

Documentation is always useful as clear directions are provided in a static context for people to reference at will. The following quote by an unknown author sums this point up very well:

“Documentation is like sex. When it's good, it's very, very good. And when it's bad, it's still better than nothing!”-- Unknown

The author hopes this guide will help writers and editors alike, as both are concerned with style choices when writing and editing respectively.

SECTION I:

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Chapter 1: Introductory Guidelines

1.1 Introduction

The guidelines given in this guide are based on several sources, namely:

- ❖ The European Commission Style Guide (seventh edition, 2011);
- ❖ The World Bank Translation Style Guide (Washington DC, 2004);
- ❖ Oxford Canadian Dictionary (second edition, 2006);
- ❖ Technical Editing by Carolyn Rude (Fourth edition, 2006);
- ❖ The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling (19th edition, 2009); and
- ❖ Aaron Courtice Technical Communication Style Guide, (Volume 1, 2010).

A number of technical terms are not defined within the body of the guide but can be found in the Glossary at the end of the guide.

Technical writing and writing in general warrants that there is honesty in the work being produced. Therefore writers must abide by copyright and plagiarism guidelines.

This guide is useful to the editor as well because writers will not always get the details right. The editor adds value to the content by making the text correct, consistent, accurate, and complete. For these reasons this guide provides some introductory guidelines on what the writer and editor need to accomplish in the text.

1.2 Copyright

The first important rule when approaching writing is to bear in mind copyright laws. Because work is protected by copyright permission must be obtained to reproduce all or part of another person's work. Permission must also be acquired for each use, as permission to use copyrighted material in one publication does not give one the right to use it elsewhere.

1.3 Plagiarism

This guide explains choices on references and footnotes. These are critical to avoiding plagiarism.

1.4 General Guidelines

1.4.1 Making a document accurate

Making a document accurate refers to the content, such as the appropriate use of the term, date, or model number. Use of the wrong term, date, and model number can change the intended meaning of the text and even result in legal problems. For example, during the trial of

Dr. Conrad Murray (Michael Jackson's former doctor) the jury had mistakenly put June 6, 2009 as the incident date on the verdict form but Michael Jackson was still alive on that day. The jury had to make the correction to the accurate date of June 25, 2009.

1.4.2 Making a document correct

Correct refers to conforming to the standards of grammar, spelling, and punctuation of the language in which the document is published. These standards are described in dictionaries, and in style guides such as this one. Where the writer goes wrong with these standards the editor follows through when doing his/her editing.

1.4.3 Making a document consistent

A consistent document avoids shifts and variations in use of terms, spelling, numbering, and abbreviation. Consistency helps readers understand the information. Planning for consistency before the document is developed saves time and stress during the editing and publishing stages.

Document consistency includes the following elements:

- ❖ style, semantics, and syntax (verbal consistency);
- ❖ typography, tables and figures, print layout, screen layout, colour (visual consistency);
- ❖ spelling, capitalization, hyphenation, abbreviation, numbers, punctuation (mechanical consistency);
- ❖ related parts of documents such as chapters that follow a pattern (structural consistency);
- ❖ referencing of the same object or event that do not contradict one another (content consistency).

1.4.4 Making a document complete

A complete printed document contains all its verbal and visual parts including front and back matter. All referenced material has to be included, and illustrated items must match the text or object referenced. All pages must be included and in order. If it is a website the home page must be included and all related pages noted on the menu list.

SECTION II:

WRITING STYLE GUIDELINES

Chapter 2: Spelling

2.1 Conventions

The spelling conventions herein are based on the Oxford Canadian Dictionary, and The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling 19th edition. This guide recommends the Canadian English spelling. There are similarities in spelling with the Canadian and British spelling, but greater disparities with the American spelling, but these disparities are becoming fewer. Table 1 below demonstrates some differences in the spelling of a few words between the three.

