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Writing guides

**NICE style guide**

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NICE style guide

In our everyday work, we all write for NICE. We might be replying to an email, making an announcement to colleagues, drafting a job description, compiling a report for a committee, or preparing recommendations for publication. To make our writing clear and concise we follow these principles:

* **Use plain English.** Use [everyday words](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/e#everyday-words). Avoid [abbreviations](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/a#abbreviations) and turning [verbs into nouns](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/v#verbs-to-nouns). Remember to set your spellcheck to UK (not US) [spelling](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#spelling).
* **Be concise.** Keep [sentences short](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#sentences). Write [active sentences](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/a#active-sentences).
* **Think about our readers.** Refer to [people not patients](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#patients). Use [person-centred language](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/pperson-centred-language). Remember to consider [equality issues](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/e#equality-and-diversity-terms) when you write.
* **Keep formatting simple.** Keep [footnotes](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/f#footnotes) to a minimum and provide [hyperlinks](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#hyperlinks) to useful information. Write [numbers](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#numbers), [units](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/u#units) and [symbols](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#symbols) consistently. See [NICE templates and formatting guide](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-templates-and-formatting-guide-wg3) for more information.

Use the A–Z list to search for the term or style point you are looking for. Alternatively, you can also download a PDF of the file and search the text by using 'Ctrl' + 'F'.

If you can't find what you are looking for, check <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>. If you still need advice email Jaimella Espley ([jaimella.espley@nice.org.uk](http://mailto:jaimella.espley@nice.org.uk/)). The style guide is an evolving product, and we welcome any feedback or comments you may have to help us further improve it!

**Useful websites**

Dictionary: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>

Thesaurus: <http://www.visuwords.com/>

British national formulary: <http://www.bnf.org/bnf/index.htm>

Summaries of product characteristics: <http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/>

Standard units: <http://physics.nist.gov/cuu/Units/>

A

A&E

A&E is for life-threatening emergencies, and a lot of work is being done to make sure people do not go there unless they need to (for example the [Meet Jo](http://www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/meet-joe.aspx) video). Bear this in mind when you write. You may want to use 'service providing emergency or urgent care' instead, which includes urgent care centres, minor injury units, NHS walk-in centres and even GP out of hours services.

A large number of

Do not use. Use: many, a lot of, lots of.

Abbreviations

Avoid using abbreviations. Only use them if the abbreviation is more commonly used than the full text.

If you must use them, define abbreviations the first time they are used. Remember that digital products might not be read sequentially and readers may just jump to the section they are interested in, so it is best to define terms in every section. For documents in the web viewer, this means defining terms under each H1 heading level. For pathways define terms in every reading pane. The glossary function in the web viewer and pathways can be useful for defining abbreviations, and you can also link to the terms in the [NICE glossary](http://www.nice.org.uk/glossary).

If you are writing for the public, simply putting the abbreviation in brackets after the full version may not be enough – think about adding a phrase such as 'which is usually shortened to …'.

The following do not need to be spelt out: AIDS, BMI, CT, DNA, GP, HIV, IgA, IgD, IgG and IgM (immunoglobulins A, D, G and M), MRI, NHS, UK, US, USA, USB and UV.

Don't use abbreviations of NICE-specific terms (for example, use technology appraisal, Guideline Committee, appraisal consultation document, and final appraisal determination, rather than TA, GC, ACD and FAD).

Do not put capital letters into the words from which an abbreviation is derived simply to indicate the letters that have been used to construct the abbreviation: for example, write multiple sclerosis (MS), not Multiple Sclerosis (MS).

Do not repeat words that are already included in the abbreviation (for example, the human immunodeficiency virus should be called HIV, not the HIV virus).

Abbreviations used in a table should be defined in a table footnote. See [tables](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/t#tables) and [footnotes](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/f#footnotes) for more information.

Lower-case abbreviations are rarely used, but they should have full stops (for example, e.g. and i.e.). See [e.g.](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/e#eg) and [i.e.](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/i#ie) for information on using these abbreviations.

Abuse

Do not use if 'misuse' will do; for example, 'substance misuse'.

Access

Be careful when using this word because it could be ambiguous – does it mean availability of services, eligibility for referral, geographical location or transport? Make sure that the meaning is clear to your reader.

Accordingly

Do not use. Use: so, therefore.

Active sentences

We aim to write active sentences. In active sentences, the subject is the person or thing performing the action, for example:

'Stephen (subject) watched TV.'

We try to avoid passive sentences. In passive sentences the subject is the person or thing that undergoes the action. Part of the verb 'to be' is usually introduced (am, are, is, was, were, being, been, have been, has been), for example:

'The TV (subject) was watched by Stephen.'

You can often change a passive sentence to an active one simply by changing the word order, and removing 'by' and 'to be', for example:

'Smokers **will be helped** to quit their habit **by** pharmacists' (passive)

'Pharmacists will help smokers quit the habit' (active)

Passive sentences are fine to use occasionally, as long as the meaning is clear. The passive can be useful if it is not clear who is doing the action, if rewording it would make the sentence longer, or if it simply sounds better, for example:

'All patients should be offered an assessment' (passive)

For more information see [Writing for NICE](http://publications.nice.org.uk/wg2).

Addresses

Set out addresses line by line with no punctuation.

When listing job titles, affiliations and locations for Guideline Development Group or committee members in NICE guidance (such as the NICE version of a clinical guideline), put the address on 1 line using punctuation to save space.

Use 'Tel:', 'Fax:', 'Email:'. Don't add international dialling codes unless your document is for an international audience.

Use non-breaking spaces ('Ctrl + Shift + Space') in phone and fax numbers to separate the code from the number and different parts of the number: for example, 020 7067 5800; 01308 867896.

Adverse event, adverse effect, adverse reaction or side effect

An **adverse effect** or **adverse reaction** is an unwanted or harmful reaction experienced by a person after the administration of a drug(s), or after having any other treatment or intervention, which is suspected to be related to, or caused by, the drug, treatment or intervention.

An **adverse effect** is seen from the point of view of the intervention, whereas an **adverse reaction** is seen from the point of view of the patient. In other words, the drug or intervention causes an effect, whereas the patient has a reaction.

Causality is the key differentiating feature from adverse event.

An **adverse event** is any undesirable event experienced by a person while they are taking a drug(s), or having any other treatment or intervention, regardless of whether or not the event is suspected to be related to or caused by the drug, treatment or intervention.

All of these terms apply to drugs, treatments or interventions that have been used under normal conditions (that is, the drug, treatment or intervention has been given as intended and there has not been an overdose or poisoning).

Be cautious when changing these terms; if the document you are working on is providing data from clinical trials, it is better to be consistent with the terminology used in the source clinical trial papers rather that inadvertently attribute causality.

**Side effect** is most often used in information for the public. A side effect relates specifically to any unwanted consequence (harmful or not) caused by a drug, or other treatment or intervention (when given as intended). It just means an effect of the drug (or treatment or intervention) that is additional to the main intended effect.  It could be good, bad, or neutral, and that might depend on the circumstances.  For example, a 'side effect' of an antidepressant might be drowsiness.  If a person with depression has problems sleeping, that could be a beneficial effect. If they are trying to drive, it isn't!

Adviser

Not 'advisor'.

Affect and effect

The verb 'to affect' means to influence something or to adopt a certain manner or pose. The verb 'to effect' means to accomplish something. As a noun, you would usually want 'effect' ('affect' has a narrow meaning relating to emotional states). The following are correct:

* They investigated the effects of dietary interventions alone in patients who had had a myocardial infarction.
* They investigated how dietary interventions affected the rate of myocardial infarction.

African-Caribbean

Not 'Afro-Caribbean'.

Age

Avoid language that stereotypes older people as mentally or physically enfeebled or that implies younger people are any more or less deserving or significant than others.

Use 'older people' rather than 'the elderly', 'old people', 'pensioners', 'senior citizens' or 'the aged'. If older age is a risk factor for a condition, for example, quantify it if possible and say 'people over x'.

Specify whether the age is in months or years, and use 'older' and 'younger' or 'over' and 'under' rather than 'greater' and 'less': for example, 'people older than 60 years' or 'children younger than 11 months' or 'over-65s'.

In documents for the public, months or years do not need to be specified unless the text would be unclear without them: for example, if you are talking about vaccinating young children, you should specify that it takes place at 18 months and 3 years.

In guidance, there will usually be definitions of terms (including age ranges) such as 'neonates', 'infants', 'children' and 'young people'. If these terms are used, make sure that they are defined in each piece of guidance and that they are consistent throughout the document and in all versions of the guidance.

For general documents, use 'children' for those of primary school age, 'young people' rather than teenagers or adolescents, 'young adults' for people aged 18–25 years, and 'students' rather than pupils for those in education beyond primary school.

Don't use 'the age of' or '… years of age' or '… years old'.

See also [equality and diversity terms](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/e#equality-and-diversity-terms).

Aged

Do not use. Use 'older people'. The UN agreed cut-off is 60+ years to refer to the older population.

Ageing

Not 'aging'.

AIDS

A patient with HIV infection is said to have AIDS when serious illnesses become apparent. AIDS may also be referred to as late-stage or advanced HIV – make sure you use the same definition throughout your document.

People are infected with, and transmit, HIV, not AIDS.

The test is an HIV antibody test, not an AIDS test.

Note that HIV and AIDS do not need to be spelt out.

See also [HIV](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#hiv).

Alcoholic

Do not use. In line with our house style, we do not label people. Use 'people who are dependent on alcohol'.

Alfa

Use 'alpha' unless the British Approved Name (BAN) as listed in the most recent edition of the [British national formulary](http://bnf.org/) (BNF) is spelt 'alfa', for example interferon alfa. See also [Greek letters](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#greek-letters).

Alleviate

Do not use. Use: ease, reduce, lessen.

Alongside

One word, no hyphen.

Alpha

Use 'alpha', for example TNF-alpha inhibitor, unless the British Approved Name (BAN) as listed in the most recent edition of the [British national formulary](http://bnf.org/) (BNF) is spelt 'alfa', for example interferon alfa. See also [Greek letters](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#greek-letters).

Alternate

'Alternate' means 'by turns' – 'day alternates with night'.

Alternative

An 'alternative' is a choice (strictly you should have only 2 alternatives, but most authorities are now more relaxed about this).

Although

See [while, although and whereas](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/w#while-although-and-whereas).

America

Do not use. Use the abbreviation 'USA' (you don't need to spell it out).

Note that North America is the USA, Canada and Mexico.

Among and between

Traditionally 'between' is used if you're writing about 2 items, and 'among' for more than 2. But, this is not an absolute rule, and sometimes 'among' would not make sense. For example, 'I dropped it somewhere between here, the desk and the door'. You should also use 'between' for more than 2 items if you are talking about the joint activities of a group: 'The 4 people ate 3 cakes between them'.

A choice is between 1 thing 'and' another. Not 1 thing 'or' another.

Amongst

Do not use. Use 'among'.

Ampersand (&)

Only use if it forms part of a company name (for example, Marks & Spencer).

And and but

It is acceptable to start a sentence with a conjunction (words such as 'and' and 'but'). This can be a useful way of breaking up a long sentence without losing the link between related ideas, and can also help to add emphasis. But it is a device that should not be overused.

And/or

Do not use 'and/or'– it is ambiguous and often misinterpreted. It is usually possible (and more accurate) to use 'or' instead.

Annex

Do not use if referring to supplementary material at the end of a document, use 'appendix' (plural appendices).

Antiarrhythmic

Not 'anti-arrhythmic'.

Antibodies

IgA, IgD, IgG and IgM are immunoglobulins A, D, G and M; the abbreviations don't need to be defined. For subgroups, use the style IgG1 (number on the line, not subscript).

Anticancer

Not 'anti-cancer'.

Anticholinergic

Not 'anti-cholinergic'.

Antidepressant

Not 'anti-depressant'.

Anti-epileptic

Not 'antiepileptic'.

Antihistamine

Not 'anti-histamine'.

Anti-inflammatory

Not 'antiinflammatory'.

Antipsychotic

Not 'anti-psychotic'.

Antisocial behaviour

Use this term instead if 'delinquent behaviour'.

Anti-tumour

Not 'antitumour'.

Apostrophe

The apostrophe is usually used to indicate possession. For a singular noun the apostrophe should be before the 's'; for plurals it usually comes after the 's'. For words that are themselves plural – such as 'women' or 'children' – the 's' indicates only the possessive, not the plural, so the apostrophe goes before the 's'. For example:

* the baby's heart rate (1 baby)
* the babies' heart rates (more than 1 baby)
* the patient's opinion (1 patient)
* the patients' opinion (more than 1 patient, but 1 opinion)
* the patients' opinions (more than 1 patient with more than 1 opinion)
* the children's favourite playground (more than 1 child).

The exceptions are:

* its – like 'his', this is already possessive, so there's no need to add an apostrophe ('They saw its footprints')
* it's – contraction of 'it is' ('It's a lion!')
* personal names if the end of the person's name is pronounced 'iz'; for example, 'Mr Bridges' car would not start, but Mr Jones's motorbike was fine'.

Use an apostrophe for '3 months' treatment with X'.

Names of committees, councils and other organisations usually don't have apostrophes, but you should check for each organisation. For example:

* the General Practitioners Committee (not the General Practitioners' Committee)
* the Partners Council (not the Partners' Council, and definitely not the Partner's Council)
* the Citizens Council (not the Citizens' Council or the Citizen's Council)
* the King's Fund
* National Collaborating Centre for Women's and Children's Health.

If something 'belongs' to more than 1 person or group, add the apostrophe after the last noun. So, you'd have 'Dallaglio and Perry's tries were spectacular …', 'Ensure you consider patients and carers' needs'. The National Collaborating Centre for Women's and Children's Health is an exception to this rule!

Apostrophes should not be used to indicate a plural: for example 'The procedure became common in the 1990s' (not the 1990's) or 'In January we wrote 6 ACDs' (not ACD's).

Use an apostrophe to keep sentences brief and to the point. For example instead of 'The recommendations in the guideline' use 'The guideline's recommendations'. For more information see [contractions](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/c#contractions).

As and because

Use 'as' when you mean 'at the same time' and 'because' when giving reasons:

* As I was going up the stair, I met a man who wasn't there.
* Because I am allergic to cats, I don't keep a cat as a pet.

Asian

This can mean people from the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, or the Far East. Explain what you mean when using this term. It is likely to be interpreted differently by different readers. See also [black, Asian and minority ethnic groups](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-groups).

Asylum seekers

Do not group with 'refugees'.

At the time that

Do not use. Use 'when'.

At this moment in time

Do not use. Use 'now'.

Attempt

Do not use. Use 'try'.

Audience

Consider your audience in terms of their language and information needs, how and why they may be accessing the content and how much time they may have to read it.

Your audience may be using a monitor or a hand-held device to view your content. Think about the implications this may have for layout and language.

Do not write as if the page will be printed out, unless your audience has specifically stated that they do not read on screen.

Your primary audience's first language may well be English, but there will be people reading your content whose first language is not English and their technological access may vary too. Keep it short and simple and use plain English.

B

Bacteria (names of)

See [organisms (names of)](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/o#organisations-names-of).

Base case

Base case (noun); base-case (adjective).

Base-line

Do not hyphenate. Use 'baseline'.

Baseline

Do not hyphenate.

B cell

Hyphenate when used adjectivally; for example, 'B-cell activation'. But, if you are talking about 'the patient's B cells', do not hyphenate.

Because and as

Use 'as' when you mean 'at the same time' and 'because' when giving reasons:

* As I was going up the stair, I met a man who wasn't there.
* Because I am allergic to cats, I don't keep a cat as a pet.

Behind schedule

Do not use. Use 'late'.

Belief or religion

Be specific when referring to different faiths. The customs and practices associated with particular beliefs should be taken into account but avoid stereotyping or making assumptions.

Try to use neutral language. For example, use the term 'forename' or 'first name' rather than 'Christian name'.

See also [faith groups](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/f#faith-groups).

Beta-blocker

Not 'betablocker'.

Between and among

Traditionally 'between' is used if you're writing about 2 items, and 'among' for more than 2. But, this is not an absolute rule, and sometimes 'among' would not make sense. For example, 'I dropped it somewhere between here, the desk and the door'. You should also use 'between' for more than 2 items if you are talking about the joint activities of a group: 'The 4 people ate 3 cakes between them'.

A choice is between 1 thing 'and' another. Not 1 thing 'or' another.

b.i.d.

Do not use. Use 'twice daily'.

Bisexual

Do not use the initials LGB (lesbian, gay and bisexual).

See for example the DH guide (2009) [Sexual orientation: a practical guide for the NHS](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130107105354/http%3A/www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_095634).

Some organisations and networks refer to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender).

Black

Do not use an initial capital letter for 'black'. Using 'black' to describe people can be very misleading. Think carefully before you use it and ensure that it is very clear which group of people you are referring to.

If possible, use ethnicity or cultural background rather than skin colour when describing someone.

If skin colour is referred to, use 'black' (no initial capital) as an adjective (for example, black children). Don't use 'blacks' or 'non-white'.

If race is a proxy or clear indicator for a likely health outcome, then this is the preferred descriptor. For example, some research shows prostate cancer outcomes are different for men of African and Caribbean family origin, so to refer to 'black men' in this instance would not be helpful.

For more information, see [skin colour](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#skin-colour).

Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups

'Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups' is used as an umbrella term to denote people in the UK who are not part of the white majority, may face discrimination because of their ethnicity, or have needs or values specific to their ethnic background which may differ from the white majority. Use it only when naming specific subgroups is not appropriate.

This term has replaced 'black and minority ethnic groups' in some circles in recognition of the large minority Asian population.

Do not use the abbreviation 'BAME'. If it is necessary to refer to a group, use 'minority ethnic group' or 'black, Asian and minority ethnic groups' rather than 'ethnic minority'.

Blind people

Do not use. Also do not use 'the blind'. In line with our house style, we do not label people. Use 'people with a visual impairment'.

BME/BAME

Do not use. Use [black, Asian and minority ethnic groups](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-groups).

BMI

Use kg/m2 when giving BMI values. You do not need to define BMI as 'body mass index'.

Bold

Using bold can make the page easier to scan if it is used sparingly to highlight key words and phrases. Do not make whole sentences or paragraphs bold.

Both

Use 'both' only if you are discussing 2 things:

Incorrect: 'Audit groups often underestimate the resources needed, in terms of both finance, project management and administrative support.'

Correct: 'Audit groups often underestimate the resources needed, in terms of both project management and administrative support.'

When using 'both' place it immediately before the 2 things you are discussing. For example, you would not say '… both in terms of project management and administrative support', but you would say '… in terms of both project management and administrative support'.

Boxes

See [diagrams and images](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#diagrams-and-images).

Brackets

Use curved brackets (…). Avoid using multiple brackets if possible. If you have to nest brackets, use them in this order: ( [ { } ] ).

Do not put 2 sets of brackets next to each other, for example: '(optional) (PICOT) system is utilised'. Instead use 1 set of brackets and use other punctuation such as commas, semi-colons or dashes to separate the text, for example '(PICOT; timeframe is optional)'.