Table 1: Spelling Differences

Conventions	Canadian	British	American
-c- and -s-	licence	licence	license
diphthongs/digraph	hemorrhage	haemorrhage	haemorrhage
double consonant	program	programme	program
e + suffix	acknowledgement	acknowledgement	acknowledgment
foreign plurals	referendums	referendums	referenda
-l or -ll	enrol	enrol	enroll
-or or -our	neighbour	neighbour	neighbor
-er or -re	centre	centre	center
-i or -y	tire	tyre	tire
-ise or -yze	analyze	analyse	analyze
-ck or -que	cheque	cheque	check
-g or -gue	catalogue	catalogue	catalog
-ces or -xes	appendices	appendices	appendixes
-er or -or	adviser	adviser	advisor
-ow or -ough	plough	plough	plow
Final -e or no Final -e	annex	annexe	annex
-ou or o	smoulder	smoulder	smolder
-ey or -y	storey	storey	story

2.2 Frequently Misspelled Words

Apart from words that are spelled differently as a matter of that country's standards, there are words that are incorrectly spelled altogether regardless of the country's spelling convention. The following are a few to refer to.

Table 2: Frequently Misspelled Words

Correct	Incorrect
Accommodate (two m's)	Accommodate
All Right (opposite of all wrong)	Alright
Liaison (i before and after 'a')	Liason
Subpoena (the b is silent)	Supoena
Misspell (two S's; miss is added to spell)	Misspell
Inanimate (one n; prefix in means not, root word is animate)	Innanimate
Millimetre (two l's; the root mill means thousand)	milimetre

2.3 Frequently Misused Words

Apart from spelling conventions writers need to be careful when using words that are similar in sound but different in spelling and meaning. Make note of these words and their definitions and be guided accordingly on the correct ones to use where appropriate.

Table 3: Frequently Misused Words

affect – to influence.	effect – result.
assure – make certain of.	ensure – make certain the occurrence of an event, situation, or outcome.
complement – something that completes and makes whole.	compliment – to give praise.
continually – interrupted action over a period of time	continuously – uninterrupted action.
discreet – tactful.	discrete – separate or distinct.
farther – physical distance.	further – degree, quantity, or time.
fiscal – financial.	physical – concerning the body, or things material.
its – a possessive pronoun meaning belonging to it.	it's – a contraction meaning it is.
lay – put or bring into a certain position.	lie – to be in a certain position.
personal – private or one's own.	personnel – a collective noun referring to persons employed or active in an organization.
principle – basic truth or law.	principal – first or primary.
stationery – writing paper, and other writing materials and office supplies.	stationary – fixed in its place; not moveable.
whose – of or belonging to which person.	who's – contraction for who is.
your – of or belonging to yourself.	you're – contraction for you are.

Chapter 3: Capitalization

3.1. Basic Rules

The basic rules of capitalization dictate that the first word of a sentence, titles of publications and people, days, months, the pronoun I, and proper nouns are capitalized. Also, capitalize nouns that refer to specific people and places.

Do not use capitalization for emphasis, as it can make the text harder to read and understand, and it takes up more space. It is better to use bold, italics, or a larger type size for emphasis.

3.2 Geographic Names

Capitalize names of specific regions, as in *Middle East*, but not a general point on the compass, as in *east of the avenue*.

Capitalize adjectives derived from geographic names when the term refers to a specific place, as in Chinese food, but not when the term has a meaning that does not relate to the place, as in french fries.

3.3 Personal Names, Titles, and Headings

Capitalize a title when it comes before a name, as in *President Obama*, but not when it is used in general to refer to an officer, as in *the president*.

Capitalize names of disciplines that refer to nationalities, as in *French, Spanish*, but not when referring to academic disciplines, as in *history and mathematics*.

Capitalize the first and last names in headings, but lowercase articles, coordinating conjunctions, and prepositions.

3.4 Names of Organizations

Capitalize names of organizations, government agencies, or institutions, as in *Seneca College*. But you would not capitalize it when referring to it as *the college*, as that is now the type of institution.

Chapter 4: Punctuation

4.1 Punctuation Convention

Punctuation helps understand the sentence, giving the readers cues or clues about the meaning. It helps define sentence structure.

A few general rules of punctuation in technical documentation are as follows:

- Add one space after end stop punctuation, not two.
- Do not indent paragraphs.
- Do not double-space; use single spacing between paragraphs, as this makes text easier to read.
- Let the space between paragraphs consistently indicate and separate paragraphs.
- Use an em dash (—) instead of two hyphens (--) .
- Use an en dash (–) instead of a hyphen.

4.2 Period

The period (.), otherwise known as the full stop, or a form of end stop punctuation, is used to end a sentence that is not a direct question or an exclamation. The following are ways in which it is used.

- Use it to end a sentence.
- Use it in abbreviations and people's initials.
- Use it after a number or letter in a numbered list or formal outline.
- Use it as an ellipsis (three periods ...) to indicate the omission of words in a quote, or to show a break in thought.
- Do not use it in title headings.

4.3 Colon

The colon (:) signals the end of one clause and the beginning of another. It helps readers anticipate a new subject and a new verb. It is used in the following ways:

- Use it to introduce a list following a grammatically complete sentence, as we have done in this section.
- Use it to precede a long quotation of one or more paragraphs.
- Use it to precede a formal quotation or question, as we did in the preface to this style guide.
- Use it to precede a second independent clause that explains the first clause.
- Use it after the salutation in a letter.
- Use it to separate parts of a title, reference, or time.

4.4 Semicolon

The semicolon (;) also signals the end of one clause and the beginning of another. It is used in the following ways:

- Use it between independent clauses in a compound sentence that is not separated by a coordinating conjunction.
- Use it between independent clauses in a compound sentence that is joined by a coordinating conjunction and commas are in the clauses.
- Use it to separate groups of items in a list that are separated by commas.

4.5 Comma

The comma (,) also signals the end of one clause and the beginning of another. It is used in the following ways:

- Use a comma to separate items in a list.
- Use it before 'etc.'
- Use it to separate adjectives in a series, but not if the adjectives are not in a series.
- Use it to separate two sentences that are joined by a conjunction.

4.6 Hyphens, and Compounds

The hyphen indicates a relationship between two phrases. People often tend to confuse its use. The following list is a useful guide to know when to use it, and when not to.

Compound words may or may not be hyphenated. Compound words are sometimes hyphenated in error. To be sure when the hyphen should be used in compound words consult The Canadian Press Caps and Spelling style guide, or the Canadian Oxford Dictionary.

- Compound adjectives are hyphenated if they precede the word modified, as in country-smoked ham.
- Compound adjectives that begin with "all", "half", and "low" are hyphenated, as in half-hearted, all-purpose, high-grade, low-risk.
- Compound adjectives are hyphenated if they start with *well*, but not if they precede a noun. For example you can say *well-written style guide*, but **not** *the report was well-written*. You would say *the report is well written*.
- Use a hyphen to join prefixes to proper names, as in *anti-Nebraska democrat*.
- Use a hyphen to join noun and adjective terms, as in *hard-earned cash*.
- Use a hyphen to join an initial capital with a word, as in *T-shirt*.
- Do not use a hyphen between compound adjectives, as in *Hispanic American*. You would not write *Hispanic-American*.
- Do not use a hyphen to separate two nouns, as in *school principal*.

- Use a hyphen for the minus sign in temperatures, as in -10 degrees.
- Use a hyphen to differentiate words, and avoid misinterpretation, example, resign (quit your job) has a different meaning from re-sign (sign again).

4.7 Dash

Dashes are sometimes used to substitute for parentheses, show a break in thought, or provide emphasis. They should not be overused however; other forms of punctuation such as a comma, or parentheses should be used where appropriate.

Dashes also provide clues to additional information at the end of the sentence that help readers understand the main point of the sentence.

No spaces should be used on either side of the dashes.

4.7.1 Em Dash

An em—dash is the length of the letter M. You can get this by setting your keyboard to Num Lock, and then pressing Alt + 0151. The em dash is used in the following ways:

- Use an em dash to set off parenthetical information, such as an appositive.
- Use an em dash before the author's name after a direct quotation.

4.7.2 En Dash

An en—dash is the length of the letter N. You can get this by setting your keyboard to Num Lock, and then pressing Alt + 0150. Use an en dash in number ranges to replace the word 'to' or 'from', as in the years 2000–2010.

4.8 Parentheses

Parentheses are used to set off information that is relevant to the sentence, but is enough to be used as an aside. They accomplish the following:

- They are used as an explanation.
- They are used as amplification.
- They are used as an example the topic is dealing with.
- They are used as digression to relate a minor idea to the topic.

4.9 Question Mark

The question mark is a form of end stop punctuation that transforms a sentence into a query.

When a question mark follows a direct quotation place it after the closing quotation marks if it applies to the entire sentence, but place it before if it is referring only to the quote. It may also be used to indicate uncertainty, or doubt.

[4.10 Exclamation Mark](#)

The exclamation mark is used in similar ways to the question mark. It is also an end stop punctuation, but unlike the question mark that asks a question, the exclamation mark adds emphasis.