This is often necessary with confidence intervals. For example, '(trial 1: adjusted hazard ratio 0.77, 95% confidence interval [CI] 0.64 to 0.92)'.

Check the punctuation inside brackets. If the brackets enclose text within a sentence, the closing full stop must be outside the bracket (as in this example).

(But if the bracket encloses a full sentence, the full stop is inside the bracket.)

Brand names

You should usually only use the generic name of a drug. Use the British Approved Name (BAN) as listed in the most recent edition of the [British national formulary](http://bnf.org/) (BNF).

If necessary (for example, in technology appraisals or if the same drug is produced by different manufacturers and you need to distinguish between the different brands of drug), you can give the brand (proprietary) name and the manufacturer's name at the first mention of the drug. Give the generic name first, followed by the brand name and the manufacturer in brackets. For example, fludarabine phosphate (Fludara, Schering Health); rivastigmine (Exelon, Novartis).

Brand names have an initial capital, but do not use a ™ or ® mark.

If you need to refer to a class of drugs (for example, anticholinergics), it is acceptable to use either 'anticholinergics' or 'anticholinergic drugs', but make sure 1 style is used consistently throughout a document.

See also medicines.

Breastfeeding

Not 'breast-feeding'.

Britain

Do not use 'Britain' to mean England and Wales – write 'England and Wales'. Note also that:

* the UK is England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
* Great Britain is England, Scotland and Wales.

Do not spell out UK.

Bullet points

Use bullet points to split lengthy text into manageable chunks.

Do not use more than 2 levels of bullets if possible. The style is:

* Bullet left 1
	+ bullet left 2.

Use the bullet styles specified and already set up in the NICE template you are using (see [NICE templates and formatting guide](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-templates-and-formatting-guide-wg3) for more information). Remember to choose the 'Bullet last' style for the final bullet in your list.

A **short-entry list** is introduced with a colon, and the bulleted items:

* start with a lower-case letter
* contain items with only a few words
* usually run on from the lead-in line (unless phrases such as 'all of' or 'any of' are added to the lead-in line)
* never have a new sentence starting within them
* have a full stop at the end of the last item only.

Make sure that **every** item in the list follows on from the introduction in the same way.

The characteristics of **long-entry lists** are as follows:

* Each entry usually consists of at least 1 complete sentence and ends with a full stop. But, you can also use the long-entry list style if you have a list in which the items are long but aren't complete sentences.
* The lead-in line can be a sentence or part of a sentence, and it should always end with a colon. Bullets do not have to run on from the lead-in line.
* Long-entry lists do not necessarily need a lead-in line; the bullets can stand alone.

Do not assign numbers or letters to list items unless you want to indicate a hierarchy, or the numbers or letters form part of a specific grading system.

If you are dealing with very explicit lists, such as inclusion/exclusion criteria, it may be necessary to add words that link the list items.

In some lists (such as criteria for offering a particular treatment, or several treatments that should be offered), it is essential to know whether all or only some of the bullet points apply. You can do this by adding phrases such as 'all of' or 'any of' to the lead-in line. In this case it isn't necessary for the bullets to run on directly from the lead-in line, even in the short-entry list style. For example:

Consider a person to be at high cardiovascular risk for his or her age unless they have all of these features:

* not overweight
* normotensive (below 140/80 mmHg without antihypertensive therapy)
* no microalbuminaemia
* does not smoke
* lipid profile not high risk
* no personal or family history of cardiovascular disease.

An alternative for short-entry lists with a small number of items is to use 'and' and 'or'. These words should be in bold, on the same line as the preceding bullet point, and with no comma. For example:

The criteria for inclusion in the study were:

* older than 16 years **and**
* history of situation-related seizures:
	+ febrile convulsions **or**
	+ seizures related to other situations such as alcohol withdrawal **and**
* current management with at least 2 anti-epileptic agents.

But and and

It is acceptable to start a sentence with a conjunction (words such as 'and' and 'but'). This can be a useful way of breaking up a long sentence without losing the link between related ideas, and can also help to add emphasis. But it is a device that should not be overused.

C

Campaigns or projects

Titles of projects or campaigns should be given initial capitals: Active for Life, No Smoking Day.

See [capital letters](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/c#capital-letters) for more information.

Can and may

'Can' should be used for things that are possible. 'May' is used for what is permissible. So, to say 'sildenafil cannot be used in women' is incorrect because women are physically capable of swallowing a sildenafil tablet.

Can't

See [contractions](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/c#contractions).

Capital letters

Use initial capitals for proper names (for example, Down's syndrome, Munchausen's syndrome, Parkinson's disease, Mann–Whitney test, Apgar score). But use lower case for adjectival forms: caesarean, darwinian, parkinsonian.

Do not use capitals for words that derive from a proper name but that have passed into common use (for example, braille, doppler, gram stain, biro, hoover).

The term 'white paper' does not need capitals because it is a generic document.

Do not use initial capitals for disease names (except at the beginning of a sentence) unless the name is derived from a proper noun such as a person's name (for example, multiple sclerosis or motor neurone disease, compared with Hodgkin's disease or Crohn's disease).

Use capital letters for job titles only in committee and development group lists, or if referring to a specific person in the same sentence. For example: 'All senior medical editors attend meetings occasionally, Editorial Adviser Ann Horrell said'.

Do not use initial capitals to indicate the letters that have been used to form an abbreviation or for emphasis:

* Correct: People with multiple sclerosis (MS) …
* Incorrect: People with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) …

Do not use initial capitals for 'black' or 'white'. Do use them for ethnic group names based on the name of a country or continent (for example, Chinese, European).

Use an initial capital when referring to a specific organisation or body, but not when referring generally to a type of organisation. Departments in an organisation do not usually take initial capitals. For example, you should write:

* a circular from the Department of Health …
* Mr Barton, who represented Liverpool Health Authority, said that most health authorities were keen to play an active role in the initiative.
* The procedure is illegal in 12 US states but was legalised in the State of Georgia in 1998.
* Local protocols have been developed by trusts. Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust was one of the first.
* You can get that from the purchasing department.

However, we do use initial capitals when referring to NICE directorates (for example, the Centre for Health Technology Evaluation, and the Centre for Clinical Practice). See also [NICE bodies](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#nice-bodies) for more information.

When referring to seasons, use capitals for specific seasons and lower case for general references:

* The guidance will be launched in Spring 2009.
* Flu is more common in the winter.
* We are holding a New Year party.
* The document will be released early in the new year.

North, south, east and west should all be lower case (northern England, birds fly south for the winter) **unless** they form part of a proper name, for example, West Lambeth.

Case-control study

Hyphenate when used adjectivally.

Case mix

Not 'case-mix'.

Cases

'Cases' is not usually acceptable when referring to people or patients, but watch out for data that concern events rather than people (for example, cases of heart attack rather than people who have had a heart attack – 1 person may have had several heart attacks).

It is acceptable to use cases in disease prevalence: for example, 5.7 cases per 100,000.

Castration-resistant prostate cancer

Do not use. Use 'hormone relapsed prostate cancer' instead.

Casual workers

If you are specifically referring to people from other countries who are working in the UK, do not use 'casual workers' because this could refer to anybody. Use 'migrant workers'.

Caucasian

Do not use unless the person in question comes from the Caucus mountains of Georgia or Armenia. Use 'white'.

For more information on using terms such as 'white', see [white](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/w#white) and [skin colour](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#skin-colour).

Charts

See [diagrams and images](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#diagrams-and-images).

Checklist

One word.

Childcare

One word.

Children in care

Be careful you are using the correct term because you may mean 'looked-after children', which covers both those children in the care of the local authority and those accommodated on a voluntary basis.

'In care' has a very specific meaning and refers to children and young people who are placed in the care of the local authority under a court order, such as an interim or full care order.

Children may also be provided with accommodation on a voluntary basis for more than 24 hours and are then also called 'looked-after children (or young people)'. These terms always need to be explained when writing for a public audience.

See also [looked-after children and young people](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/l#looked-after-children-and-young-people).

Christian name

Do not use. Use 'first name' or 'forename'.

Class

Do not use. Refer to the person's socioeconomic status.

See the [Office for National Statistics](http://www.ons.gov.uk/) classification system for socioeconomic status. This is a description of a person's position in society using criteria such as their income, level of education achieved, occupation and value of the property they own.

Clinical trials

Use phase I, II, III or IV … (note: roman numerals, lower-case p) when describing phases in clinical trials.

Colon

Use a colon (:) to introduce bullet lists and lists within a sentence.

A colon may be used to separate 2 main clauses if the second complements the first:

* We had every right to protest: the repair was not performed properly.

A colon, without a space either side, is also used in a ratio:

* The ratio of men to women was 3:1.

Coming soon

Try to avoid using the words 'new' or 'coming soon' to promote new content because this looks out of date very quickly.

Comma

A comma is usually unnecessary before the 'and' or 'or' preceding the last item in a list. But, if the list is lengthy and complicated, or contains 'compound' items that include an 'and' or 'or', then a comma may help to avoid confusion, for example:

* The capsules come in green, red and blue, and blue.

There should be a comma before 'and', 'or' or 'but' linking 2 main clauses in a sentence if each clause could be a complete sentence on its own (but consider whether the 2 clauses would be clearer as separate sentences). The following examples show **correct** usage:

* We visited the department, and the manager was pleased to see us.
* The GP wrote to the hospital, but the letter was lost in the post.
* I could go after work on Wednesday, or you could go on Saturday morning.

Don't use a comma if the 2 clauses have the same subject, as in the following examples:

* We visited the department and spoke to the manager.
* The GP wrote to the hospital and telephoned a social worker.
* I could phone on Wednesday evening or visit on Saturday morning.

Commas may be used either side of 'extra' information that is not crucial to the sense of the sentence (known as a non-defining clause), in the way that you might use brackets:

* The Director, who was on his way to a meeting, heard the news on the radio.

You shouldn't use a comma before information that is needed to clarify the subject of your sentence (known as a defining clause):

* The dog that had found a bone ignored its owner's calls. (The meaning here is that the other dogs came when they were called, but the dog with the bone did not.)

Similarly, you should not use a comma before 'respectively' (see [respectively](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/r#respectively)).

See also [that and which](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/t#that-and-which) in this style guide for more information on using commas with these terms.

Commence

Do not use. Use: start, begin.

Committees

Use initial capitals for committee names, for example Guideline Development Group or Public Health Advisory Committee. Avoid abbreviations such as GC or PHAC. To avoid repetition, consider using the full name the first time you mention the committee then referring to it as the 'Group' or 'Committee' thereafter.

For information about listing job titles of members of committees, see [job titles](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/j#job-titles).

Comorbidity

Not 'co-morbidity'.

Companies (names of)

See [capital letters](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/c#capital-letters) for more information.

Compare with and compare to

Use 'compare with' if you're comparing the similarities or differences between items. For example, 'Compared with his last marathon, the London to Brighton bike ride was a piece of cake.'

Use 'compare to' if you are likening 2 things. For example, 'she compared the taste to that of saccharin' would mean she thought it tasted like saccharin.

Usually you'll need 'compare with'.

Often 'than' can be a good, plain English alternative to 'compared with'. For example instead of 'adverse events were more common with A compared with B' you could say 'adverse events were more common with A than with B'. Or instead of 'in the second phase, patients in both treatment groups had an increased event risk compared with their event risk in the first phase' you could say 'patients in both treatment groups had a higher event risk in the second phase than in the first phase'.

Complements

This means things that go together, something that completes. Whereas 'compliments' is an expression of praise.

Complete (verb)

Do not use. Use: fill in, finish, end.

Comprised

Do not use 'comprised of'. Use either 'comprised' or 'consisted of':

* 'The team consisted of experts from all the relevant fields'
* 'The manual comprised 3 sections'.

Computer-related terms

When referring to software, give both the name of the program and the company, both with an initial capital: for example, Adobe Acrobat, Microsoft Excel. Note that some have additional internal capitals, for example PowerPoint, JavaScript, RealPlayer. Do not include ® and ™.

Terms that are formed from initial letters (HTML, URL, PDF, CD-ROM) should be given entirely in upper case, but most terms are lower case: for example, e-commerce (not E-commerce), email, intranet, web page. The exceptions are Internet, Net and World Wide Web, which should have initial capitals.

Note the spelling of computer program, and computer disk.

Confidence intervals

The abbreviation CI can be used if defined at first mention.

Use 'to' rather than a hyphen or an en dash, unless there is insufficient space in a table or figure. If a confidence interval contains a negative number you should always use 'to' to avoid confusion.

* 95% confidence interval 78 to 87
* 95% CI –6 to 9.

Confidentiality

Commercial-in-confidence data should be highlighted or underlined (for details, see the individual programme methods manuals).

Consequently

Do not use. Use 'so'.

Continual and continuous

Continual means something that happens frequently but not constantly.

Continuous describes something that happens without a break or interruption.

Contractions

Abbreviations in which the last letter of the word is also the last letter of the abbreviation – do not take full stops (Dr, Mr).

Use contractions such as 'can't' and 'don't', especially in information for the public. Avoid ugly contractions that are hard to read such as 'they've'.

Contraindication

Not 'contra-indication'.

Note: a drug, not a person, is contraindicated.

Contrast

Use 'by contrast' instead of 'in contrast' unless it is in contrast to a specific thing.

Cooperate

Not 'co-operate'.

Co-opt/co-optees

Not 'coopt' or 'cooptees'.

Coordinate

Not 'co-ordinate'.

Copyright

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Cost–benefit analysis

Use an en dash, rather than a hyphen.

Cost–consequence analysis

Use an en dash, rather than a hyphen.

Cost effectiveness

Only hyphenate when used as an adjective – for example, the cost-effectiveness analysis.

Cost–utility analysis

Use an en dash, rather than a hyphen.

Cow's milk

Not 'cows' milk'.

Crossover

One word.

Cross references

Do not add page cross-references because they will vary in different formats. Use a description that won't change if the page numbering changes – for example, a heading name.

Cytological

Not 'cytologic'.

D

Data

Data should take a plural verb – 'These data indicate … ' or 'these data were … '.

Dates

Use the UK format of day month year (4 September 2008; Tuesday 4 September 2008; 4/9/2008). For most documents, use the 4 September 2008 format (4/9/2008 format may be used in tables). Do not use the style 4th September.

Use the names (rather than numbers) of months if possible to avoid confusion (4 September 2008). When reading documents by US authors be aware that they are probably using the US format of month/day/year (9/4/08 for 4 September 2008).

For non-calendar years, such as financial years, use an oblique rather than a hyphen or en dash; use 2 digits for the second year: for example, the financial year 2008/09.

Deaf

Please think carefully before using this term. The [National Deaf Children's Society](http://www.ndcs.org.uk/)(NDCS) website has the following definitions:

'deaf'

The NDCS uses the word 'deaf' to mean any range of hearing loss. This can be used as general term to describe people over the whole range of hearing loss.

'Deaf'

With a capital D, this usually refers to people who may consider themselves to be members of the Deaf community and to be part of a cultural or linguistic minority. Most members of the Deaf community will use British Sign Language as their first or preferred language.

These terms are not interchangeable. Depending on the degree of hearing loss in the people you are describing, you may also need to consider whether 'people with hearing loss' or 'people with a hearing impairment' may be more appropriate.

Do not use 'the deaf'.

Decimal places

The number of decimal places indicates the precision of measurement and how this was reported in the source data. So, when discussing evidence, give the same number of decimal places as in the original publication (such as a published paper, or an assessment report for a technology appraisal).

In recommendations and general discussion, the number of decimal places given may be reduced by rounding up or down as appropriate.

It is good practice to give the same number of decimal places for different values of a variable throughout a document (such as a drug dose, time, quality-adjusted life year, odds ratio).

Beware of giving a misleading impression of accuracy by including too many decimal places, particularly when converting between currencies, or between imperial and metric measurements. Round up or down to the nearest whole number. For example: The cost of the surgery is about $10,000 (£6700.23) – amend to read £6700.

Decision-making

Always hyphenate, whether noun or adjective.

Degree symbol

The degree symbol (12°C) is closed up to the number. Do not use a superscript letter 'o'.

Demonstrate

Do not use. Use 'show'.

Dependant and dependent

'Dependant' is the noun (for example, a child is a dependant); something that depends on something else is 'dependent' on it.

Diabetic

Do not use. In line with our house style, we do not label people. Use 'people with diabetes'.

Diagrams and images

This section covers diagrams (including boxes, charts, figures, flow charts, graphs and other line drawings) and images (photos, logos and icons) used to illustrate documents uploaded by the publishing team into the web viewer. The web viewer is a system used to publish guidance and other related documents such as information for the public and methods manuals to the website.

If you want advice on other types of documents that will be uploaded onto the NICE website and intranet contact the [Web team.](http://intranet.nice.org.uk/NICEAndNicePeople/CentresDirectorates/communications/WebTeam.cfm)

This section covers documents uploaded by the publishing team to the web viewer (for example, guidance, methods manuals, information for the public).

General advice

For diagrams use as little text as possible, and make it as large a font size as the space in your design will allow. Use Arial font.

In labels, titles and text entries, use a capital letter for the first word and proper nouns only. Do not add a full stop at the end.

Ensure that the title or caption adequately explains the image: a reader should be able to understand the image, box or figure without trawling back through the text, but avoid adding too much detail in the title or caption. Define all abbreviations used in the caption unless the abbreviation has been used many times in the text. Order abbreviation definitions alphabetically.

Number images by type sequentially throughout a document, for example: Figure 1, Box 1, Box 2, Figure 2. If the document is long and has numbered chapters or sections, number the figures according to the chapter/section in which they appear (for example, 4 figures in chapter 5 could be numbered 5.1–5.4).

If you are cross-referencing to an image, you don't need an initial capital, for example 'table 1' or 'figure 1'.

Avoid using tinted backgrounds for text. If a tinted background is needed, use a light grey that the text stands out against.

Do not put the diagram inside a frame or drawing.

If your documents (for example, guidance) will be published in the web viewer by the publishing team, use diagrams and other images only if they present information in a way that is easier to grasp or more concise than words or tables. Talk to the publishing team about your plans for including images and diagrams as early as you can, so they can advise you. Do not use images just to make the page more interesting or break up the text.

Boxes and figures

Boxes have titles above. Figures have captions below.

Examples of a box title:

**Box 1 Examinations that should be included at the annual check-up**

Example of a figure caption and definitions of abbreviations (note abbreviation definitions are in alphabetical order):

**Figure 3 The probable sites of action of drugs used to manage anxiety**

MAOI, monoamine oxidase inhibitor; RIMA, reversible inhibitor of monoamine oxidase; SSRI, selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitor

Diagrams

Diagrams will appear at lower quality on the web viewer than in the program you draw them in. Text in small font sizes and complicated graphics can be illegible in the web viewer, so it is particularly important to follow the general advice section above.

If possible, supply the original drawing (for example, in PowerPoint), rather than converting to .jpg or other formats.

Figures

See 'boxes and figures' above.

Images

Images must be in .jpg or .png format. Use a high-resolution image if you can. If you have sourced the image from someone else, ask them if they can provide a high-resolution version.

File size

Diagram and image files should be just under 1 megabyte in size to avoid slowing the web viewer down on computers with slower internet connections, but if the image is larger then ask James Hall ([james.hall@nice.org.uk](http://mailto:james.hall@nice.org.uk/)) to reduce its size.