The exclamation mark is sometimes used where a question mark could be, as in “Isn’t he adorable!” This is in a rhetorical context. In such situations the question mark and exclamation are used, but this is not the preferred choice when writing technical documentation.

[4.11 Quotation Marks](#)

Quotation marks are used in the following ways:

- Use quotation marks to enclose a direct quotation, and in the titles of short print publications.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.
- Place quotation marks outside of a comma or period.
- Place quotation marks inside a semicolon or colon.
- Place question marks, exclamation points, and dashes inside the quotation marks when they belong directly to the quotation, but outside if they do not relate directly to the quotation.
- Do not use quotation marks to enclose the title of an unpublished or long written work.

[4.12 Apostrophe](#)

The apostrophe is used to show either possession or a contraction.

When used before a final ‘s’ it differentiates a possessive noun or pronoun from a plural word. For example, *the supervisor’s car*. Possessive pronouns such as its, theirs, hers, yours, do not need an apostrophe. By contrast, if you are referring to a plural noun you would not use an apostrophe, as in *the red honda cars are on sale*.

In the case of contractions the apostrophe plus a final ‘s’ is used, as in *you’re*, the contraction for *you are*. In technical documentation it is best to avoid using these contractions, and spell out the words instead.

Chapter 5: Sentence Structure and Verb Usage

5.1 Sentence Structures

Sentence structures are used to reinforce meaning. The writer and editor ensure there is a match between the sentence structure and the intended meaning of the text. The sentence must be arranged so that the **subject** and **verb** are near the beginning. Subject and verb are at the core of a sentence's meaning.

5.1.1 Sentence Arrangement (S-V-O)

The preferred standard in English is subject-verb-object (S-V-O), or subject-verb-complement (S-V-C) pattern. This is the pattern most familiar to readers, so any deviation from this standard will make it harder for the reader to comprehend.

5.1.2 Parallelism

Use of the parallel structure help maintain consistency in the relationship of items.

- All the items should be the same part of speech (nouns, verbs, participles) or same type of phrase.
- In a compound phrase if the active voice is used in the first clause then so should the second clause. Otherwise the reader will be confused by the shift.

5.1.3 Positive constructions

Negative constructions make sentences seem longer than they are, and makes reading harder to comprehend.

Use positive constructions. For example, instead of writing *it is not uncommon*, write *it is common*.

Avoid use of multiple negatives. For example *I haven't never owed nothing to no one*. It is very unclear to understand what such a statement is saying.

5.2 Verbs

Verbs are very crucial to sentence structure. They provide the most important information about the subject because they indicate the action being taken. Substituting verbs with other parts of speech such as nouns and adjectives obscure the intended meaning because the reader is left wondering what was the action taken and by whom. The type of verbs used also help to add purpose to the text.

5.2.1 Strong Verbs

This guide recommends constructing sentences with strong verbs. While all verbs are ‘doing words,’ (they tell what the subject is doing) some are weak because they do not place emphasis on the precise action word that requires it. For example, in the following sentence the verb is *hold*, but that is not the main point of the sentence.

The committee will hold a meeting.

The main point of the sentence is the meeting, not holding. Therefore, the sentence is better stated as follows:

The committee will meet.

The latter version uses fewer words and makes the meaning of the sentence more obvious and accurate.

5.2.2 Active Voice

The standard for technical documentation is use of the active voice. When the active voice is used the subject is the agent of the action. It establishes responsibility and adds energy to writing. We can be sure of who is doing what when the active voice is used, as in the following sentence.

Storms are damaging coastal towns.

This sentence is stronger and clearer in meaning than the following:

Coastal towns are being damaged.

In the latter example we are left wondering who or what is is damaging the coastal towns.

5.2.3 Nominalization

Nominalizations are nouns formed from verbs. Stay away from nominalizations when their use obscure the intended meaning and can be stated in simpler, plainer terms. Here are a few examples.

Table 4: Nominalizations

in agreement with	agree
make a decision	decide
under examination	examine
conduct an assessment	assess
have admiration for	admire

Chapter 6: Gender Neutral Language

So as to avoid gender bias it is best not to constantly use the pronoun *he* as a general term. It is better to alternate '*he or she*' with '*she or he*'. Additionally, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) recommends using the following alternatives in place of "man" or references to the male gender.