Dietitian

Not 'dietician'.

Different from

Not 'different to' or 'different than'.

Disabilities

Use 'disability' rather than pejorative terms such as 'defect'.

Don't imply that people with a disability have a problem, are less fortunate or unhappy.

People should not be defined in terms of their disability or impairment. We should separate the person from the condition. So we would say: 'people with a visual impairment'.

For possible exceptions to our non-labelling policy see [deaf](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#deaf) and [disabled people](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#disabled-people).

See also [learning disability or learning difficulty](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/l#learning-disability-or-learning-difficulty).

Disabled people

Not 'people with disabilities'. This is in line with the Equality Act 2010.

See the [Disability Discrimination Act](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG_4001068).

Disadvantaged

Please think carefully before using this term. We avoid labelling people and putting people into groups and terms such as 'disadvantaged' are often used to group lots of very different people together. It will be clearer for the reader if you spell out the groups of people you are referring to. If this is becoming repetitive, seek advice from an editor. If you must use 'disadvantaged' do so sparingly and remember that it could be seen by your readers as a value judgement, implying the fault is with the people not the services.

Disc

Use 'disc' for everything other than a computer 'disk'.

Discoloration

Not 'discolouration'.

Discontinue

Do not use. Use: end, cancel, stop.

Discuss

Avoid in information for the public. Use plainer terms such as 'talk about' instead.

Disease names

Do not use initial capitals for disease names (except at the beginning of a sentence) unless the name is derived from a proper noun such as a person's name (for example, multiple sclerosis or motor neurone disease, compared with Hodgkin's disease or Crohn's disease).

Use an en dash for names of diseases or syndromes that are formed from the names of 2 or more people (for example, Creutzfeld–Jakob disease and Guillain–Barré syndrome).

See [capital letters](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/c#capital-letters) for more information.

Disk

For computer disk; disc for everything else.

Doctor–patient interaction

Use an en dash, rather than a hyphen.

Don't

See [contractions](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/c#contractions).

Doppler

Do not capitalise – use 'doppler'.

Dosage

Dosage refers to the dose and frequency: the recommended dosage is 500 mg 3 times daily. 'Dose' refers to a single amount of a drug.

Use the style 0.5 ml/kg per hour. Do not use 0.5 ml/kg/hour.

Dose

Dose refers to the amount of drug: 'he took 500 mg paracetamol' (or paracetamol 500 mg). Compare with 'dosage', which refers to the dose and frequency: 500 mg 3 times daily.

Dose–effect response

Use an en dash, rather than a hyphen.

Dose–response study

Use an en dash, rather than a hyphen.

Drug names

Use the British Approved Name (BAN) as listed in the most recent edition of the [British national formulary](http://bnf.org/) (BNF); this name is often referred to as the generic name.

If necessary (for example, in technology appraisals or if the same drug is produced by different manufacturers and you need to distinguish between the different brands of drug), you can give the brand (proprietary) name and the manufacturer's name at the first mention of the drug. Give the generic name first, followed by the brand name and the manufacturer in brackets. For example, fludarabine phosphate (Fludara, Schering Health); rivastigmine (Exelon, Novartis).

Generic names are in lower case, whereas brand names have an initial capital. Do not use a ™ or ® mark with a brand name.

If you need to refer to a class of drugs (for example, anticholinergics), it is acceptable to use either 'anticholinergics' or 'anticholinergic drugs', but make sure 1 style is used consistently throughout a document.

Drugs

See [medicines](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/m#medicines).

Drug user

Do not use. In line with our house style, we do not label people. Use 'people who take drugs'.

Dual diagnosis

Avoid this term. Instead explain what you mean, for example, people with a severe mental health problem and who use drugs or alcohol, or people with a mental health problem and a learning disability..

Due to

Don't use 'due to' when you mean 'because of'. When 'due to' is used after 'was' you can usually tell if it's being used wrongly by testing whether you can substitute 'caused by' for 'due to'. If you can't, change it to 'because'.

'Due' is an adjective (for example, 'Reply by the due date'). 'Due to' is also adjectival and so should modify a noun:

* Correct: 'The train is due to arrive at 14.10.' ('due to arrive at 14.10' is an adjectival phrase that describes the train)
* Incorrect: 'Due to leaves on the line, the train was late.'

E

e.g.

Many people are unsure about the difference between e.g. (for example) and i.e. (that is), so to avoid confusion it is generally best to use the English translated forms:

* The drug is available in several different forms (for example, you may be prescribed it as a patch that you apply to your upper arm, or you may have tablets).
* These are general recommendations for practice (that is, they will not be suitable for everyone with this condition).

You can also use 'such as' rather than 'for example'. Read the sentence and decide which term is best. In flow charts or tables when space is limited, it may be appropriate to use i.e. or e.g. (with full stops: ie and eg without full stops are incorrect), but you should consider carefully whether they will be understood by the intended reader.

East

North, south, east and west should all be lower case (northern England, birds fly south for the winter) unless they form part of a proper name, for example, West Lambeth.

ECG

Spell out electrocardiogram and abbreviate as ECG thereafter. Do not abbreviate electrocardiography to ECG.

Effect and affect

The verb 'to affect' means to influence something or to adopt a certain manner or pose. The verb 'to effect' means to accomplish something. As a noun, you would usually want 'effect' ('affect' has a narrow meaning relating to emotional states). The following are correct:

* They investigated the effects of dietary interventions alone in patients who had had a myocardial infarction.
* They investigated how dietary interventions affected the rate of myocardial infarction.

Elderly

Do not use. Use 'older people'. The UN agreed cut-off is 60+ years to refer to the older population.

Ellipses

Use … only to indicate an omission of words in a quotation. Create by using 'Ctrl + Alt + full stop' and add a space either side of the ellipsis.

If the ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence, add a full stop immediately after the ellipsis: ….

'… if the ellipsis comes at the start of a quotation, use 3 points and a space'. Do not use an initial capital for the first word (unless it is a name or proper noun).

Email

Begins with a lower-case e (unless starting a sentence).

Emphasis

Do not use italics or underlining for emphasis – try to add the emphasis in the wording, or use bold.

En dash

Use an en dash with no spaces each side (rather than a hyphen) for:

* ranges (the age range was 3–12 years)
* adjectival phrases in which the adjectives have equal weighting to indicate a relationship between the 2 words (for example, cost–utility analysis, case–control study, doctor–patient interaction, dose–effect response, or dose–response study)
* names that are formed from the names of 2 or more people (for example, Creutzfeld–Jakob disease, Guillain–Barré syndrome and Kaplan–Meier).

See [ranges](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/r#ranges) and [disease names](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#disease-names) for more information.

End point

Is 2 words.

Enquiry and inquiry

Use inquiry when you are referring to a formal investigation into something, for example the Leveson inquiry. Use 'enquiry' when you mean to 'ask in a general context', for example 'the comms team handled 100 enquiries this week'.

Epileptic

Do not use to describe people. In line with our house style, we do not label people. Use 'people with epilepsy' rather than 'epileptics'.

Equality

Equality is about creating a society where everyone can participate fully and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Equality does not necessarily mean treating everyone the same. It acknowledges that people may have different needs which may have to be met in different ways, according to their situation.

Equality and diversity terms

Remember not to objectify people – always use 'who' rather than 'that', for example, 'people who did exercise', 'patients who were offered the medicine'. For guidance on the following terms, please click on the hyperlink.

Please use these terms:

[African-Caribbean](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/a#african-caribbean)

[Bisexual](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#bisexual)

[Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-groups)

[Disabled people](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#disabled-people)

[Faith groups](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/f#faith-groups)

[First name](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/f#first-name)/[forename](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/f#forename)

[Gypsies and Travellers](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gypsies-and-travellers)

[Lesbian](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/l#lesbian), [gay](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gay) and [bisexual](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#bisexual)

[Looked-after children and young people](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/l#looked-after-children-and-young-people)

[Minority ethnic group](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/m#minority-ethnic-group)

[Older people](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/o#older-people)

[People of [insert ethnic group] family origin/heritage or ancestry](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#people-of-insert-ethnic-group-family-originheritage-or-ancestry)

[People who are homeless](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#homeless-people)

[People with hearing loss/deaf people](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#deaf)

[People with a learning disability/learning difficulty](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#people-with-a-learning-disabilitylearning-difficulty)

[People with a mental health problem](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#people-with-a-mental-health-problem)

[People with a visual impairment](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#people-with-a-visual-impairment)

[People with [insert condition]](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#people-with-insert-condition)

[People who [insert risk-taking behaviour]](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#people-who-insert-risk-taking-behaviour)

[Sexual orientation](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#sexual-orientation)

[Socioeconomic status](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#socioeconomic-status)

[Transgender](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/t#transgender) person/people

[Transsexual](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/t#transsexual) person/people

[Women who have been trafficked](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/w#women-who-have-been-trafficked)

Please think carefully before using these terms:

For guidance on the following terms, please click on the hyperlink.

[Asylum seekers](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/a#asylum-seekers)

[Black](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#black)

[Deaf](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#deaf)

[Disadvantaged](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#disadvantaged)

[Female](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/f#female)

[Gender](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gender) and [sex](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#sex)

[Male](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/m#male)

[Marginalised](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/m#marginalised)

[Migrant workers](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/m#migrant-workers)

[Neglected](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#neglected)

[Patients](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#patients)

[Race](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/r#race) and [ethnicity](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/e#ethnicity)

[Refugees](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/r#refugees)

[Seldom-heard](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#seldom-heard)

[Service users](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#service-users)

[Skin colour](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#skin-colour)

[Under-served](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/u#under-served)

[Victim](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/v#victim)

[Vulnerable](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/v#vulnerable)

[White](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/w#white)

Esophagus

Do not use. Use oesophagus.

et al.

Always put a full stop at the end of et al.

See [references](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/r#references) for more information.

etc.

Avoid using 'etc.' or its translated form ('and others') in your writing by using 'including', 'such as' or 'for example'. (Don't use these phrases and then end with 'etc.', because this is saying the same thing twice.)

Ethnicity

Use the term 'family origin' rather than 'race' or 'ethnicity'. For example, 'women of South Asian, African, Caribbean or Middle Eastern family origin'.

Always refer to race or cultural background rather than skin colour – unless skin colour is relevant. (An example of when it would be relevant is when referring to skin cancer or if the focus is on how health professionals or others perceive groups of people.)

If skin colour is referred to, use 'black' or 'white' (no initial capital) as adjectives (for example, black children). Don't use 'blacks' or 'whites' as nouns. Do not use Caucasian unless the person in question comes from the Caucus mountains of Georgia or Armenia.

If race is a proxy or clear indicator for a likely health outcome, then this is the preferred descriptor. For example, some research shows prostate cancer outcomes are different for men of African and Caribbean family origin, so to refer to 'black men' in this instance would not be helpful.

If it is necessary to refer to a group, use 'minority ethnic group' or 'black and minority ethnic groups' rather than 'ethnic minority'.

Evidence reviews may use a different terminology to describe people of different ethnic origins. When possible, use the [Office for National Statistics](http://www.ons.gov.uk/) (ONS) classifications and notes for guidance.

Also note:

* People who do not read or speak English may not come from what is usually considered a minority ethnic group (for example, they may be white people from another western European country).
* Family origins: a person's nationality may be different from their family origins. For example, a British woman might have Asian family origins.
* Be aware that the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' are not precise and are often defined differently in different settings. For example, the Equality Act does use the term race, but in the Equality Act it is used broadly to cover a range of scenarios.

See also [equality and diversity terms](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/e#equality-and-diversity-terms).

Ethnic minority

Do not use. If it is necessary to refer to a group, use 'minority ethnic group' or [black, Asian and minority ethnic groups](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-groups).

European Union

The European Union (EU) was created under the Maastricht Treaty in 1993; it currently (2012) encompasses 27 states, including the old European Community (EC).

Everyday words

Everyday words are surprisingly effective at describing complicated ideas. [Writing for NICE](http://publications.nice.org.uk/wg2) has a table of everyday words that can be used instead of more complicated terms often used at NICE. It also contains helpful advice about avoiding jargon.

The [Plain English Campaign](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/) website has a useful A-Z of everyday words.

Evidence-based

Always hyphenate.

F

Facilitate

Do not use. Use: let, allow, help.

Faeces, faecal

Not 'feces/fecal'.

Failure

When referring to a treatment failure, it should be clear that it is the treatment that has failed and not the patient. For example, write 'this treatment could be considered after first-line therapy has failed', not 'this treatment could be considered after the patient has failed first-line therapy'. Similarly, avoid using terms that could imply failure of the patient, such as 'Patients should continue treatment if they achieve a response of at least 50%'.

Faith groups

Use this term instead of 'faith and religious groups'.

Family and carers

Use the following when including a person's family or carers in a recommendation: 'people with [condition] and their family members or carers (as appropriate)'.

There may be other occasions when specific recommendations for children will need us to use 'parent'.

Female

Do not use 'a female' or 'females'. Use 'woman' or the plural 'women', or 'girl' and the plural 'girls' depending on the context.

Fetus/fetal

Not 'foetus/foetal'.

Fewer

Use 'less than' if you're referring to a continuum, and 'fewer than' if you're referring to something discrete. You won't be far wrong if you use 'fewer than' with numbers, and 'less than' with quantities. The rule applies even if the numbers or quantities are not specified. For example, 'I would like fewer candles on my cake, and less icing'.

When referring to side effects or adverse events, be careful to avoid ambiguity about whether you are referring to the number of effects that may occur, the severity of the effects or the number of people likely to be affected. Suggested phrases are respectively:

* 'has fewer possible side effects'
* 'has less severe side effects'
* 'causes side effects in fewer people'.

Usually, mixing up 'less' and 'fewer' is simply bad grammar, but in some cases it can change the meaning:

* 'Our school has poor exam results because we have fewer good English teachers.' (We don't have as many as other schools.)
* 'Our school has poor exam results because we have less good English teachers.' (Our English teachers are useless.)

Figures

See [diagrams and images](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#diagrams-and-images).

Financial data

Use the style below when presenting financial data for example in costing reports, costing tools, the annual report.

Use of commas

* There is no need for a comma in **3-numeral figures** and below for example £100.
* Use a comma in **4-numeral figures** for example £1,000. This is in line with finance standards and is an exception to our general style on numbers. For non-financial documents where costs are presented in a more general way, we should keep with NICE style (no comma) – see [numbers](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#numbers) for more information.
* Use a comma in **5-numeral figures** for example £10,000.
* These rules apply to tables or writing numbers in reports.

Rounding

* All daily drug/technology costs in unit cost tables and costing templates should be presented to 2 decimal places, for example £2.26.
* Estimates for annual costs or treatment period should be rounded as follows:
	+ £0 to £99 rounded to the nearest whole pound, for example £5.49 = £5, or £5.50 = £6
	+ £100 to £999 rounded to the nearest £10, for example £545 = £550, or £555 = £560
	+ £1,000 to £99,999 rounded to the nearest £100, for example £5,449 = £5,400, or £5,550 = £5,600
	+ Above £100,000 rounded to the nearest £1,000, for example £554,499 = £554,000, or £555,500 = £556,000.
* Rounding should be used in text only. It should **not** be used in spreadsheets.

Alignment of financial data

* To follow accounting convention, financial data should be aligned to the right in all tables.

**Use of financial numbers in narratives, reports and templates:**

* Write costs as numbers not words, for example £5 **not** 'five pounds'.
* Write unit costs as numbers, for example £2.26.

First

See [numbers](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#numbers).

First name

Use instead of 'Christian name'.

Flow charts

See [diagrams and images](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#diagrams-and-images).

Flu

Not influenza or 'flu.

Focused/focusing

Not 'focussed' or 'focussing'.

Following

Do not use if you can use 'after' instead.

Follow up

Follow up (verb), but follow-up (noun and adjective).

Footnotes

Create all footnotes using 'Insert footnote'. Don't use superscript numbers or cross-references for repeated footnotes.

Do not use footnotes in headings. Avoid using them in the rest of your text. Do not use footnotes that just contain hyperlinks. If a footnote contains a reference only, check if a hyperlink is available for the reference. If it is delete the footnote and hyperlink from the text instead.

Sometimes there isn't a suitable alternative and footnotes need to be used (for example, for off-label prescribing in clinical guidelines or for references), but try to keep their use to a minimum.

Keep footnote reference details to the minimum needed for readers to understand the source. For example, for a citation of HPA guidelines, the reference would be: 'Health Protection Agency (2009) *Clostridium difficile*: how to address the problem'. We would not include details of publishers or publisher's location. However, journal names should be included for journal articles. Check for any specific style points for the document series you're working on.

Any further explanations or details that are needed should be included in the main body of text if possible and can include hyperlinks where necessary. If you are linking to an external document or website, hyperlink the document title and state the source of the document so that it is clear to readers that they are leaving our site; for example, 'healthcare professionals should follow the [Department of Health's advice on consent](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reference-guide-to-consent-for-examination-or-treatment-second-edition)' rather than just 'healthcare professionals should follow [advice on consent](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reference-guide-to-consent-for-examination-or-treatment-second-edition)'.

For footnotes in tables, see [tables](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/t#tables).

Forename

Use instead of 'Christian name'.

Former

Do not use. It can often be misinterpreted.

If you have wording that states 'The 2 most common side effects were headache and nausea. The former was reported by more than 60% of patients.' this can be reworded to 'The 2 most common side effects were headache and nausea. Headaches were reported by more than 60% of patients.' This is much clearer and not open to misinterpretation by readers.

Forward slash

Avoid using because it can be ambiguous: 'patients/carers' can mean 'patients and carers', 'patients or carers' or 'patients and/or carers'. Write out in full what you mean if possible.

It is generally better to use punctuation rather than a forward slash when listing options: 'describe the interventions/strategies/activities' should read as 'describe the interventions, strategies or activities' or '… and activities'.

Do not use 'and/or'– it is ambiguous and often misinterpreted. It is usually possible (and more accurate) to use 'or' instead.

If you do use a forward slash, do not insert spaces before or after it (write 'x/y' rather than 'x / y').

Do not use a forward slash with numbers, which can lead to confusion, for example, '1/2' can be read as 'half' rather than '1 or 2' or '1 out of 2'.

Frontline

Not front-line.

Full stop (point)

Use a single space after a full stop.

Do not use full stops in [abbreviations](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/a#abbreviations) formed from the first letters of words (for example, NHS, USA, DNA) or in acronyms (words made from the first letters of other words, such as radar, laser and AIDS).

Contractions – abbreviations in which the last letter of the word is also the last letter of the abbreviation – do not take full stops (Dr, Mr).

Lower-case abbreviations are rarely used, but they should have full stops (for example, e.g. and i.e.). See [e.g.](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/e#eg) and [i.e.](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/i#ie) for information on using these abbreviations.

Initials do not need full stops (for example, Dr HJ Baker).

Fundholder

One word.

G

Gay

Do not use the initials LGB (lesbian, gay and bisexual).

See for example the DH guide (2009) [Sexual orientation: a practical guide for the NHS](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130107105354/http%3A/www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_095634).

Some organisations and networks refer to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender).