Table 5: NCTE recommendations for gender neutral language

Sexist Language	Alternative
Mankind	- Humanity, human beings, people
Man's achievements	- Human achievements
The best man for the job	- The best person for the job, the best man or - woman for the job
Man-made	- Synthetic, manufactured, crafted, machine-made
The common man	- The average person, ordinary people
Chairman	- Coordinator, presiding officer, head, chair
Businessman	- Business executive or manager
Fireman, mailman	- Firefighter, mail carrier
Steward and stewardess	- Flight attendant
Policeman, policewoman	- Police officer

Chapter 7: Numbers

7.1 Writing out Numbers

- Spell out numbers that start a sentence.
- Spell out whole numbers before 10. After 10 use figures.
- Use numerals with any measurement abbreviations and for percentages.
- Write very large numbers as a numeral and word combination, as in, 4.5 billion.
- Spell out ordinal numbers in text.
- avoid combining single-digit figures and words using hyphens, as in, *2-day journey*.
Spell it out to say *two-day journey*.
- However, retain standard phrases such as 25-cent stamp, 40-hour week.

7.2 Fractions

- Insert hyphens in fractions used as adverbs or adjectives but not if they are nouns, as follows:
 - *Two-thirds increase*, but not *an increase of two thirds*.
- Avoid combining figures and words as follows:
 - *Two-thirds full*, but not *2/3 full*.

7.3 Date and Time

- Omit apostrophe in years, as in 1980s, not 1980's.
- Spell out the date to avoid any ambiguity, for example, December 25, 2011.
- Use the 12-hour system for time.
- When writing time use a colon and a.m or p.m as opposed to o'clock, as in 2:00 a.m., not 2 o' clock.
- Use the articles 'to' and 'and' to separate dates, as in from 1983 to 1984, and between 1983 and 1984.

Chapter 8: Abbreviations and Symbols

8.1 General guidelines

- Abbreviations in the spelling of names should remain, because it is a part of the name, as in Ernst & Young, is not Ernst and Young.
- Periods should be used with abbreviations that appear in lowercase letters, but not with abbreviations in all capital letters.
- Initials substituting for names are initialism, eg. IBM or m.p.h.
- Don't include too many abbreviations in content, makes it hard to understand.
- Use abbreviations that are familiar to the reader.
- Acronyms are okay instead of repeating long strings of text.
- Do not put a bracketed abbreviation after the name of an organization.
- Do not spell out common abbreviations if the full term is hard to pronounce, eg. DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). Just include brief description, if necessary.
- Omit periods in full-caps abbreviation unless referring to person or place.

- For Canadian provinces and territories use:
 - Alt., B.C., N.B., N.S.
Que., Sask., Man., N.L., N.W.T., Ont., P.E.I.
- Omit periods from currency abbreviations.
- Lower case abbreviations that have become common, such as radar.

8.2 Mathematical Symbols

8.2.1 Per Cent

Per cent is written as two words in Canadian spelling, and is spelled out in words when the number is also spelled out. When being used with figures use the symbol %.

8.2.2 Multiplication sign

Use x or * to represent the symbol for multiplication.

8.3 Scientific Symbol and Units of Measurment

- Units of measurement without a numeral should always be spelled out.
- Express percentages as numerals.
- Use the metric system, e.g., metre, kilogram, mass, second, ampere.
- Do not use periods with metric symbols, because they are not abbreviations.
- A millimetre (mL) is the same as a cubic centimetre (cm³), therefore no need to use cc or cm, use mL.

8.4 Symbols for Editing

Please refer to Chapter 12: Appendices at the end of this guide for symbols used for editing and how they are used.

Chapter 9: Illustrations

There are various types of illustrations, and they each convey information differently, and are visually different. Illustrations make readers see and read longer what they have read, and offers immediate information that is more easily understood. They must however, convey useful information. Text and illustration must interact.

- Text and illustration must appear together.
- Text and illustration must be redundant; convey the same information.
- Text and illustration must be complementary; one must be just as essential as the other.
- Text and illustration must be supplementary; one must elaborate on the other, or add substantial information.
- The illustration should forecast the ideas while the text provides the full details. This is called stage setting.
- The illustration and text should cause semantic tension; give readers pause.

9.1 Tables

Use tables to show comparisons, or for easy access to specific information.

- Keep table structure consistent.
- Sort values in a meaningful order.
- Avoid text orientation other than horizontal, left to right.
- Align dates to the centre, keeping them at a consistent width.
- Align text to the left.

9.2 Structural Illustrations

Use structural illustrations when a flow of information is required.

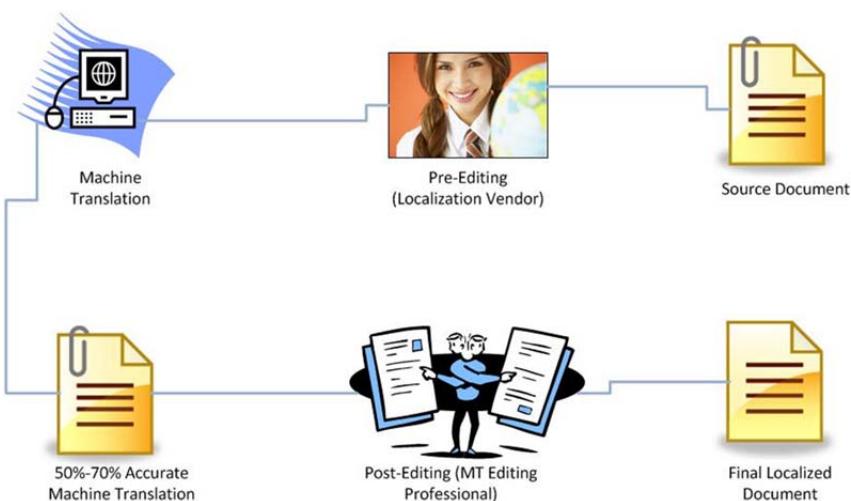


Figure 1: Structural Illustration

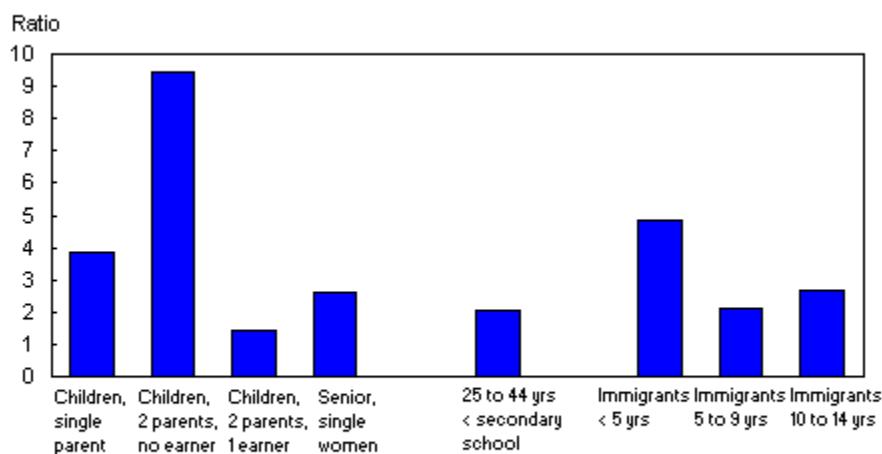
9.3 Graphs

Use graphs to display quantitative information for comparison purposes.

Group the data to make the illustrations easier to understand.

- Title and date the graph appropriately.
- Encode quantities to correspond accurately with the visual scale.
- Keep the distance between tick marks consistent with the quantitative values they represent.
- Include the value zero in the scale, or alert readers when you don't. However, always start the scale at zero for bar graphs.
- Label items on the graph, instead of using a legend.

Frequency of chronic low income from 1993 to 1998.



Note: The likelihood of experiencing low income is expressed as a relative ratio between a vulnerable group and the average for Canada, where the average =1.

Source: Statistics Canada

Figure 2: Graph

9.4 Representational

Representational illustrations depict two-dimensional and three-dimensional items, and show spatial relationships as in drawings and photographs.

- Use line drawings to identify whole and parts, preferably three-dimensional drawings.
- Use pictures when more detail is required, but do not use too much detail, focus on the task.

Chapter 10: Footnotes, References

10.1 Footnotes

Footnotes should be used instead of in-text citation. Place the footnote at the end of the sentence (or immediately after the last word to which it refers) and after all punctuation marks except dashes.

10.2 References

Use the Chicago Manual of Style as the main point of reference for citing sources. A few general guidelines are as follows:

- Indent all lines except the first in the bibliography.
- Use italics for titles of periodicals.
- Capitalize the first letter of all significant words in titles and subtitles of works and parts of works such as articles or chapters.
- Include the URL in electronic sources.