Gender

Do not use 'sex' to mean 'gender'. The Department of Health uses the term 'gender' in the NHS constitution (principle 1) to cover discrimination and equality issues in relation to biological sex differences, socially constructed gender roles, gender identity and reassignment.

'Gender' refers to the expected social roles – behaviours, activities and attributes – that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. 'Sex' refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.

Refer to 'men' and 'women', or 'boys' and 'girls'. Do not use the words 'males' and 'females'. You can however use the terms 'male' or 'female' when referring specifically to sex not gender, for example 'male patients'.

Do not make sexist assumptions – for example, that all carers are women, or that all doctors are men ('The GP should refer the patient to a neurologist if he suspects …'). Either reword to substitute plurals ('GPs should refer patients if they suspect …') or, if necessary, use 'she or he'.

If possible, avoid using 'their' with a singular noun. For example: 'After discussion with the healthcare professional, the patient chooses their preferred management'. However, it is preferable to use 'their' if constant repetition of 'he or she' would make the text clumsy and difficult to read. In this case, make sure that you are consistent in which form you use.

See also [gender identity](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gender-identity).

Gender identity

Transgender (or trans) is an umbrella term used by people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their birth sex. The term includes, but is not limited to, transsexual people and others who define themselves as gender-variant. It is important to remember that 'transgender' is not a sexual orientation and should not be included in a listing of people with different sexual orientations (for example, lesbian, gay, bisexual). Rather, it would appear in a list of the genders covered (masculine, feminine, transgender).

See also [gender](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gender).

Generic names

You should usually only use the generic name of a drug. Use the British Approved Name (BAN) as listed in the most recent edition of the [British national formulary](http://bnf.org/) (BNF).

If necessary (for example, in technology appraisals or if the same drug is produced by different manufacturers and you need to distinguish between the different brands of drug), you can give the brand (proprietary) name and the manufacturer's name at the first mention of the drug. Give the generic name first, followed by the brand name and the manufacturer in brackets. For example, fludarabine phosphate (Fludara, Schering Health); rivastigmine (Exelon, Novartis).

Generic names are in lower case, whereas brand names have an initial capital. Do not use a ™ or ® mark with a brand name.

If you need to refer to a class of drugs (for example, anticholinergics), it is acceptable to use either 'anticholinergics' or 'anticholinergic drugs', but make sure 1 style is used consistently throughout a document.

See also [medicines](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/mmedicines).

Genes

Specific names of genes are given in italics: for example, the *BRCA1* gene.

Glossaries

If you have to define only a few terms or if a term is used only once, try to include the definition in the text.

If a glossary is needed, use it sparingly. Link to the glossary the first time a word appears in each section. It is always worth checking if a word appears in the [NICE glossary](http://www.nice.org.uk/glossary) first, and linking to that if possible.

For Word documents use the format: **Word** in heading 3 from the list of styles in the NICE template followed by the definition on the next line (see [NICE templates and formatting guide](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-templates-and-formatting-guide-wg3) for more information). Start the definition with a capital letter; for example:

**Anticoagulant**

A type of drug that reduces blood clotting. Examples include warfarin and heparin.

**Hydrocephalus**

A condition that occurs when there is too much fluid in the cavities of the brain.

Gonorrhoea

Not 'gonorrhea'.

Government

When referring to the government use lower case – but use upper case if part of a title: for example, Local Government Association.

Graphs

See [diagrams and images](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#diagrams-and-images).

Great Britain

Refers to England, Scotland and Wales. Use UK if you are referring to England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Greek letters

Avoid using symbols. Instead spell out words such as alpha and beta. Only spell 'alpha' as 'alfa' if it is used in the British Approved Name (BAN) as listed in the most recent edition of the [British national formulary](http://bnf.org/) (BNF).

Hyphens separate Greek letters when used as descriptors. For example, TNF-α, IFN-α (but not when spelled out: interferon alfa).

Gypsies and Travellers

Capitalise the 'G' and the 'T'. This covers Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers among others. You do not need to capitalise the 't' in the phrase 'new age travellers'.

For more information see: Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) [Gypsies and Travellers](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/fairer-britain/good-relations/gypsies-and-travellers-simple-solutions-for-living-together/).

H

Haematological

Not 'haematologic'.

Half-life

Hyphenate.

Handicap

Do not use this term.

Hard-to-reach

Do not use – see .

He or she?

See [gender](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gender) for more information.

Headings

Use a capital letter for only the first word in a heading (except for proper nouns). Do not put a full stop at the end of the heading.

Use the heading styles that are specified and already set up in the NICE template you are using. See [NICE templates and formatting guide](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-templates-and-formatting-guide-wg3) for more information.

Healthcare

Not 'health care' or 'health-care'.

Health inequity and health inequalities

'Inequality' and 'inequity' are 2 terms that are used to describe differences in health between different groups of people. In the UK, the phrase 'health inequalities' is currently used in policy documents as a blanket term to cover both inequalities and inequity. But, strictly speaking:

* 'Health inequalities' is used to describe differences in the health of different groups without making a judgement on whether the factors causing those differences are fair. Inequalities in health are a matter of fact (examples might include health differences between men and women or between different ethnic groups).
* 'Inequities in health' is used to describe factors that are considered to lead to unfair differences in health (many relate to a disadvantaged background). They are unnecessary, avoidable and unfair – and are concerned with social justice, values or politics.

Factors that cause differences in health include: ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, geographical area and religion.

Hen's eggs

Not 'hens' eggs'.

Him or her?

See [gender](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gender) for more information.

HIV

The human immunodeficiency virus should be referred to as HIV, not the HIV virus (because 'virus' is already in the abbreviation) or the AIDS virus. Note that HIV and AIDS do not need to be spelt out.

See also [AIDS](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/a#aids).

Homeless people

Do not use. In line with our house style, we do not label people. Use 'people who are homeless'.

Homeopathy

Not 'homoeopathy'.

However

Avoid using. For plain English use the shorter 'but', although 'however' sometimes works better at the start of sentences. If used, it should be followed by a comma.

Hyperlinks

Create hyperlinks (highlight text then right click to select hyperlink and add the URL to the address field) from either the document title, or other suitable words, rather than adding visible URLs. This is known as an embedded hyperlink. If adding a hyperlink to a phrase, link as few words as possible to keep the link short and meaningful. For example: NICE has produced [information for the public on this procedure](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg431/InformationForPublic).

Do not put quotation marks around document titles that have an embedded hyperlink.

If you are linking to an external document or website, hyperlink the document title and state the source of the document so that it is clear to readers that they are leaving our site; for example, 'healthcare professionals should follow the [Department of Health's advice on consent](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reference-guide-to-consent-for-examination-or-treatment-second-edition)' rather than just 'healthcare professionals should follow [advice on consent](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reference-guide-to-consent-for-examination-or-treatment-second-edition)'. If you hyperlink to a document from the text, you do not need to list it in the reference list.

If incorporating the name of hyperlinked document into the sentence makes it clumsy, you can also consider putting the reference in brackets, for example:

At least 29.9% of women and 17% of men have experienced domestic violence and abuse. ([Homicides, firearm offences and intimate violence 2010/11: supplementary volume 2 to Crime in England and Wales 2010/11](http://data.gov.uk/dataset/crime_in_england_and_wales-supplementary_volume_2) Home Office 2012.)

Remember to include the name of the organisation producing the document to help people track it down if the link breaks. Only include a publication year if there are different versions of the document.

When hyperlinking to NICE guidance on the NICE website, link to the landing page for that guidance. Use the format <http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/IPG24>. For more information on how to style links to NICE guidance in text, see [NICE guidance and NICE guidelines](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#nice-guidance-and-nice-guidelines).

If you are hyperlinking to another section of a document, a NICE pathway, or a different part of a pathway from within a NICE pathway, do not use initial caps – treat it as part of the sentence. The hyperlinked text will appear different on the web so users will know to click on this text. For example:

For information on referral, see [smoking cessation in the workplace](http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/smoking#path=view%3A/pathways/smoking/smoking-cessation-in-the-workplace.xml&content=close) in this pathway.

Use your judgement when adding hyperlinked cross references; if the reader can just glance down the page to the section you are directing them to, adding a hyperlink is unhelpful. Reserve hyperlinks for cross references that are not on the same page or far away from the text you are linking from.

Remember that hyperlinks could be used for glossary definitions, cross references or links to external documents – make sure you make it clear to the reader what they are linking to.

Don't put reference details in a footnote if you can hyperlink directly to a document. See [footnotes](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/f#footnotes) for more information.

For more formal references in a reference list, see [references](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/r#references).

Hyphenation

Hyphens should be used for most compound words and adjectival phrases, and some [prefixes](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#prefixes).

Hyphens are used to clarify linkages between words for the reader, so we often use them for adjectival phrases, such as long-term sickness, high-risk groups and small-cell lung cancer. Adjectival phrases with a 'non' in front should have 2 hyphens, for example non-small-cell lung cancer.

In phrases such as 'high- and low-risk groups', both hyphens are needed to show how the words are linked. If possible, reword to avoid this. For example, 'there will be a 2- to 4-week delay' could be rewritten as 'there will be a delay of between 2 and 4 weeks.'

A hyphen is not needed to join an adverb to the adjective it modifies unless the meaning is ambiguous without the hyphen. For example, 'an ill-educated man (not an educated man who is ill), 'a little-known book' (not a small but known book) but 'a beautifully furnished house' (words ending in -ly do not need hyphens).

If using non-breaking hyphens ('Ctrl + Shift + Hyphen') for some terms in your document, use them every time those terms appear in your document.

Compound words such as cross-purpose are usually hyphenated.

See [en dash](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/e#en-dash) for when to use an en dash instead of a hyphen.

I

i.e.

Many people are unsure about the difference between e.g. (for example) and i.e. (that is), so to avoid confusion it is generally best to use the English translated forms:

* The drug is available in several different forms (for example, you may be prescribed it as a patch that you apply to your upper arm, or you may have tablets).
* These are general recommendations for practice (that is, they will not be suitable for everyone with this condition).

You can also use 'such as' rather than 'for example'. Read the sentence and decide which term is best. In flow charts or tables when space is limited, it may be appropriate to use i.e. or e.g. (with full stops: ie and eg without full stops are incorrect), but you should consider carefully whether they will be understood by the intended reader.

If

Use 'if' for circumstances that might not happen, but use 'when' for circumstances that are going to happen. For example, 'If the patient's blood pressure drops after starting treatment…' (it might drop) and 'When the patient's blood pressure drops after starting treatment…' (it will or should drop).

Ill health

No hyphen.

Images

See [diagrams and images](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#diagrams-and-images).

Impact on

Do not use. Use 'affect' or 'effect' depending on the context.

See [effect and affect](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/e#effect-and-affect) for more information.

Inadequate response

People should not be classified as responders or non-responders, unless appropriate in the context of discussing results from a clinical trial.

People do not 'inadequately respond' to a treatment, it is the condition that has not responded to the treatment.

Inbuilt

One word, no hyphen.

Incidence

Not to be confused with prevalence.

Incidence usually means something that is measured in a set number of people and within a time period. Prevalence gives a figure for a factor at a single point in time.

Included and including

Use 'included' or 'including' to introduce a list only if you are not listing everything. For example, 'The criteria included age above 40 years and a positive history of smoking' is correct if there were other criteria.

If you are writing the full list, use 'were' or 'are'. For example, write 'The criteria were age above 40 years and a positive history of smoking', if these were the only criteria.

Indicate

Do not use. Use 'show'.

Individual

Avoid using terms such as 'the individual' or 'individuals'. Use 'people' if possible. See [patients](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#patients) for more information.

In excess of

Do not use. Use: more than, over.

Inform

Do not use. Use 'tell'.

Infrastructure

One word, no hyphen.

Initials (for people's names)

Initials do not need full stops (for example, Dr HJ Baker).

Initiate

Do not use. Use: start, begin.

Inpatient

One word, no hyphen.

Inputted/inputting

With a double 't'.

Inquiry and enquiry

Use inquiry when you are referring to a formal investigation into something, for example the Leveson inquiry. Use 'enquiry' when you mean to 'ask in a general context', for example 'the comms team handled 100 enquiries this week'.

In spite of the fact that

Do not use. Use 'even though'.

Institute

In documents, or products, always refer to 'NICE' first. Thereafter, 'the Institute' is ok to use in documents such as business plans, and process and methods guides.

Use 'the Institute' with care in communications with lay audiences, because it may seem unfriendly. 'NICE' or 'we' may seem friendlier in these circumstances – see [Writing for NICE](http://publications.nice.org.uk/wg2) for more information.

Interferon alfa

Not 'alpha'.

Interferon beta

Interferon beta-1a, interferon beta-1b.

Internet

Initial capital.

In the process of

Do not use. Use 'when'.

Intramuscular

Do not abbreviate. Write out in full.

In documents for the public, use phrases such as 'into a muscle' for intramuscular.

Intravenous

Do not abbreviate. Write out in full.

In documents for the public, use phrases such as 'into a vein' for intravenous.

Inverted commas

See [quotes and quotation marks](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/q#quotes-and-quotation-marks).

Italics

Avoid italics on a web page It is much more difficult for people to read italics on screen. Reserve italics for except for [organisms](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/o#organisms-names-of) and [virus taxonomy](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/v#virus-taxonomy).

J

Job titles

If using titles in a list of NICE committee members give titles to everyone on the list, including lay members. For example, Professor Ben Marr (use Professor rather than Prof.); Dr Morris Bean; Mrs Mary Fuller; and so on. Please note, Mr, Mrs, Ms and Dr do not take full stops because they are contractions.

For NICE employees, do not include titles.

For 'Professor Sir John Smith', the full title – in that order – should be used when addressing letters. At the start of a letter, or in the main text of a document, the correct form is to use 1 prefix only 'Dear Sir John', 'Dear Professor Smith', 'In the meeting, Professor Smith said…'. Usually the title takes precedence, but because academic positions are likely to be more relevant to the work of NICE than society titles it is appropriate to use 'Professor' unless the person requests otherwise. If you are using 'Sir' or 'Dame', always include the person's first name – 'Professor Sir Smith' is wrong.

A doctor who also possesses a title such as 'Dame' or 'Sir' is addressed by the title **or** as doctor, but not both together, so 'Dr Jenkins' or 'Dame Elizabeth' would be correct, but Dame Dr Elizabeth Jenkins would not. Again, 'Dr' is the more relevant to NICE's work and so is the preferred form. Use capital letters for job titles only in committee and development group lists, or if referring to a specific person in the same sentence. For example: 'All senior medical editors attend meetings occasionally, Senior Editorial Adviser Ann Horrell said'.

See [capital letters](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/c#capital-letters) for more information.

Judgement

Not 'judgment'.

L

Last and past

Use 'past' to indicate recent times. Use 'last' to mean the final in a series:

* 'The last 6 horses to finish the race were not awarded rosettes.'
* 'Summers have been hotter than expected for the past 20 years.'

Latin

Do not use Latin terms unless they are widely used and there is no simple English translation. Words that can be used: ad hoc, vice versa, in vivo, in vitro and et al. (don't use italics, use roman text).

Do not use: ibid., op. cit. and a priori.

Do not use terms such as b.i.d. (twice daily), t.d.s. (3 times daily), p.r.n. (as needed), even in tables.

Avoid using N.B.

See also [Latin names](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/l#latin-names).

Latter

Do not use. It can often be misinterpreted.

If you have wording that states 'The 2 most common side effects were headache and nausea. The latter was reported by more than 60% of patients.' this can be reworded to 'The 2 most common side effects were headache and nausea. Nausea was reported by more than 60% of patients.' This is much clearer and not open to misinterpretation by readers.

Learning disability or learning difficulty

See [people with a learning disability/learning difficulty](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#people-with-a-learning-disabilitylearning-difficulty).

Lesbian

Do not use the initials LGB (lesbian, gay and bisexual).

See for example the DH guide (2009) [Sexual orientation: a practical guide for the NHS](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130107105354/http%3A/www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_095634).

Some organisations and networks refer to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender).

Less

Use 'less than' if you're referring to a continuum, and 'fewer than' if you're referring to something discrete. You won't be far wrong if you use 'fewer than' with numbers, and 'less than' with quantities. The rule applies even if the numbers or quantities are not specified. For example, 'I would like fewer candles on my cake, and less icing'.

When referring to side effects or adverse events, be careful to avoid ambiguity about whether you are referring to the number of effects that may occur, the severity of the effects or the number of people likely to be affected. Suggested phrases are respectively:

* 'has fewer possible side effects'
* 'has less severe side effects'
* 'causes side effects in fewer people'.

Usually, mixing up 'less' and 'fewer' is simply bad grammar, but in some cases it can change the meaning:

* 'Our school has poor exam results because we have fewer good English teachers.' (We don't have as many as other schools.)
* 'Our school has poor exam results because we have less good English teachers.' (Our English teachers are useless.)

Leukocyte

Not 'leucocyte'.

Leukopenia

Not 'leukopaenia'.

Licence and license

The 'licence' is the noun ('the licence was issued in 1997'). 'To license' is a verb ('the drug was licensed in 1997'). Note that US English uses 'license' for both noun and verb.

Life years

No hyphen.

Like

Do not use 'like' when you mean 'such as', for example:

Incorrect: 'Do not use 'like' when you mean 'such as' in sentences *like* this one.'

Correct: 'Do not use 'like' when you mean 'such as' in sentences *such as* this one.'

Line drawings

See [diagrams and images](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#diagrams-and-images).

Links

See [hyperlinks](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#hyperlinks).

Lists

See [bullet points](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#bullet-points).

Litre

Spell out in full.

Looked-after children and young people

Do not use the abbreviation 'LAC'. The term 'looked-after children (or young people)' refers to all children (or young people) in local authority care. The term always needs to be explained when writing for a public audience.

The term 'looked-after' has a specific legal meaning:

'Those children and young people looked after either by being accommodated under section 20, or those 'in care' during or as a result of proceedings under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and those accommodated through the police powers of protection and emergency protection orders.'

Looked-after is a broader term than 'in care'. See [children in care](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/c#children-in-care) for more details.

Low birthweight babies

Note 'birthweight' is one word.

Ltd

Include Ltd after company names only in lists of stakeholders or for affiliations in lists of development group or committee members.

M

Male

Do not use 'male' or 'males'. Use 'man' or the plural 'men', or 'boy' and the plural 'boys' depending on the context.

Managing

Refer to managing the condition, not the person – for example, 'Managing low back pain', not 'Management of people with low back pain'.

Marginalised

Please think carefully before using this term. We avoid labelling people and putting people into groups and terms such as 'marginalised' are often used to group lots of very different people together. It will be clearer for the reader if you spell out the groups of people you are referring to. If this is becoming repetitive, seek advice from an editor. If you must use 'marginalised' do so sparingly and remember that it could be seen by your readers as a value judgement, implying the fault is with the people not the services.

Mathematical symbols

See [symbols](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#symbols).

May and can

'Can' should be used for things that are possible. 'May' is used for what is permissible. So, to say 'sildenafil cannot be used in women' is incorrect because women are physically capable of swallowing a sildenafil tablet.