Chapter 11: Glossary

A

adjective Part of speech whose function is to modify a noun.

amplification The addition of further details.

appositive Noun or phrase placed with another, with the second noun or phrase used to explain the first (*Hollie, the new Supervisor*).

article A separate clause or portion of a document.

attribute A characteristic quality.

B

back matter Parts of a book that follow the body, including the appendix, glossary, and index.

body type Type of the text of a document as opposed to its headings and titles.

C

caption Brief explanation of an illustration printed beneath the title.

clause Group of words that contains a subject and a verb.

dependent/subordinate Group of words with a subject and verb, as well as a subordinating conjunction or a relative pronoun. They cannot be punctuated as a complete sentence.

independent/main Group of words with a subject and verb, but no subordinating conjunction or relative pronoun to make it dependent; may be punctuated as a complete sentence.

nonrestrictive Modifying clause beginning with a relative pronoun (*who, which*) that gives additional information about the subject, but that is not essential to identify what the subject is (the cub, who was born a few months ago, is at the Toronto zoo).

restrictive Modifying clause beginning with a relative pronoun (*who, that*) that restricts the meaning of the subject (*gives essential identifying information*). No punctuation separates the modifier from the subject it modifies (*the thief who broke into the store*).

conjunction Word that joins words (nouns, verbs, modifiers) or clauses in a series.

coordinating Joins items of unequal value, including two independent clauses (*and, but, or, for, yet, nor, so*).

subordinating Joins items of unequal value, especially a dependent to an independent clause. Makes a clause dependent (*although, because, since, while, therefore*).

complement Word used to complete the sense of the verb. A subject complement completes a linking verb, while a direct object completes a transitive verb.

complex sentence Sentence structured with a dependent as well as an independent clause.

compound sentence Sentence composed of at least two independent clauses.

copyright The legal right granted for a specific period to an author, designer, etc, or another appointed person, to print, publish, perform, film, or record original literary, artistic, or musical material.

D

digraph A group of two letters representing one sound.

diphthong A speech sound in one syllable in which the articulation begins as for one vowel and moves as for another. A compound vowel character, for example ae.

E

edit Assemble, prepare, or modify written work (especially the work of others) for publication.

F

figure Illustration that is not tabular (*line drawing, bar graph, photograph*)

footnote A note at the foot of a page referring to a marked part of the text on the page. The note is usually preceded by ordinal numbers in superscript within the text.

format The style or manner of an arrangement, design, or procedure. Placement of text and graphics on a page including the number and width of columns; the dimensions of margins, spacing, and type; and the form of the text (paragraphs, lists).

front matter Parts of a document that precede the body (*title page, table of contents, preface*).

G

glossary Short dictionary of key terms in the document.

grammar System of rules governing the relationships of words in sentences.

graphics (a) Text with a strong visual component consisting of more than words arranged in paragraphs (tables, line drawing, graphs); (b) Visuals with mathematical content as would be drawn on graph paper (graphs, architectural drawing)

guide A book with essential information on a subject.

H

halftone Picture with shading (different tones of light and dark) created by dots of different density. Produced by photographing the subject through a screen or by digital photography.

house style Mechanical style choices preferred by a publishing organization. Derives from the designation of any publishing organization as a house.

hypertext Text with electronic connections (links) to other documents or to sections within the text.

I

in house Adverb or adjective indicating that work is completed or applies within the organization rather than without, as in *an in-house style manual determines the styles choices preferred by that organization.*

interface Visual and textual features on the computer screen that enables users to use the website or software.

Internet Global network of regional networks; the cables and computers that form the network. The World Wide Web uses the Internet to transmit information.

introduction Substantive beginning section for a document; in a book, generally the first chapter rather than part of the front matter, where a preface or foreword would go.

Italics Style of printing type with the letters slanted to the right.

J

jury A body of usually twelve persons sworn to render a verdict on the basis of evidence submitted to them in a court of justice.

justification Adjustment of lines of text to align margins; alignment.

K

knowledge (a) Awareness or familiarity gained by experience (of a person, fact, or thing). **(b)** A person's range of information.

L

legend Explanation of symbols, shading, or type styles used in a graph.

line drawing Drawing created with black lines, without shading. It may be photographed for printing without a halftone.