May and might

Use 'may' if there is or was more than one possible outcome. Use 'might' if discussing something that could have happened but didn't because a condition for its happening was not fulfilled – 'he might have looked better if he'd had his hair cut'.

In some cases using 'may' instead of 'might' can change the meaning:

'Changing the treatment may have saved the patient' (the patient is alive, perhaps as a result of the change in treatment)

'Changing the treatment might have saved the patient' (the patient is dead, but perhaps would have survived if the treatment had been changed).

Medicines

A 'medicine' is a drug or other preparation for the treatment or prevention of disease. Use this term if you can.

'Drugs' or 'medication' are also acceptable terms and you should use the term that best fits the context. If using the term 'drugs', bear in mind that not all drugs are medicines. Drugs are substances that have a physiological effect on the body. That could be a medicine but it might not be (it could be a poison or a 'recreational' drug for example). If you use the word 'drug' make sure that the audience could not interpret this to mean illegal drugs.

Some audiences may prefer the word 'medication' (for example, medication for mental health problems).

Generally, patients take medicines of their own volition, or receive medicines; they are not given medicines.

If you need to refer to a class of drugs (for example, anticholinergics), it is acceptable to use either 'anticholinergics' or 'anticholinergic drugs', but make sure 1 style is used consistently throughout a document.

For information about using drug names, see [brand names](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#brand-names) or [generic names](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#generic-names).

Medication

See [medicines](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/m#medicines).

Mental illness

If people have a condition affecting their mental health, they should be described as 'people with a mental health problem'. They should not be described as 'mentally ill'.

In NICE guidance, people are only described as 'patients' if they are being treated for a physical condition (such as a broken leg), or a mental health as well as a physical problem.

Mentally ill

Do not use. In line with our house style, we do not label people. Use 'people with a mental health problem'.

Methodology and methods

Methodology is a system of methods used in a particular area of study (for example, the Cochrane Review Methodology Database) or the science of methods. The words 'method' and 'methodology' are not interchangeable – don't write 'The methodology used in this study …'.

MHRA

The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency is made up of different business centres and corporate divisions.

The [MHRA](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Aboutus/index.htm) is a centre of the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, which also includes the [National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC)](http://www.nibsc.org/) and the [Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD)](http://www.cprd.com/). The MHRA represents the regulatory divisions for both medicines and devices. If you are referring to the regulatory work of the MHRA (for example, in a drug safety update), use the abbreviation MHRA and do not define it. If you have to spell out MHRA when referring to the centre in its regulatory capacity, use Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency noting the lower case 'p'.

If you are referring to the umbrella organisation (that is, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency), always write out in full, noting the capital 'P', and never shorten to MHRA.

Microgram

Always spell 'microgram' in full. This is important, because some programs will convert µg to mg.

Middle class

Do not use. Instead refer to a person's socioeconomic status.

See the [Office for National Statistics](http://www.ons.gov.uk/) classification system for socioeconomic status. This is a description of a person's position in society using criteria such as their income, level of education achieved, occupation and value of the property they own.

Mid-life

Not 'midlife' or 'mid life'.

Might and may

See [may and might](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/m#may-and-might).

Migrant workers

If you are specifically referring to people from other countries who are working in the UK, use 'migrant workers'. Do not use 'casual workers' because this could refer to anybody – not just people from other countries.

Minority ethnic group

If it is necessary to refer to a group, use 'minority ethnic group' or [black, Asian and minority ethnic groups](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-groups) rather than 'ethnic minority'.

Minus sign

Use a minus sign to indicate negative numbers, and in equations. Using this rather than another type of dash ensures the symbol stays with the number and will not break over a line. Insert a minus sign using the 'Symbols' button on the 'Insert' tab. Hover your cursor over the dashes to see which is which. If the symbol you need is not in the pop-up, go to 'More symbols' – you will find the minus sign in 'Mathematical operators'.

mmHg

See [units](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/u#units).

Multicentre

Not 'multi-centre'.

Multidisciplinary

Not 'multi-disciplinary'. If you are talking about referral to a multidisciplinary team, remember that it is the 'person's care' that is it discussed by the team, not the person. See also [person-centred language](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#person-centred-language).

Must

NICE guidance is precisely that – guidance. We tell people what they 'should' do, not what they 'must' do. The main exception to this is when referring to matters that are legally enforceable, such as Health and Safety legislation. For example, in the clinical guideline on infection control NICE said that all staff **should** be trained in the basic principles of hygiene, but that gloves **must** be disposed of as clinical waste. For further information on how to word recommendations, refer to the relevant programme manual.

N

n

Should be lower case when referring to, for example, patient numbers (n=45).

See also [symbols](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#symbols) and [non-breaking spaces](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#non-breaking-spaces).

Naive

Not 'naïve'.

Names

See [capital letters](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/c#capital-letters) for information on proper names.

Nanogram

Always spell 'nanogram' in full.

Need and require

Use the more plain English 'need' instead of 'require'. Only use 'require' if a particular person or body demands something: 'the Department of Health requires trusts to implement this directive'.

Neglected

Avoid this term, unless in the context of threats to children's or adult's wellbeing.

We avoid labelling people and putting people into groups and terms such as 'neglected' are often used to group lots of very different people together but also to define a group of particular concern to services. It will be clearer for the reader if you spell out the groups of people you are referring to. If this is becoming repetitive, seek advice from an editor. If you must use 'neglected' do so sparingly and remember that it could be seen by your readers as a value judgement, implying the fault is with the people not the services.

Neither and nor

If you use 'neither' in a sentence, you should use 'nor' rather than 'or'. So you would write 'Neither the twice-daily nor the 3-times-daily regimen was acceptable to patients.' You can use 'nor' without 'neither' – the 'Concise Oxford dictionary' lists 'nor' as meaning 'and not, and not either', so you could write 'The drug should not be administered by unqualified staff, nor should it be administered in settings other than the specialist clinic'.

Neurological

Not 'neurologic'.

Neutropenia

Not 'neutropaenia'.

New

Try to avoid using the words 'new' or 'coming soon' to promote new content as this looks out of date very quickly.

NICE Accreditation Programme

NICE Accreditation Programme should be capitalised but if referring to NICE accreditation then accreditation should be in lower case.

The Accreditation Mark is a recognised award and should be written in capitals.

The NICE Accreditation Programme has an advisory committee. This should not be referred to as an advisory board or a programme committee.

NICE bodies

Use initial capitals for NICE bodies, for example:

* Appraisal Committee
* Assessment Group
* Citizens Council (note: no apostrophe)
* Evidence Review Group
* Guidance Executive
* Guideline Development Group
* Guideline Review Panel
* Interventional Procedures Advisory Committee
* National Clinical Guideline Centre (NCGC for short; do not include 'for Acute and Chronic Conditions')
* National Collaborating Centre
* Partners Council (note: no apostrophe)
* Public Involvement Programme
* Programme Development Group.

NICE Evidence Services

Always use NICE Evidence Services in full.

NICE Evidence Services may also be referred to in text as the 'Evidence Services of NICE'.

NICE guidance and NICE guidelines

NICE guidance is a general term we use to describe guidance produced by any of our guidance programmes.

Use 'NICE guidelines' when referring specifically to 'long' guidelines: clinical guidelines, social care guidelines, public health guidelines, medicines practice guidelines, and safe staffing guidelines.

When referring to NICE guidelines in the text, hyperlink from the title of the guidance. Don't put the programme name or number in the text. For example:

* For more information, see NICE's [headaches](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG150) guideline.
* See the NICE guideline on [metastatic spinal cord compression](http://guidance.nice.org.uk/cg75).
* See the NICE guideline on [atrial fibrillation](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG180).

For 'short' guidance (that is, technology appraisal guidance, interventional procedures guidance, medical technologies guidance and diagnostics guidance), mention the programme name in the text (this is in line with how our guidance is grouped and presented on the NICE website). For example:

* These recommendations are from NICE technology appraisal guidance on [lubiprostone for treating chronic idiopathic constipation](http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA318).

For all other products use this format:

* 'For more information, see NICE's quality standard on [link title]'
* 'For more information, see NICE's costing report on [link title]'
* 'For more information, see NICE's local government briefing on [link title]'
* 'For more information, see the NICE pathway on [link title]'

Generally, we can use the shorter form of titles for any NICE guidance and hyperlink from these. However, always check the NICE website to make sure that it will be clear which guidance it is you are referring to. For example, sometimes we have multiple guidance topics with similar short titles (we have 3 pieces of guidance with the same short title 'alcohol-use disorders'). When this happens, use the longer form of the title to help ensure it clear which guidance you are referring to.

If you need to refer to specific types of NICE guidance in your document, use the following to describe the difference types of guidance:

* diagnostics guidance
* guideline
* interventional procedures guidance
* medicines practice guideline
* medical technology guidance
* technology appraisal guidance.

See [hyperlinks](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#hyperlinks) for more information about embedding links.

See the [references](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/r#references) section for more information about how to add NICE guidance to a reference list.

Use lower case for items such as an appraisal consultation document, final appraisal document or assessment report.

NICE Pathways

NICE Pathways should have a capital 'P' when talking about the product, but should have a lower-case 'p' when talking generally about a NICE pathway on a topic.

When referring to a NICE pathway in the text, try to incorporate its name naturally in the sentence and use lower case, for example:

'For more information see the NICE pathway on [smoking](http://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/smoking)'.

Use the phrase 'in the NICE pathway' rather than 'on the NICE pathway', and follow the style in [hyperlinks](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#hyperlinks).

Non-

Always hyphenate when used as a prefix.

Non-breaking spaces

Use non-breaking spaces ('Ctrl + Shift + Space') between all numbers and units or symbols that have to be kept together to make sense.

Do not use them between long phrases, because they can affect how text appears on the web page. Instead, put them between small chunks of text. This example shows where non-breaking spaces should be included:

'400°children aged from 0°to°10°years with type°1 diabetes'.

Use non-breaking spaces in trial names for example MIRACLE°ICD°II or non-breaking hyphens if the name is hyphenated, for example CONTAK-CD.

Do not put spaces around equals signs or symbols. For example: p=0.5; 15 mg.

Note also that the % symbol (23%) and the degree symbol (12°C) are closed up to the number, as are plus and minus symbols for positive and negative numbers (+23, −26).

For more information, see [symbols](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#symbols) and [numbers](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#numbers).

Non-muscle-invasive bladder cancer

Note the 2 hyphens in this term.

Non-small-cell lung cancer

Note the 2 hyphens in this term.

Non-responders

People should not be classified as responders or non-responders, unless appropriate in the context of discussing results from a clinical trial.

People do not 'inadequately respond' to a treatment, it is the condition that has not responded to the treatment.

Non-white

Do not use. If possible, use ethnicity or cultural background rather than skin colour when describing someone.

For more information, see [skin colour](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#skin-colour).

No one

No hyphen.

Nor and neither

See [neither and nor](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#neither-and-nor).

North

North, south, east and west should all be lower case (northern England, birds fly south for the winter) unless they form part of a proper name, for example, West Bromwich.

No smoking areas

Not 'non-smoking'.

Numbered lists

Use a numbered list only when your bullet points follow on from each other in a particular order and you want to indicate a hierarchy or the numbers form part of a specific grading system.

For more information, see [bullet points](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#bullet-points).

Numbers

As a rule, use numerals for numbers, except at the beginning of a sentence. Try to reword to avoid a number at the beginning of a sentence; for example, '45 out of 100 patients in the trial …' could be reworded to 'In the trial, 45 out of 100 patients …'. Try to avoid rewording with 'In total, 45 out of 100 patients…'. If a sentence that starts with a number cannot be reworded, then spell out the number; for example, 'Forty-five patients …'.

If 2 numbers appear next to each other with the potential to confuse the reader and you can't rewrite the sentence, write the smallest number as a word, for example, 'Give the patient two 15-mg doses to take home with them'.

Remember that 'one' has several meanings and can't always be replaced by '1' because it can also be used as a pronoun or adjectivally. Use your judgement and only use '1' if you are sure that you are referring to a number. If one is followed by a unit (which could include people) or is being listed or compared in a sentence with other numbers, it is most likely that you will need to use a numeral, for example 'in 3 studies', 'there were 5 doctors', '5 patients out of 5000'. If 'one' is being used as a numerical expression (but not as a unit of quantity), for example 'one thing or another', 'one approach', 'one of the options', 'I want that one', 'I prefer the chocolate ones', then it makes more sense to use the word and not the numeral. You may also choose to spell out 'one' if it is the only number being used in a sentence. If you decide to spell out the number, spell out the unit too, for example 'Four milligrams ...', not 'Four mg ...'.

Don't put a comma in 4-digit numbers: 9999. From 10,000 onwards, use commas to separate thousands.

In columns or tables that contain lists of numbers above and below 10,000, use a comma in 1000s to help align columns.

Avoid long strings of zeroes by spelling out millions: use £4.2 million rather than £4,200,000.

A billion is 1,000,000,000.

Always use words and hyphenate them if you are writing simple fractions, for example, one-third, four-fifths.

As a rule spell out ordinal numbers, for example first, second or third. However, if you are using lots of ordinal numbers to rank a series or if you are using a large ordinal number, using numerals may look better. If you decide to use numerals, superscript the letters appearing after them, for example 21st.

For information on decimals, see [decimal places](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#decimal-places).

For information on presenting financial data, see [financial data](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/f#financial-data).

For information on using numbers with symbols or units, see [symbols](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#symbols) and [units](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/u#units).

For information on telephone numbers, see [phone numbers](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#phone-numbers).

O

Oblique mark (forward slash or solidus)

See [slash](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#slash).

Oesophagus

Not 'esophagus'.

Older people

Use 'older people' rather than the following: the elderly, old people, pensioners, senior citizens, the aged.

The UN agreed cut-off is 60+ years to refer to the older population.

Old people

Do not use. Use 'older people'.

Ongoing

One word, no hyphen.

Online

One word, no hyphen.

Only

'Only' is a word that modifies another word or phrase. Generally, it should be placed as close as possible to the word or phrase that it is modifying. The examples below show how the sense of a sentence can be changed by moving the 'only' around:

* Dr Peters only works in the Park Road practice on Mondays and Tuesdays. (This implies that on the other days Dr Peters does something else in the Park Road practice – probably not what the author meant.)
* Dr Peters works only in the Park Road practice on Mondays and Tuesdays. (Dr Peters doesn't work anywhere else on Mondays or Tuesdays.)
* Dr Peters works in the Park Road practice on Mondays and Tuesdays only. (Dr Peters doesn't work in the Park Road practice on Wednesday to Sunday.)

Putting 'only' in an ambiguous place can lead to confusion:

* Dr Peters works in the Park Road practice only on Mondays and Tuesdays. (This could be read as relating to where he works, or on which days.)
* The drug should only be prescribed to children for severe allergies. ('Only' placed here could mean that:
	+ it should be prescribed for severe allergies, but can be bought over the counter for less severe reactions
	+ this drug should be used for children and a different drug for adults
	+ it should be used for severe allergies but not for mild allergies
	+ it should be used for severe allergies in children, but could be used for mild allergies in adults.)

On-site

Not 'onsite'.

Ordinal numbers

See [numbers](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#numbers).

Organisations (names of)

All organisations are singular, for example: 'NICE has said…'. See [capital letters](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/c#capital-letters) for more information on how to use capitals in organisations' names.

Organisms (names of)

Latin names of organisms, which comprise the genus and the species, are given in italics: *Salmonella typhimurium*.

Names should be given in full at their first mention; the genus name can be abbreviated subsequently: *S typhimurium*.

The genus name used on its own is italicised: *Salmonella* spp.

Plural and adjectival forms are given in roman, lower-case initial: streptococcal infection, staphylococci.

See also [virus taxonomy](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/v#virus-taxonomy).

Orientated or oriented

Use oriented rather than orientated.

Outpatient

No hyphen.

P

p (values)

Use a lower-case non-italic for probability (p) values. Do not put spaces around the symbol or equals sign: p<0.05; p≤0.01; p=0.012. Do not hyphenate p value.

See also [symbols](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#symbols) and [non-breaking spaces](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#non-breaking-spaces).

Page numbers

Include page numbers in documents longer than 1 page. Position the page number as specified and already set up in the NICE template you are using.

Parkinson's disease

Takes a capital 'P', but parkinsonism has a lower-case 'p'.

Passive sentences

We try to avoid passive sentences. We aim to write [active sentences](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/a#active-sentences).

Past and last

Use 'past' to indicate recent times. Use 'last' to mean the final in a series:

* 'The last 6 horses to finish the race were not awarded rosettes.'
* 'Summers have been hotter than expected for the past 20 years.'

Pathways

See [NICE Pathways](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#nice-pathways).

Patients

When possible, refer to 'people' not 'patients', especially if referring to people with chronic conditions. For example, use 'people with diabetes' rather than 'diabetics' or 'patients with diabetes'. Avoid using patients to refer to people using the health service in connection with their mental health or pregnancy. Don't use 'the individual', 'individuals' or 'persons'.

'Patients' is acceptable to avoid cumbersome phrases or if it is more precise ('We interviewed 50 patients at each hospital'), but be sure that it is accurate for the group you're describing – it wouldn't be right in the context of pregnant women attending an antenatal clinic, for example. For many NICE documents it is more appropriate to use 'patients and carers' than simply 'patients'.

For some conditions it may be preferable to refer to 'patients', for example if they are in hospital with an acute or life-threatening condition. For clinical guidelines, discuss which is the most appropriate term with the Guideline Development Group and National Collaborating Centre, explaining our usual approach to them. You might also want to talk to the PIP lead for the guidance.

In all NICE guidance, use 'people' rather than 'patients' if appropriate when talking about all those with the condition. However, 'patients' is appropriate when summarising evidence from clinical trials and shouldn't be changed. It is also more appropriate to refer to 'patients' when describing issues around consent. So it is fine to have the 2 terms in different sections of the same document.

'Cases' is not usually acceptable, but watch out for data that concern events rather than people (for example, cases of heart attack rather than people who have had a heart attack – 1 person may have had several heart attacks).

It is acceptable to use cases in disease prevalence: for example, 5.7 cases per 100,000.

Pensioners

Do not use. Use 'older people'. The UN agreed cut-off is 60+ years to refer to the older population.

People of [insert ethnic group] family origin/heritage or ancestry

Use this term when possible if you need to describe [ethnicity](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/e#ethnicity).

See also [person-centred language](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#person-centred-language).

People using xxx services

If you are referring to people using the health service in connection with their mental health or pregnancy, avoid referring to them as 'patients'.

Use 'people using xxx services' instead and 'people' thereafter. If this is becoming repetitive or you feel it is making your writing unclear, consult an editor.

People who are homeless

Do not use 'homeless people/person' or 'the homeless'.

See also [person-centred language](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#person-centred-language).

People with hearing loss/deaf people

See [Deaf](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#deaf).

People with a learning disability/learning difficulty

Do not use: mentally disabled, mentally handicapped, special needs.

In line with our house style, we do not label people. Use 'people with a learning disability' or 'people with a learning difficulty'.

Ensure that you use the right term to describe the people you are writing about. The British Institute of Learning Disabilities has the following useful definition:

'Learning disability – is a general term that refers to individuals who find it harder to learn, understand and communicate. Other terms that are used to describe an individual's situation include complex needs or high support needs.