M

manual A book of instructions, especially for operating a machine or learning a subject.

manuscript Unpublished version of a document. Because the term literally suggests handwriting, it is often replaced by typescript.

mood Verb form indicating the writer's attitude toward the factuality of action or condition expressed.

imperative Verb form used to express commands.

indicative Verb form used for factual statements.

subjunctive Verb form used to indicate doubt or a hypothetical situation.

N

noise Distracting material in a document, such as errors, excess words, or an inappropriate voice, that interferes with the reader's attention to the content.

noun Part of speech representing a person, place, thing, or idea.

O

object Noun or noun substitute that is governed by a transitive verb, a nonfinite verb, or a preposition. A direct object tells what or who. An indirect object tells to whom or what or for whom or what.

online Electronic file on a computer rather than in print.

P

parallel structure; parallelism Use of the same form to express related ideas in a series.

participle Modifier formed from a verb with the addition of the suffix –ing or –ed, as in *judging, disgraced*.

PDF Portable Document Format; a file format developed by Adobe and used for documents that are distributed electronically on different platforms.

persona Character or personality of the writer as projected in a document by his or her style.

phrase Group of related words that function as a grammatical unit; does not contain both a subject and verb.

plagiarism The act of taking and using thoughts, writings, inventions, etc. of another person as one's own.

point Unit of linear measure used by graphic designers and printers; roughly one-sixth of an inch. Used to describe both vertical and horizontal measures.

preface Part of the front matter of a document stating the purposes, readers, scope, and assumptions about the document. Often includes acknowledgements as well.

prefix (a) A verbal element placed at the beginning of a word to adjust or qualify its meaning.

(b) A title placed before a name.

preposition Part of speech that links a noun with another part of the sentence.

pronoun Part of speech that takes the position and function of a noun. May be personal (*I, we, you, they*), relative (*who, whose, which, that*), indefinite (*each, someone, all*), intensive (*myself*), reflexive (reflecting on the grammatical subject: *he chose it himself*), demonstrative (*this, that, these*), or interrogative (*who?*).

publish Prepare and issue a book, newspaper, computer software, etc., for public sale.

Q

quantitative (a) Concerned with quantity. (b) Measured or measurable by quantity.

query Question to the writer posed by the editor requesting information that is necessary for completing the editing correctly.

R

readability The ease with which a reader can read and understand a document, based on content, level of technicality, organization, style, and format.

redundant Duplicate information; unnecessary repetition.

roman type Type style characterized by straight vertical lines in characters rather than the slanted lines that characterize italic type.

S

salutation The initial words of a letter used to address the person being written to.

semantics Study of meaning.

simple sentence Sentence consisting of one independent clause.

style Choices about diction and sentence structure that affect comprehension and emphasis as well project voice or persona.

style manual Collection identifying preferred choices on matters of mechanical style including capitalization, abbreviation, and documentation.

syntax Structure of phrases, clauses, and sentences.

T

table Text or numbers arranged in rows and columns.

table of contents List in front matter of a document of the major divisions, such as chapters, and the page numbers on which the divisions begin.

tense Form of the verb that indicates time of the action as well as continuance or completion.

tone Sound that the voice of the writer projects—serious, angry, humourous, etc.

U

usage Accepted practice in the use of words and phrases.

V

verb Part of speech that denotes action, occurrence, or existence. Characterized by tense, mood, and voice.

intransitive Verb that does not carry over to a complement.

linking Verb that links the subject to a subject complement.

to be “Is” or a variant of *is*; links the subject to a subject complement.

transitive Verb that requires a direct object to complete its meaning.

voice The relationship of subject and verb.

active voice Verb form indicating that the subject performs the action expressed by the verb.

passive voice Verb form indicating that the subject of the sentence receives the action expressed by the verb; always indentified by a “to be” verb plus a past participle.

W

white space Graphic design concept: blank space on the page that functions to draw attention to certain parts of the page, to make it easier on the eyes to read, to signal a new section, or to provide presentational balance.

word spacing Amount of space between words. Used in order to achieve right justification, or get rid of run-on vertical space.

X

x-height Size of a letter without its descender or ascender, or the equivalent to the x in the alphabet.

Y

yearly Done or occurring once per year.

Z

zone An area having particular features, properties, or use.

Chapter 12: Appendices – Editing Checklists

[Appendix A: Copy Editing Checklist](#)

[Appendix B: Comprehensive Editing Checklist](#)

[Appendix C: Proofreading Checklist](#)