'Learning difficulty – is often used in educational settings and refers to individuals who have specific problems with learning as a result of either medical, emotional or language problems. Children and young people requiring special education needs are often described as having a learning difficulty.'

See also [person-centred language](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#person-centred-language).

People with a mental health problem

Not 'mentally ill'. In line with our house style, we do not label people.

See also [person-centred language](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#person-centred-language).

People with a visual impairment

Not 'the blind, blind people'. In line with our house style, we do not label people.

See also [person-centred language](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#person-centred-language).

People with [insert condition]

For example, people with epilepsy or diabetes. In line with our house style, we do not label people.

**Do not use** terms such as epileptics or diabetics.

Sometimes you may feel it is more appropriate to say 'people diagnosed with [condition]' rather than 'people with [condition]'.

However, please apply common sense when making changes to wording that 'labels' people. For example, depending on the context words such as 'smoker' may be acceptable (such as in public health guidance).

Look at the overall tone of your document, and how the wording comes across in the context of the guidance, to help with your decision.

See also [person-centred language](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#person-centred-language)[.](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/pperson-centred-language)

People who [insert risk-taking behaviour]

For example, people who take drugs. In line with our house style, we do not label people.

**Do not use** terms such as drug users.

See also [person-centred language](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/pperson-centred-language).

Per cent and percentage points

'Per cent' refers to the amount of change in terms of a percentage of the original figure, whereas 'percentage points' refers to the number of units by which the original percentage has changed. For example, if survival rate for a disease is 20 out of 100 (20%), a treatment that increases survival rate by 10 **per cent** would increase it to 22% (20 + 10% of 20), whereas one that increases it by 10 **percentage points** would increase it to 30% (20 + 10).

Use per cent, not percent, if a sentence starts with a number, for example 'Ten per cent of patients…'. Otherwise use the % symbol, closed up to the number, as above.

Perimenopausal

Do not hyphenate.

Person-centred language

Use language that is inclusive and empathetic. Remember not to objectify people – always use 'who' rather than 'that', for example, 'people who did exercise', 'patients who were offered the medicine'.

Generally, people take medicines of their own volition, or receive medicines; they are not given medicines.

Don't label people with their condition: we would never say 'epileptics', 'schizophrenics', 'smokers', 'drug-takers'. Use the following as a guide: 'people with epilepsy', 'people with schizophrenia', 'people who smoke', 'people who take drugs'. Exceptions to this rule include [disabled people](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#disabled-people) and [deaf people](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/d#deaf-people).

Don't say that someone 'suffers' from a condition: use 'people with ingrowing toenails', rather than 'people suffering from ingrowing toenails'.

Refer to managing the condition, not the person – for example, 'Managing low back pain', not 'Management of people with low back pain'.

The words we use should acknowledge that the person has a choice in their treatment, so we should try to use the phrase 'offer treatment to the person' rather than 'treat the person'. Remember though that there are circumstances where 'offer' is not appropriate, for example if the person is unconscious and needs emergency treatment.

Refer to 'monitoring blood sugar' or 'monitoring a person's condition/health' rather than 'monitoring a person'. If you are concerned that 'monitor' may have negative connotations, see if 'check', 'check regularly' or 'review' would work instead.

People do not 'fail treatment'. Change to 'treatment failure' or indicate that the treatment has failed.

People should not be classified as responders or non-responders, unless appropriate in the context of discussing results from a clinical trial.

People do not 'inadequately respond' to a treatment; it is the condition that has not responded to the treatment.

Do not refer to patients or people being suitable or not suitable for treatments. It is the treatment or intervention that is suitable or not suitable for the patient.

A medicine, not a person, is contraindicated.

Sometimes, because you are quoting from a source document, you may need to use language that is not NICE style. See [using quotation marks for words and phrases that are not NICE style](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/q#quotes-and-quotation-marks) for more information.

Persons

Don't use. Use 'people' if possible. See [patients](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#patients) for more information.

Person years

Do not hyphenate.

Phase

See [clinical trials](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/c#clinical-trials).

Phone numbers

Use the following formats, with non-breaking spaces ('Ctrl + Shift + Space'):

* numbers starting with 02: 020 7045 2193; 023 1234 5678
* numbers starting with 01: 01883 333333 (gap after area code)
* extension numbers: 020 7045 2193, extension 1470
* international numbers: +44 (0)845 003 7780 (use only if your document has an international audience)
* mobile numbers: 07887 777777 (gap after first 5 digits).

Plc

Include Plc after company names only in lists of stakeholders or for affiliations in lists of development group or committee members.

Pleuro-amniotic

Not 'pleural-amniotic'.

Plural or singular

Organisations, committees, teams and so on take a singular verb: for example, 'The Appraisal Committee meets once a month …', 'NICE issues guidance …', 'The Committee was persuaded …'.

'Either' and 'neither' take a singular verb unless 1 (or more) of the subjects is plural (if there are both singular and plural subjects, put the singular one[s] first):

* Either nausea or irritability is ...
* Neither the doctor nor the patients were ...

Units of measure always have a singular verb:

* Five millilitres was injected.

Post holder

Two words, no hyphen.

Postmenopausal

Do not hyphenate.

Post-surgery

But use 'after surgery' if possible.

Practise and practice

'Practice' is the noun – for example, 'a doctor's practice'. 'Practise' is the UK English verb form ('a doctor who practised medicine …'). Note that in US English 'practice' is used as the verb form.

Precancerous

Not 'pre-cancerous'.

Prefixes

Always hyphenate non- as a prefix.

Prefixes such as 'co', 'mid', 'pre' and 'post' do not usually need hyphens. But hyphens should be used if:

* the prefix precedes a capital (for example, inter-American)
* the prefix precedes a number (for example, pre-1990)
* the non-hyphenated word is ambiguous or can be misread (for example, re-lay versus relay, re-cover versus recover, pre-date versus predate, mid-gestation versus midgestation)
* the non-hyphenated word is difficult to read because of doubling of vowels (for example, re-emerge) or of consonants (for example, cross-species).

Note that double i (for example, semi-illiterate, anti-inflammatory) is not acceptable, whereas other double vowels are often acceptable (for example, cooperate, coordinate, coexist, microorganism).

Premenopausal

Do not hyphenate.

Prepositions at the end of sentences

Some people believe that a preposition (such as in, to, for or on) should not end a sentence. Sometimes re-writing a sentence to move the preposition can make it clearer, but often it simply results in a tortuous, stilted sentence. Write to be as clear and easy to read as possible, and if that means ending with a preposition, don't worry. The examples below end in prepositions, but are grammatically correct:

* They must be convinced of the commitment they are taking **on**.
* What are you listening **to**?

It was good enough for Churchill and Shakespeare, and it's good enough for NICE.

Prevalence

Not to be confused with incidence.

This is a rate by definition, so don't use 'prevalence rate'.

Preventative or preventive

Use preventive rather than preventative.

Principal

Principal is an adjective and should be used when referring to the main or most important factor or person: 'The principal advisor is Professor Smith.'

Principle

Principle is a noun and should be used for a rule or code of conduct ('His principles will not be compromised') or a theory ('The ticket prices are based on the principle that people will pay more to travel further').

Prior to

Do not use. Use 'before'.

p.r.n.

Do not use. Say 'as needed'.

Probability

Use a lower-case non-italic for probability values. Do not insert spaces around the symbol or equals sign: p<0.05; p≤0.01; p=0.012.

See also [symbols](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#symbols) and [non-breaking spaces](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#non-breaking-spaces).

Programme

Use 'programme' for everything other than when referring to a computer program.

Projects or campaigns

Titles of projects or campaigns should be given initial capitals: Active for Life, No Smoking Day.

Proprietary names

See [brand names](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#brand-names).

Proteins

Protein names are not italicised and start with a capital letter.

Q

Qualifications

We do not usually include people's qualifications in our documents. If they are used, the letters after the name should be in the order in which they are usually obtained (bachelors degree, masters degree, doctorate, membership of professional bodies), without punctuation (for example, Professor Richard Lilford BSc PhD FRSC).

Questionnaires and quality-of-life scales

As a rule, and especially if the scale or questionnaire is commonly used, use the abbreviations for the tool, defining it in brackets at the first mention, for example DLQI (Dermatology Life Quality Index). Questionnaires should have initial capitals.

Quotes and quotation marks

Make sure that every opening quotation mark has a matching closing mark. NICE style is to use double quotes for direct speech and single quotes for most other purposes.

Use double inverted commas for direct quotes of a person's spoken words (for example, in a press release).

Use single inverted commas for quotes from other documents. If this quote has been edited and text left out, use '[…]' to indicate the omission.

Single inverted commas can also be used to enclose an 'unusual' word or phrase, non-standard use of a word or phrase, or a word or phrase that has a specific meaning in that document. For example:

* The patient felt 'light-headed'.
* In this guidance, 'rapidly' is used to mean within 4 hours.

Quotes that are a complete sentence should be preceded by a colon, and start with a capital. The punctuation at the end of the quote should be inside the inverted commas:

* When she received Sam's email, Alison said: "Why don't you look on the intranet?"
* In the opening speech at the conference, Dr Brown said: "This guidance will help improve services for children."

If the quote is part of a sentence, start with lower case and put punctuation outside the quote marks. This type of quote shouldn't be preceded by a colon:

* Dr Smith said the new guidance would lead to "a big improvement in care for many patients".

If you need to quote a large amount of text, use indented text with quotation marks. For example:

'Writing in plain English doesn't mean writing in a patronising or over-simplified way. It doesn't mean reducing the length or changing the meaning of your message. It doesn't mean banning words or avoiding using long words. Plain English gets your message across more quickly, more easily and more directly.'

If a quote runs to more than 1 paragraph, open speech marks at the start of each paragraph but only close speech marks at the very end of the quote.

For quotes inside quotes, use double inverted commas if the main quote is in single inverted commas, and single inverted commas if the main quote is in double inverted commas. For example:

* 'When I spoke to him he said "go away", so I left him alone.'

Using quotation marks for words and phrases that are not NICE style

Single inverted commas can also be used when you are using terminology that is not NICE style but you can't change it, for example if you are quoting from a marketing authorisation, summary of product characteristics or a research paper.

R

Race

Use the term 'family origin' rather than 'race' or 'ethnicity'. For example, 'women of South Asian, African, Caribbean or Middle Eastern family origin'.

Always refer to race or cultural background rather than skin colour – unless skin colour is relevant. (An example of when it would be relevant is when referring to skin cancer or if the focus is on how health professionals or others perceive groups of people.)

If skin colour is referred to, use 'black' or 'white' (no initial capital) as adjectives (for example, black children). Don't use 'blacks' or 'whites' as nouns. Do not use Caucasian unless the person in question comes from the Caucus mountains of Georgia or Armenia.

If race is a proxy or clear indicator for a likely health outcome, then this is the preferred descriptor. For example, some research shows prostate cancer outcomes are different for men of African and Caribbean family origin, so to refer to 'black men' in this instance would not be helpful.

If it is necessary to refer to a group, use 'minority ethnic group' or 'black and minority ethnic groups' rather than 'ethnic minority'.

Evidence reviews may use a different terminology to describe people of different ethnic origins. When possible, use the [Office for National Statistics](http://www.ons.gov.uk/) classifications and notes for guidance.

Also note:

* People who do not read or speak English may not come from what is usually considered a minority ethnic group (for example, they may be white people from another European country).
* Family origins: a person's nationality may be different from their family origins. For example, a British woman might have Asian family origins.
* Be aware that the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' are not precise and are often defined differently in different settings. For example, the Equality Act does use the term race, but in the Equality Act it is used broadly to cover a range of scenarios.

Ranges

Either an en dash or 'to' is acceptable, but be consistent if the ranges are close to each other in the text:

* Incorrect: The prevalence in France is 15–20%, compared with 9% to 12% in the UK.
* Correct: The prevalence in France is 15–20%, compared with 9–12% in the UK.

Confidence interval (CI): use 'to' rather than an en dash; for example, 95% confidence interval 78 to 87. An en dash may be used if space is limited (such as in a table), but never with minus numbers.

When using an en dash, it is not necessary to add the unit after the first numeral: 'prevalence is 7–10%'.

Do not use an en dash if a range is preceded by 'from' – in this instance, use 'to'; for example, 'the ages ranged from 4 to 42 years'.

Do not use an en dash with 'between' – use 'and': 'he usually went to bed between 10 and 11 pm'.

Do not use an en dash next to other mathematical symbols (for example, use '−2.5 to −3.0', not '−2.5–−3.0').

Ratios

Use a colon without spaces: 'The ratio of men to women was 3:1'.

Re-administer/re-administration

Hyphenate.

References

How you reference something, or style your reference, will depend on how you wish to cite your reference, the product the reference is in, and whether or not the product has a reference list.

If there is no need for your document to have a reference list (for example, you are referencing NICE guidance in a guideline or other piece of guidance, or are referencing a website), it is usually better to create a hyperlink from either the document title, or other suitable words, rather than adding visible URLs. This is particularly important if your document is going to be produced online only. For information on how to style hyperlinks in your documents, see [hyperlinks](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#hyperlinks).

If, however, your document will have a reference list or you are referencing journal articles or other similar material that is not easily accessible online, follow the instructions provided below. The most important thing to remember is that all references in a document are cited and styled consistently.

It is fine to link to references such as journal articles or books that need to be paid for, but before you do this, check that the references is not freely available elsewhere.

Referring to the reference list in the main text

In most documents, use author names rather than reference numbers in the text, and always give the year of publication:

* if there are 2 authors, give both surnames; for example (Emson and Wu 2005)
* if there are more than 2 authors, use the first author's surname with 'et al.'.

If you refer to the authors in the sentence, use, for example: 'Edwards et al. (2008) were the first to report this effect in the community'.

If you need to cite more than 1 article at the same point, order them alphabetically (from the first author's surname) and separate with a semicolon. For example: 'There are 3 specific areas of organisational development (Davies and Franks 2008; Green 2006; Johnston et al. 2007, 2009)'.

If the text contains references to more than 1 document by the same author and with the same year of publication assign letters (a, b, c, d) to differentiate them (for example, Brown et al. 2007a). Letter in the order in which they appear in the text, and mirror this in the reference list.

Styling references in a reference list or footnote

* If there are more than 3 authors or editors, list the first 3 then add 'et al.' after the third name.
* Separate the names of authors or editors with commas and use the form: Smith S, Jones TD, William WL et al.
* Do not edit titles – they should appear exactly as in the original.
* For titles of references (that is, book titles or journal article titles as well as chapter titles), only the first letter is capitalised (except proper nouns**). If the reference is available online, hyperlink to the reference, and embed the hyperlink in the title.**
* Give journal names in full and use capital letters for the key words in the title, for example British Medical Journal or British Journal of Community Nursing.
* Page ranges are contracted so digits aren't repeated. For example: 16–9, 52–7, 136–9, 185–96.
* There should not be a full stop at the end of each reference.
* Do not use italics for any part of any type of reference (unless the title includes the name of an organism that needs to be italicised).
* Try to avoid using footnotes that only have references in them. For digital publication, it is better to include the reference in the text and hyperlink from the document title if this possible. See [hyperlink](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#hyperlinks)s for details on how to do this. If you do need to add a reference to a footnote, keep the reference details to the minimum needed for readers to understand the source. For example, for a citation of HPA guidelines, the reference would be: 'Health Protection Agency (2009) *Clostridium difficile*: how to address the problem.' We would not include details of publishers or publisher's location. But, journal names should be included for journal articles. Check for any specific style points for the document series you're working on. For more information, see [footnotes](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/f#footnotes).
* References that are in press are allowed. We try to complete these before publication, but if we cannot, the style is to add 'in press' where the page range would normally appear. For electronic items, follow this style but use 'forthcoming' rather than 'in press'.
* Unpublished material, personal communications and so on should not be listed in the reference list. Instead, put a citation in brackets in the text, to include the name and initials of the author(s) or correspondent(s) and a date (year). For example:
(Peters CD, Franks JL: unpublished data 2007) or (Johnston EG: personal communication 2008).
(Note: written permission from the person being quoted is needed to cite personal communications.)
* References that are described as 'submitted' in the reference list should be removed from the list and treated as unpublished.

For information on specific types of articles or documents you may want to reference, examples are given in alphabetical order below:

Acts

Use initial capitals for main words and include the date it was passed in brackets. For example:

HM Government (1995) [The Disability Discrimination Act](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/50/contents)

HM Government (1998) [Data Protection Act 1998](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents)

In the text: write the title without quotation marks and with initial capitals, hyperlinking the title to the document for example: the Care Act 2014. If the Act is not online and doesn't have a year as part of its title write as follows: Name Of Act (year).

If referring to a specific act in the same sentence or paragraph, but not repeating the full title, refer to the Act (initial cap). Acts are passed rather than published so have a different style.

Books, reports and other non-serial publications

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2008) Annual survey report 2008: absence management. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

Department for Work and Pensions (2007) Ready for work: full employment in our generation. London: The Stationery Office

Chapter/article from a book, report or other non-serial publication with editors

McCrea C (1999) Good clinical audit requires teamwork. In: Baker R, Hearnshaw H, Robertson N, editors. Implementing change with clinical audit. Chichester: Wiley, p119–32

Marmot M, Wilkinson R, editors (2006) Social determinants of health. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Cochrane review

Gagnon AJ (2000) Individual antenatal education for childbirth. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews issue 4: CD00287

Conference abstract (in conference proceedings)

Li TW, Jones PA (2006) Methylation changes in early embryonic genes in cancer [abstract]. In: Proceedings of the 97th Annual Meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research, 1–5 April 2006, Washington DC, USA. Philadelphia: AACR; p7. Abstract 30

Conference abstract (in a journal)

Anand R, Hartmann R, Gharabawi G (1997) Worldwide clinical experience with Exelon, a new generation cholinesterase inhibitor, in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. European Journal of Neurology 4 (Suppl. 1): S37 (Abstract)

Conference poster

Rockwood K, Kershaw P (2000) Galantamine's clinical benefits are not offset by sleep disturbance: a 3-month placebo-controlled study in patients with Alzheimer's disease. Poster presented at the 7th International World Alzheimer Congress, 1–3 March 2000, Washington DC, USA

Conference proceedings

Smith A, Jones J (2002) Recent advances in CBT. Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Clinical Neurophysiology; 18–24 October 2001, San Francisco, USA. Amsterdam: Elsevier, p232–4

Court case

Court cases take the form – plaintiff v defendant (year) court and case number. For example:

A and others v the National Blood Authority and others (2001) EWHC QB 446 [EWHC QB stands for England and Wales High Court Queen's Bench]

Rottman v MPC (2002) HRLR 32 [Human Rights Law Reports]

Document that is also available in electronic format

Arduino JM, Stuver SO, Spiegelman D et al. (2001) [Assessment of markers of hepatitis C virus in a Japanese adult population](http://jid.oxfordjournals.org/content/184/10/1229.full). Journal of Infectious Diseases 184: 1229–35

**For an online publication, or any reference source that is available online, embed the hyperlink to the document in the title of the reference as shown above.**

Document that is only available in electronic format

Medical Research Council (2008) [Developing and evaluating complex interventions: new guidance](http://www.mrc.ac.uk/complexinterventionsguidance)

For an online publication, embed the hyperlink to the document in the title of the reference as shown above. Make it clear who published the resource, so if the hyperlink changes people can still track the document down using the title and publisher. Use your judgement as to whether you need to also include a date accessed in square brackets after the link. It is helpful to include a date accessed after any articles, content or web pages that you think might change or that change regularly (for example the BNF). Generally, documents with a publication date such as NICE guidance, journal articles and reports, don't need a date accessed. If you include a date accessed use the following style:

[accessed 31 August 2013].

If your document is to be printed, add the visible URL in brackets at the end of the reference.

Erratum

Errata are given in the form of a usual journal citation (see entry below), with the details of the issue in which the erratum appears following in brackets. For example:

Rep M, van Dijl JM, Suda K et al. (1996) Promotion of the mitochondrial membrane complex assembly by a proteolytically inactive yeast. Science 274: 103–6 (erratum in Science 275: 741)

Health Technology Assessment

Daniels J, Gray J, Pattison H et al. (2009) Rapid testing for group B streptococcus during labour: a test accuracy study with evaluation of acceptability and cost-effectiveness. Health Technology Assessment 13 (42)

Journal article

Broom D, D'Souza R, Strazdins L et al. (2006) The lesser evil: bad jobs or unemployment? A survey of mid-aged Australians. Social Science and Medicine 63: 575–86

Norman P, Bambra C (2007) The utility of medically certified sickness absence as an updatable indicator of population health. Population, Space and Place 13: 333–52

For online publications you can also include the doi reference number.

Include an issue number in the reference **only** if the journal homepage lists only the volume and issue number without showing the page range or if the pagination is not consecutive throughout a volume. If you need to include an issue number follow this style:

Panicker J, Haslam C (2009). Lower urinary tract dysfunction in MS: management in the community. British Journal of Community Nursing 14 (11): 478–80

Journal supplement

Layton A, Moss F, Morgan G (1998) Mapping out the patient's journey: experiences of developing pathways of care. Quality in Health Care 7(Suppl. 2): S30–6

Monograph on CD-ROM

Reeves JRT, Maibach H (1995) Clinical Dermatology Illustrated [CD-ROM]. 2nd edition, version 2. San Diego: CMEA

Newspaper citation

Timmins N (2009) NHS managers' skill levels criticised by MPs. The Financial Times, 13 January, p2

National service framework

If referring to national service frameworks as a generic term, use lower case. Only the full title should appear in quotation marks, with an initial capital for the first word; shorthand versions of NSF titles should appear in lower case and without quotes. For example, 'National service framework for children, young people and maternity services' if referring to the NSF in full; and children, young people and maternity services NSF if referring to it in shorthand (you would use the shorthand, for example, if listing several national service frameworks).

NICE guidance

NICE is the author of all of our guidance, and so should be cited as the author and appear first. We changed our name to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence on 1 April 2013. When referring to NICE or citing NICE as an author in a reference, we should only refer to 'Care' in our name for anything published after 1 April 2013. Anything published before 1 April 2013 should have 'Clinical' in our name, as per our name when the guidance or other document was published. It is standard practice in references to use the name an organisation or institution had at the time the document was published.

When referencing NICE guidance (with the exception of the full versions of clinical guidelines) use the following format:

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2008) [Occupational therapy interventions and physical activity interventions to promote the mental wellbeing of older people in primary care and residential care](http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PH16). NICE guideline (PH16)

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2008) [Metastatic spinal cord compression: diagnosis and management of adults at risk of and with metastatic spinal cord compression](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG75). NICE guideline (CG75)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2014) [Drug allergy: diagnosis and management of drug allergy in adults, children and young people](http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/CG183). NICE guideline (CG183)

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2008) [Adalimumab for the treatment of adults with psoriasis](http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA146). NICE technology appraisal guidance 146

Use this format for other products:

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2014) [Tackling drug use](http://www.nice.org.uk/advice/lgb18). NICE local government briefing 18

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2014) [Transient loss of consciousness](http://www.nice.org.uk/advice/qs71). NICE quality standard 71

When referencing the full version of a clinical guideline, use the following format:

* National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health (2010) [Depression: the treatment and management of depression in adults](http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG90/Guidance). NICE guideline (CG90). Leicester and London (UK): British Psychological Society and The Royal College of Psychiatrists

**In the 'Related NICE guidance' section of NICE documents**, use the abbreviated form below. Note, for clinical guidelines we usually reference the NICE guideline in our documents, rather than the full guideline (which is copyrighted to the National Collaborating Centre; if citing the full guideline, see the style provided above). Use the short title for each document unless 2 or more guidelines have the same short title (for example, the alcohol-use disorders); in this case use the modified short title given on the guidance landing page on the website.

Divide the list under 'Published' and 'Under development' subheadings – but **only** if both types of guidance are included; otherwise do not use subheadings. List guidance:

* in reverse date order (that is, the most recent first) for published guidance
* by guidance number (newest first) if 2 or more items of the same type of guidance are published in the same year (for example, 2 clinical guidelines published in 2008 would be listed with the latest guideline number first)
* alphabetically by title if different types of guidance published in the same year
* in date order of expected publication for guidance under development.

Use this format for published guidance:

* [Mental wellbeing and older people](http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PH16) (2008) NICE guideline PH16
* [Metastatic spinal cord compression](http://guidance.nice.org.uk/CG75) (2008) NICE guideline CG75
* [Bevacizumab for the treatment of non-small-cell lung cancer (terminated appraisal)](http://guidance.nice.org.uk/TA148) (2008) NICE technology appraisal guidance 148
* [Smoking cessation – supporting people to stop smoking](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/QS43) (2013) NICE quality standard 43

Do not list suspended technology appraisals.

Use this format for guidance under development:

* The physical and emotional health and wellbeing of looked-after children and young people. NICE guideline (publication expected September 2010)
* Acute coronary syndrome – rivaroxaban. NICE technology appraisal guidance (publication expected March 2015)

If the publication date is unknown, write (publication date to be confirmed).

NICE Pathways

When referring to a NICE pathway in the text, try to incorporate its name naturally in the sentence and use lower case, for example:

'For more information see the NICE pathway on smoking'.

Use the phrase 'in the NICE pathway' rather than 'on the NICE pathway', and follow the style in [hyperlinks](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#hyperlinks).

Questionnaires and quality-of-life scales

See [questionnaires and quality-of-life scales](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/q#questionnaires-and-quality-of-life-scales).

Reports

If referring to a report title in the text, use an initial capital for the first word only and put it in single quotation marks. For example, 'Choosing health – making healthy choices easier'. If possible, hyperlink the title to the document, in which case don't use the quotation marks.

Speeches

Use the following format: Author (year) Title. Speech given to [audience] on [date]. [Place of publication]: [Publisher]. Available from [xxx] (Add place of publication, publisher and source information if available.)

Note that official speeches given by politicians will generally have been written by a government department, so it should be listed as the author, and the speaker should be noted:

Author (year) Title. Speech given by [speaker] to [audience] on [date]. [Place of publication]: [Publisher]. Available from xxx (Add place of publication, publisher and source information if available.)

For example: Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2013) [The future of Europe in the global economy](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-future-of-europe-in-the-global-economy). Speech given by the Right Honourable David Lidington MP, Minister of State for Europe, to the Lord Mayor's Gala Dinner at the Great Hall, Guildhall on 23 May 2013. London: Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

Trial names

See [trial names](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/t#trial-names-2).

Web document citations

Web document citations should be included in the reference list if there is one. If there isn't a reference list, follow the instructions in [websites](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/w#websites).

Refugees

Do not group with asylum seekers.

Regarding

Do not use. Use 'about'.

Regimen

Drugs are given according to a regimen, not a regime.

Relevant for

Avoid. Use 'relevant to'.

Religion or belief

Be specific when referring to different faiths. The customs and practices associated with particular beliefs should be taken into account but avoid stereotyping or making assumptions.

Try to use neutral language. For example, use the term 'forename' or 'first name' rather than 'Christian name'.

Require and need

Use the more plain English 'need' instead of 'require'. Only use 'require' if a particular person or body demands something: 'the Department of Health requires trusts to implement this directive'.

Respectively

Before you use 'respectively', consider whether it is really needed. It can be confusing, particularly if several variables are being discussed. Breaking up the information to 1 or 2 variables per sentence and repeating a few words can make the text easier to follow. For example:

'… response rates at week 24 were 83% and 80% and at week 48 were 76% and 81% for ustekinumab 45 mg and 90 mg respectively'

is easier to follow if it is split into 2 sentences:

'… response rates at week 24 were 83% for ustekinumab 45 mg and 80% for ustekinumab 90 mg. At week 48 they were 76% for ustekinumab 45 mg and 81% for ustekinumab 90 mg.'

If you use 'respectively', keep it as close to the information it's referring to as possible.

Do not add a comma before 'respectively'.

Responders

People should not be classified as responders or non-responders, unless appropriate in the context of discussing results from a clinical trial.

People do not 'inadequately respond' to a treatment, it is the condition that has not responded to the treatment.

Re-treated

Meaning treated again. Hyphenate.

Risk

Use 'risk **of**' if you are talking about the result, for example 'risk of side effects'.

Use 'risk (or risks) **from**' or '**associated with**' if you are talking about the cause, for example 'risks associated with drinking during pregnancy'.

Routes of administration

Do not abbreviate the route of administration – write out the terms in full (for example, intramuscular, intravenous).

In documents for the public, use phrases such as 'into a vein' for intravenous, or 'into a muscle' for intramuscular.

S

Seasons

Use capitals for specific references; lower case for general references. For example:

* the guidance will be launched in Spring 2009
* flu is more common in the winter
* we are holding a New Year party
* the document will be released early in the new year.

Second-line therapy

Hyphenate 'second-line' when used adjectivally.

Seldom-heard

Please think carefully before using this term. We avoid labelling people and putting people into groups and terms such as 'seldom-heard' are often used to group lots of very different people together. It will be clearer for the reader if you spell out the groups of people you are referring to. If this is becoming repetitive, seek advice from an editor. If you must use 'seldom-heard' do so sparingly and remember that it could be seen by your readers as a value judgement, implying the fault is with the people not the services.

Self-

As in self-awareness, self-assessment, self-esteem, self-opinionated, self-help, self-monitoring; always hyphenate, whether noun or adjective.

Semicolon

Avoid using semicolons in information for patients and the public.

Semicolons can be used to separate 2 closely linked clauses. For example, a semicolon can be used instead of a conjunction (for example, 'and' or 'but') to link 2 clauses that are closely associated or that complement each other, as in the following sentences:

* Writing an abstract of 250 words is difficult; writing an abstract of 50 words is even more challenging.
* The patients liked the drug; the lack of side effects was the main reason.

Semicolons can also be used to separate complex entries in a list:

* The boy told his mum what presents he wanted for Christmas: a replica Jaguar; a leather football, with the logo of his favourite team; an Adidas shirt, in either blue or green; and a pair of Dr Martens.

Senior citizens

Do not use. Use 'older people'. The UN agreed cut-off is 60+ years to refer to the older population.

Sentences

Use short sentences: 15–20 words is ideal, and 30 words the maximum.

Vary your sentences. Use longer ones for detail and shorter, punchy ones for more effect.

Restrict yourself to 1 main idea per sentence. Avoid repetition.

Use shorter, friendlier words and phrases.

For more information and examples, see [Writing for NICE](http://publications.nice.org.uk/wg2).

Service users

Avoid this term. Refer to 'people' or '[people using xxx services](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#people_using_xxx_services)' instead if you are talking about people using the health service in connection with their mental health or pregnancy. Rarely, using 'service user' as shorthand is acceptable, for example, in mental health and social care topics the lay members of guideline development groups are referred to as 'service user and carer members'.

Sex

Do not use 'gender' if you mean 'sex'.

'Sex' refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.

[Gender](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gender) refers to the expected social roles – behaviours, activities and attributes – that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

Sexuality

Do not use. Use 'sexual orientation'.

Sexual orientation

Do not confuse with [gender identity](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gender-identity).

Use the term 'sexual orientation' not 'sexuality'.

Don't assume that everyone is heterosexual and avoid heterosexist language (for example, 'partner' and 'spouse' should be used in preference to 'husband' or 'wife').

Use the terms 'lesbian', 'gay' or 'bisexual', 'lesbian, gay or bisexual' if referring to a specific person or group, and 'lesbian, gay and bisexual' if talking generally.

See also [lesbian](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/l#lesbian), [gay](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gay) and [bisexual](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/b#bisexual).

She or he?

See [gender](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gender) for more information.

Should

NICE guidance is precisely that – guidance. We tell people what they 'should' do, not what they 'must' do. The main exception to this is when referring to matters that are legally enforceable, such as Health and Safety legislation. For example, in the clinical guideline on infection control NICE said that all staff **should** be trained in the basic principles of hygiene, but that gloves **must** be disposed of as clinical waste. For further information on how to word recommendations, refer to the relevant programme manual.

Should you

Do not use. Use 'if you'.

Side effect

See [adverse event, adverse effect, adverse reaction or side effect](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/a#adverse-reaction-adverse-effect-adverse-reaction-or-side-effect).

Sign off

Sign off (verb); sign-off (noun and adjective).

Since

'Since' should be used to refer to time, for example, 'Since I arrived at the office, I have drunk 4 cups of coffee'. Do not use 'since' to mean 'given that' or 'because', for example, 'Since there were no studies on this subject, we had to rely on expert opinion.'

Singular or plural

Organisations, committees, teams and so on take a singular verb: for example, 'The Appraisal Committee meets once a month …', 'NICE issues guidance …', 'The Committee was persuaded …'.

'Either' and 'neither' take a singular verb unless 1 (or more) of the subjects is plural (if there are both singular and plural subjects, put the singular one[s] first):

* Either nausea or irritability is ...
* Neither the doctor nor the patients were ...
* Units of measure always have a singular verb:
* Five millilitres was injected.

Skin colour

Always refer to race or cultural background rather than skin colour, unless skin colour is relevant. (An example of when it would be relevant is when referring to skin cancer or if the focus is on how health professionals or others perceive groups of people.)

If skin colour is referred to, use 'black' or 'white' (no initial capital) as adjectives (for example, black children). Don't use 'blacks' or 'whites' as nouns. Do not use Caucasian unless the person in question comes from the Caucus mountains of Georgia or Armenia.

If race is a proxy or clear indicator for a likely health outcome, then this is the preferred descriptor. For example, some research shows prostate cancer outcomes are different for men of African and Caribbean family origin, so to refer to 'black men' in this instance would not be helpful.

See also [equality and diversity terms](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/e#equality-and-diversity-terms).

Slash

Avoid using because it can be ambiguous: 'patients/carers' can mean 'patients and carers', 'patients or carers' or 'patients and/or carers'. Write out in full what you mean if possible.

It is generally better to use punctuation rather than a forward slash when listing options: 'describe the interventions/strategies/activities' should read as 'describe the interventions, strategies or activities' or '… and activities'.

Do not use 'and/or'– it is ambiguous and often misinterpreted. It is usually possible (and more accurate) to use 'or' instead.

If you do use a forward slash, do not insert spaces before or after it (write 'x/y' rather than 'x / y').

Do not use a forward slash with numbers, which can lead to confusion, for example, '1/2' can be read as 'half' rather than '1 or 2' or '1 out of 2'.

Smoker

Do not use. In line with our house style, we do not label people. Use 'people who smoke'.

Social class I–V

Do not use. Refer to the person's socioeconomic status.

See the [Office for National Statistics](http://www.ons.gov.uk/) classification system for socioeconomic status. This is a description of a person's position in society using criteria such as their income, level of education achieved, occupation and value of the property they own.

Socioeconomic

Do not hyphenate.

Socioeconomic status

Do not use any of the following: working class; middle class; upper class; social class I–V. Instead refer to the person's socioeconomic status.

See the [Office for National Statistics](http://www.ons.gov.uk/) classification system for socioeconomic status. This is a description of a person's position in society using criteria such as their income, level of education achieved, occupation and value of the property they own.

Solidus

See [slash](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#slash).

South

North, south, east and west should all be lower case (northern England, birds fly south for the winter) unless they form part of a proper name, for example, West Lambeth.

Spaces

Use only 1 space after a full stop, not 2.

Use non-breaking spaces ('Ctrl + Shift + Space') between all numbers and units, but do not put spaces around equals signs or symbols. For example: p=0.5; 15 mg.

Note also that the % symbol (23%) and the degree symbol (12°C) are closed up to the number, as are plus and minus symbols for positive and negative numbers (+23, −26).

For more information, see [symbols](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#symbols) and [numbers](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/n#numbers).

Spelling

Use UK English.

To check that the language is set correctly on a Word document, use 'Ctrl + A' to select all the text, then in Word 2007 go to 'Home/Proofing/Set language' and highlight 'English (UK)'. In earlier versions of Word go to 'Tools', 'Language', 'Set language' and make sure that 'English (UK)' is highlighted.

Use the 'Concise Oxford English dictionary' for guidance.

Use -ise spellings, not -ize (for example, synthesise not synthesize).

Do not change the spellings of names of organisations or companies even if they don't follow usual NICE style: for example, the World Health Organization.

As a general rule, if there are 2 variations of a word, use the shorter: for example, 'while' rather than 'whilst', 'on' rather than 'upon' (but 'although' rather than 'though'), 'in' rather than 'within'. See the [writing for NICE](http://publications.nice.org.uk/wg2) booklet for more examples.

Split infinitives

The 'rule' that infinitives should not be split (putting an adverb between 'to' and the verb, as in 'to boldly go') was introduced by people who thought that English should follow the same rules as Latin (a Latin infinitive cannot be split because it is a single word). Unless you feel that English should conform to the rules of a long dead and largely unrelated language, there is no reason to avoid split infinitives. Put the adverb wherever it reads most naturally and clearly.

Statistics

Use lower-case roman for 'p' (probability) and 'n' (number).

Do not insert spaces on either side of mathematical symbols.

The style for probability is p<0.05; p≤0.01; p=0.012.

If several statistical terms are used in a set of brackets, use commas to separate the terms; for example (95% CI 0.53 to 0.69, 2 RCTs, n=6551).

Other terms that you may come across include:

* Mann–Whitney test.
* Odds ratio: an estimate (usually with a confidence interval) for the effect of a treatment. The term is widely used in clinical studies.
* Relative risk (RR): the ratio of the risk of a given event or outcome (such as an adverse reaction to the drug being tested) in 1 group of subjects compared with another group. Relative risk is sometimes used as a synonym for risk ratio.
* Standard deviation (SD).
* Standard error of the mean (SEM).
* t-test.

See also [symbols](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#symbols).

Statutory

Do not use. Use: by law, legal.

Subscript

Use subscript in:

* HbA1c
* Vitamin B12
* VO2 max
* FEV1

Don't use subscript in:

* Beta-2
* T2-weighted imaging

When making a character subscript, make sure that the space after it is not in subscript font too.

Subthreshold

Do not hyphenate.

Suffer

Don't say that someone 'suffers' from a condition: use 'people with ingrowing toenails', rather than 'people suffering from ingrowing toenails'.

Suitable and suitability

Do not refer to patients or people being suitable or not suitable for treatments. It is the treatment or intervention that is suitable or not suitable for the patient.

Symbols

Avoid using <, >, ≤, ≥, × (multiply) and = in text, although they can be used to save space in tables; + and − should only be used in text for positive and negative numbers, not as mathematical operators. Remember that many readers will not understand what all these symbols mean.

If you are using symbols in the main text, put them in brackets. For example:

* The difference was not statistically significant (p>0.18).

When 'translating' symbols in text, please use plain English. For example, say 'x or more' rather than 'equal to or greater than x'.

Do not insert spaces between numbers and symbols. For example: p=0.1 or p>0.1.

The % symbol (23%) and the degree symbol (12°C) are also closed up to the number, as are plus and minus symbols for positive and negative numbers (+23, −26).

For formulae, use the 'multi' sign × (type '0215' on numerical keypad while holding down 'alt', or use 'Insert/Symbols'). Do not use the letter 'x'.

For the minus sign, use 'Insert/Symbols/More symbols', click on 'Mathematical operators' in the drop-down menu and select the minus sign from the grid. Do not use a hyphen or an en dash.

Use 'Insert/Symbols' to add a ± to your document. Do not use '+/−'.

T

Tables

Use the table styles specified and already set up in the NICE template you are using (see [NICE templates and formatting guide](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-templates-and-formatting-guide-wg3) for more information). Use an initial capital for the first word in each cell.

Full stops at the end of bullet points and at the end of text in cells are not needed. If bullets are not used, then full stops are needed to differentiate between points. If there are no data, an en dash ('Ctrl' and 'Minus' on your numeric key pad) rather than leaving the cell blank. Do not use shading, because it won't work in the web viewer or pathways.

Number tables sequentially throughout a document. If the document is long and has numbered chapters or sections, number the tables according to the chapter/section in which they appear (for example, 4 figures in chapter 5 could be numbered 5.1–5.4). If you are cross-referencing to a table from the text, you don't need an initial capital, for example 'see table 1'.

Put table titles above the table. Don't add a full stop after the title. Ensure that the title or caption adequately explains the table: a reader should be able to understand it without trawling back through the text, but avoid adding too much detail in the title. Define all abbreviations used in the table in a footnote, unless the abbreviation has been used many times in the text. Use the following punctuation for table abbreviation lists:

Abbreviations: NMES, neuromuscular electrical stimulation; PRT, progressive resistance training; SD, standard deviation; SWAL-QOL, swallowing-related quality of life; TT, traditional therapy; VFSS, videofluoroscopic swallowing study.

For digital products such as pathways use the glossary function to define abbreviations.

Use superscript numbers for footnotes and add them to the last row of the table. The cells in this row should be merged so that the text runs across the full width of the table. Start with a capital but don't end with a full stop. Order the abbreviation definitions alphabetically.

Use \*, \*\*, \*\*\* to indicate significance values, and define these in the last row, before any footnotes (\*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001).

**Table 1 Number of people with adverse effects on day 14 of the study**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Number of people with adverse effect | Number of people who left the study because of adverse effects |
| Group1 | Nausea | Local irritation |
| Placebo | 14 | 122 | 2 |
| Treated with Y only | 105 | 23 | 56 |
| Treated with X and Y | 127 | 28 | 101 |
| 1 There were 200 people in each group2 Another person reported this but there was no evidence on examination |

For more information, see [abbreviations](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/a#abbreviations) and [footnotes](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/f#footnotes).

Targeted/targeting

Not 'targetted/targetting'.

T cell

Hyphenate when used adjectivally, as in 'T-cell receptor'.

t.d.s.

Do not use. Say '3 times daily'.

Telephone numbers

See [phone numbers](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/p#phone-numbers).

Terminate

Do not use. Use: end, cancel, stop.

That and which

Use 'that' if the description is necessary to define the item that you're discussing, but '[comma] which' if you're adding extra information that isn't needed to define the item. It can be extremely important to get this right, as the following examples show:

* There was 1 serious adverse event, which was reported in a patient in the placebo group. (This means that there was only 1 serious adverse event, and the extra information is that it occurred in a patient who had received placebo.)
* There was 1 serious adverse event that was reported in a patient in the placebo group. (This means that 1 serious adverse event was reported in a patient in the placebo group – it tells you nothing about any serious adverse events that might have occurred in other groups.)

The majority of

Do not use. Use 'most'.

These

Avoid using 'this', 'these' or 'those' if it is not clear what is being referred to – it's better to repeat a word or to paraphrase. Also, don't assume that people will read headings: repeat the word or phrase if necessary. Some possibly confusing examples follow:

* Potentially confusing: 'Brown attempted to measure patient QALYs using carers as proxies but these may not accurately reflect those of the patient or society.' (Does 'these' mean the QALYs or the carers?)
* Clearer: 'Brown attempted to measure patient QALYs using carers as proxies but these proxy measurements may not accurately reflect the impact of the disease on the patient or society.'

This

Avoid using 'this', 'these' or 'those' if it is not clear what is being referred to – it's better to repeat a word or to paraphrase. Also, don't assume that people will read headings: repeat the word or phrase if necessary. Some possibly confusing examples follow:

* Potentially confusing: 'Brown attempted to measure patient QALYs using carers as proxies but these may not accurately reflect those of the patient or society.' (Does 'these' mean the QALYs or the carers?)
* Clearer: 'Brown attempted to measure patient QALYs using carers as proxies but these proxy measurements may not accurately reflect the impact of the disease on the patient or society.'

Those

Avoid using 'this', 'these' or 'those' if it is not clear what is being referred to – it's better to repeat a word or to paraphrase. Also, don't assume that people will read headings: repeat the word or phrase if necessary. Some possibly confusing examples follow:

* Potentially confusing: 'Brown attempted to measure patient QALYs using carers as proxies but these may not accurately reflect those of the patient or society.' (Does 'these' mean the QALYs or the carers?)
* Clearer: 'Brown attempted to measure patient QALYs using carers as proxies but these proxy measurements may not accurately reflect the impact of the disease on the patient or society.'

Thrombocytopenia

Not 'thrombocytopaenia'.

Time

Units of time should be written out in full: 30 seconds, 24 hours, 5 years. But, ms (millisecond) and abbreviations for complex units of time (such as 5 m/s [metres per second]) are acceptable.

Time-consuming

Always hyphenate.

Titles

See [job titles](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/j#job-titles).

TNF-alpha inhibitor

Not TNF inhibitor, TNF-α inhibitor or TNF-α antagonists.

TNM classification

Run the TNM stages together, for example: T3N0M0 or T4N0M0.

Today

Try to avoid using words like 'today', 'yesterday' or 'tomorrow', which look out of date very quickly. If you need to use 'today' then put the date as well, for instance: 'NICE has today (23 September 2009) published final guidance on the use of pemetrexed for the treatment of non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC).'

Tomorrow

Try to avoid using words like 'today', 'yesterday' or 'tomorrow', which look out of date very quickly. If you need to use 'tomorrow' then include the date as well, for instance: 'NICE will publish final guidance on the use of pemetrexed for the treatment of non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) tomorrow (23 September 2009).'

Trade unions

Not trades union. But Trades Union Congress is the correct and full term for the TUC.

Transgender

'Trans' is also an acceptable term that is in common use. Think about whether you are referring to a specific group for example, transsexual or transgender, and whether you need to make this clear when you first introduce the term in your writing.

Remember not to confuse gender identity with sexual orientation.

For more information see [gender identity](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gender-identity).

Transsexual

'Trans' is also an acceptable term that is in common use. Think about whether you are referring to a specific group for example, transsexual or transgender, and whether you need to make this clear when you first introduce the term in your writing.

Remember not to confuse gender identity with sexual orientation.

For more information see [gender identity](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/g#gender-identity).

Travellers and Gypsies

Capitalise the T and the G. This covers Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers among others. You do not need to capitalise the 't' in the phrase 'new age travellers'.

For more information see: Equality and Human Rights Commission (2009) [Gypsies and Travellers](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/fairer-britain/good-relations/gypsies-and-travellers-simple-solutions-for-living-together/).

Treatment failure

When referring to a treatment failure, it should be clear that it is the treatment that has failed and not the patient. For example, write 'this drug could be considered after first-line therapy has failed', not 'this drug could be considered after the patient has failed first-line therapy'. Similarly, avoid using terms that could imply failure of the patient, such as 'Patients should continue treatment if they achieve a response of at least 50%'.

Treatment in, treatment for

A treatment is used 'in' people or 'for' an indication. For example, 'Insulin is used in either adults or children', but 'Insulin is used as a treatment for diabetes'.

Trial names

Use the acronym (for example CALYPSO). There is no need to spell out what the acronym stands for.

U

Underlining

Don't use underlining to emphasise text. If it is necessary to emphasise text, use bold instead. On a web page users will assume underlined text it is a link and try to click on it.

Under-served

Please think carefully before using this term. We avoid labelling people and putting people into groups and terms such as 'under-served' are often used to group lots of very different people together. It will be clearer for the reader if you spell out the groups of people you are referring to. If this is becoming repetitive, seek advice from an editor. If you must use 'under-served' do so sparingly and define it at the first mention to make sure our readers know who we are talking about.

Under way

Two words.

Unique

Either something is unique or it isn't. Do not use 'very unique' or 'fairly unique'.

Units

Use the [international system of units](http://physics.nist.gov/cuu/Units/) (SI units), with the exception of mmHg for blood pressure, and other situations in which non-SI units are standard (for example, 'ml' for millilitres).

Use metric rather than imperial units, unless you feel that people may be more familiar with a measurement in imperial, for example their weight. In these cases, include the metric equivalent in brackets. Spell out imperial units rather than abbreviating them, for example inches instead of ″.

Insert a non-breaking space ('Ctrl + Shift + Space') between all numbers and units.

Note that temperatures and percentages do not have a space: 37°C, 76%.

For energy, kcal may be used, but give values in kJ as well.

There are various websites that have a unit conversion tool, such as [www.onlineconversion.com](http://www.onlineconversion.com/)

Always spell out 'litre', 'microgram', 'microsecond' and 'nanogram' in full. Spelling out microgram is particularly important because some programs will convert µg to mg. Other units should also be spelt out in full if there is any possibility of confusion. For example, mg will be understood in a document for healthcare professionals, but consider whether it may be more appropriate to use milligrams (for example, in documents for the public or in general writing). We use 'ml', not 'mL' for millilitre.

Units of time should be written out in full: 30 seconds, 24 hours, 5 years. But, ms (millisecond) and abbreviations for complex units of time (such as 5 m/s [metres per second]) are acceptable.

Use, for example, '5 mg/100 ml' rather than '5 mg/dl'.

Use slashes rather than 'per' with units that are abbreviations, but 'per' if the units are given in full (for example, 'beats per minute' for a pulse rate). For drug doses, '30 mg per day' or '30 mg/day' are acceptable.

Use kg/m2 when giving BMI values. For example, 'Women with a pre-pregnancy body mass index above 30 kg/m2'.

Units should be repeated. For example, '5%, 15% and 25%' not '5, 15 and 25%'. If appropriate, change the numbers to a range: 'between 25 and 30°C' can be changed to '25–30°C'.

When referring to blood pressure, use 'higher than' or 'lower than' rather than 'over' or 'under'.

Unsuitable

Do not refer to patients or people being suitable or not suitable (unsuitable) for treatments. It is the treatment or intervention that is suitable or not suitable for the patient.

Upon

Do not use. Use 'on'.

Upper class

Do not use. Refer to the person's socioeconomic status.

See the [Office for National Statistics](http://www.ons.gov.uk/) classification system for socioeconomic status. This is a description of a person's position in society using criteria such as their income, level of education achieved, occupation and value of the property they own.

URLs

Usually, URLs will be embedded. See [hyperlinks](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#hyperlinks) for more information.

If you are giving a web address (URL) in full, always give the http:// prefix. Do not add full stops at the end of a web address. If it appears at the end of a sentence, put it inside brackets if possible.

USA

Do not spell out USA or US.

Use 'USA' to refer to the country; use 'US' adjectivally: 'There are 3 centres in the USA', but 'There are 3 US centres'.

Utilise

Do not use. Use 'use'.

V

Variety of

'Variety of' is the noun form of 'various' (don't use 'variety of' and 'different' in the same clause):

The Committee members have a variety of backgrounds.

Various

'Various' is used to describe things that are different:

* The delegates came from various countries.

Varying

'Varying' should be used in the same way as 'changing':

* Correct: 'Pulse rates varying from 80 to 156 beats per minute were recorded for patient A.' (That is, the pulse rate of patient A was changing during the period.)
* Incorrect: 'The bedspread is available in varying colours.' (This is incorrect because the colours don't themselves change; 'various' would be correct here.)

Verbs to nouns

Avoid turning verbs into nouns. For example, say 'managing the condition' not 'the management of the condition'. This helps keep the text active, short and clear. Examples of phrases to avoid can be found in [Writing for NICE](http://publications.nice.org.uk/wg2).

Versus

Avoid using and use 'compared with' if possible. If 'versus' must be used, always spell out. Do not use the abbreviation 'vs' (except in tables) because this may not be understood by all readers.

Victim

Avoid this term because people don't like being seen as victims.

Virus taxonomy

In 'formal' taxonomic usage the accepted names of virus orders, families, subfamilies and genera are printed in italics and the first letters of the names are capitalised.

Species names are printed in italics and have the first letter of the first word capitalised. Other words are not capitalised unless they are proper nouns, or parts of proper nouns.

General rules to follow are:

* Italicise things like the species, genus, and family of a virus when used in a taxonomic sense.
* If a virus is well known, such as polio, the virus taxonomy (for example, the genus and species name) usually isn't used.
* Do not italicise a virus name when used generically.
* If a virus name has a proper name in it, then you capitalise it.

For example:

* bovine kobuviruses, a kobuvirus, kobuviruses, but *Kobuvirus* spp.
* The presence of West Nile virus was confirmed in mosquitoes and dead crows.
* The species *West Nile virus* is a member of the genus *Flavivirus*.
* Ebola virus takes a capital 'E'.
* There have been recent reports of outbreaks of the Toscana virus (family *Bunyaviridae*, genus *Phlebovirus*, species *Sandfly fever Naples virus*).
* The varicella-zoster virus can cause 2 diseases: chickenpox (varicella) and shingles (herpes zoster). It belongs to the order *Herpesvirales*, family *Herpesviridae*, subfamily *Alphaherpesvirinae*, and the genus *Varicellovirus*.
* Varicella-zoster virus (VZV) and Epstein–Barr virus (EBV) are important human pathogens that belong to different subfamilies of the herpesviruses: the *Alphaherpesvirinae* and *Gammaherpesvirinae* respectively.
* The Epstein–Barr virus (EBV), also called human herpesvirus 4 (HHV-4), is best known as the cause of infectious mononucleosis (glandular fever).

Vulnerable

Avoid this term, unless in the context of people eligible for community care services.

We avoid labelling people and putting people into groups and terms such as 'vulnerable' are often used to group lots of very different people together but also to define a group of particular concern to services. It will be clearer for the reader if you spell out the groups of people you are referring to. You may for example mean [people at risk of abuse or neglect](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/draft-care-and-support-bill/web-forum/safeguarding-adults/). If this is becoming repetitive, seek advice from an editor. If you must use 'vulnerable' do so sparingly and remember that it could be seen by your readers as a value judgement.

W

We

If possible, use 'you' and 'we', particularly when giving advice. It is friendlier and shorter.

Web addresses

If you are giving a web address (URL) in full, always give the http:// prefix. Do not add full stops at the end of a web address. If it appears at the end of a sentence, put it inside brackets if possible.

For more information, see [hyperlinks](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#hyperlinks).

Web page

Two words.

Website(s)

One word.

If you are giving a web address (URL) in full, always give the http:// prefix. Do not add full stops at the end of a web address. If it appears at the end of a sentence, put it inside brackets if possible.

For more information, see [hyperlinks](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/h#hyperlinks).

If there is a reference list, include web document citations in it. See [references](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/r#references) for more information.

Always check that any URLs in your document work before publication.

Wellbeing

One word.

Well known

Not well-known, unless used as an adjective, as in 'well-known author'.

West

North, south, east and west should all be lower case (northern England, birds fly south for the winter) unless they form part of a proper name, for example, West Lambeth.

What or which

Use 'what' to ask a question where there are an unknown or infinite number of possible answers, for example 'What treatments are available for diabetes?'.

Use 'which' when there is a choice between a number of items from, for example 'Which diabetes treatment is the most effective?'.

When

'When' refers to time. Don't use 'when' as a synonym for 'if'.

Where

'Where' refers only to location, but it can be unclear, so it should generally be avoided if possible.

Don't use 'where' as a synonym for 'if' or to mean 'in whom'.

Whereas

See [while, although and whereas](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/w#while-although-and-whereas).

Which and that

Use 'that' if the description is necessary to define the item that you're discussing, but '[comma] which' if you're adding extra information that isn't needed to define the item. It can be extremely important to get this right, as the following examples show:

* There was 1 serious adverse event, which was reported in a patient in the placebo group. (This means that there was only 1 serious adverse event, and the extra information is that it occurred in a patient who had received placebo.)
* There was 1 serious adverse event that was reported in a patient in the placebo group. (This means that 1 serious adverse event was reported in a patient in the placebo group – it tells you nothing about any serious adverse events that might have occurred in other groups.)

While, although and whereas

While

Not 'whilst'. Use 'while' for something that happened at the same time as something else:

* While the Committee considered the matter, a dog crept into the room and ate the evidence review papers.

Although

Use 'although' to show that something has been considered but discounted:

* Although the Committee considered the matter important, there was no evidence on which to base a recommendation.

Whereas

Use 'whereas' if a comparison or contrast is meant:

* The press officers are all based in the office, whereas most of the editors work from home.

White

Does not take an initial capital. Do not use 'whites' as a noun.

If possible, use ethnicity or cultural background rather than skin colour when describing someone.

For more information, see [skin colour](http://publications.nice.org.uk/nice-style-guide-wg1/s#skin-colour).

Wholegrain

Not whole-grain.

Within

'Within' can usually be replaced by the shorter 'in' unless you are describing something that falls within specific boundaries or a range. Notice the distinction between the meanings of the words in the phrases below:

I'll be back in an hour (I will be back at the end of the timespan)

I'll be back within an hour (I could come back any time during the timespan)

With regard to

Avoid – use a more plain English term such as 'about'.

With the exception of

Do not use. Use 'except'.

Women who have been trafficked

Use this term.

Working class

Do not use. Refer to the person's socioeconomic status.

See the [Office for National Statistics](http://www.ons.gov.uk/) classification system for socioeconomic status. This is a description of a person's position in society using criteria such as their income, level of education achieved, occupation and value of the property they own.

Workplace

One word.

X

X-ray

Capital X.

Y

Yesterday

Try to avoid using words like 'today', 'yesterday' or 'tomorrow', which look out of date very quickly. If you need to use 'yesterday' then put the date as well, for instance: 'NICE published final guidance on the use of pemetrexed for the treatment of non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) yesterday (23 September 2009).'

You

If possible, use 'you' and 'we', particularly when giving advice. It is friendlier and shorter.