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Australian Transport Safety Bureau

The ATSB's little book of style

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Australia's national transport safety investigator

AVIATION | MARINE | RAIL

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Introduction

This writing style guide is for authors of ATSB investigation and research reports and all corporate documents (across all modes of transport). It is a tool to:

- make writing, editing and reviewing easier

- ensure consistency in style and language

- help standardise presentation.

It applies to all levels of reports and is to be used by all ATSB staff.

The ATSB's little book of style is designed to be short and concise. It does not cover every circumstance. It is also not the only guidance document available to you. You can also rely on the *Safety Investigation Guidelines Manual—Reporting*.

This writing style guide does not replace ATSB guidelines on writing for ministers.

It does replace *Tools—Report Style Manual* (version 1.06, issued 27 April 2011).

Guide structure

This guide:

- lists the mandatory Australian Government reference documents to use when writing for the ATSB

- specifies the ATSB's policy to use plain English

- outlines the importance of writing for your reader and their needs

- lists the main writing, editing and style requirements to follow (in alphabetical order), based on common issues found in investigation and research reports, correspondence and corporate documents, produced across all modes.

Mandatory references

ATSB uses these two mandatory reference documents as primary authorities:

- *Style manual:* for authors, editors and printers (sixth edition), John Wiley & Sons Australia Ltd

- *Macquarie Dictionary* (sixth edition), Macquarie Library Pty Ltd
(for definition, spelling, hyphenation and use of italics)
Online version available at:
Section 22

When these references are silent on an issue, ATSB uses these secondary references:

- Transport safety legislation and supporting regulations including:

  - *Air Navigation Act 1920*

  - *Air Services Act 1995*

  - *Airspace Act 2007*

  - *Australian Maritime Safety Authority Act 1990*

  - *Aviation Transport Security Act 2004*

  - *Carriage of Goods by Sea Act 1991*

  - *Civil Aviation Act 1988*

  - *Navigation Act 1912*

  - *Shipping Registration Act 1981*

  - *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003*

- Rail Industry and Safety Standards Board (RISSB) *Glossary of Rail Terminology*

- *Cambridge Aerospace Dictionary, Bill Gunston, November 2004*

- *Convention on International Civil Aviation Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation, Annex 13.*

Plain English

Government and ATSB policy

Writing in plain English is Australian Government policy and ATSB policy. It is part of an international movement that began in the 1970s and has been specified in Australian Government legislation since 1983.

What is plain English?

Plain English is language your readers can understand and immediately act on. It is clear and accessible.

Plain English is simple and direct, but not simplistic. It does not mean omitting key information or dumbing down content. Even complex technical and legal information can be conveyed accurately when written in plain English.

Why use plain English?

Plain English is effective for many reasons. For the ATSB, this includes:

- getting messages across quickly and clearly
- motivating readers and increasing their understanding
- avoiding confusion
- enabling readers to concentrate on content instead of being distracted by complicated language
- enhancing image and reputation
- making reading easy.

Plain English writing tips

Follow these tips to write in plain English.

1. **Keep sentences short**
    Vary sentence length but aim for an average of about 22 words.

    Appendix A: Reduce unnecessary words

2. **Use short everyday words**
    Use familiar words and aim to write like you speak. Use short words that are direct and precise.

3. **Avoid jargon**
    Do not use jargon. Uncommon and unfamiliar words (jargon) are often taken to be pretentious.

4. **Avoid bureaucratic writing**
    Do not use bureaucratic language. Instead explain as simply as possible.

5. **Use technical language well**
    Use technical and specialist language sparingly and explain on first use where required (in brackets or in a footnote).

6. **Write in the active voice not the passive voice**
    See 'Active voice'.

7. **Make every word count**
    If a word does not add value do not use it.

8. **Be consistent**
    Describe objects, events and concepts the same way instead of varying language and causing confusion. For example, use either the word report, document or paper (but do not use a mix of all three); program or project or initiative (not a mix of all three).

9. **Avoid shortened forms**
    Avoid shortened forms (acronyms and initialisms) or reduce to a bare minimum.

Unintended judgment

Using plain English ensures ATSB reports and communications are impartial and accurate and can be interpreted correctly by the media.

Excess words, especially adjectives and adverbs, can inadvertently carry unintended emotion or judgment.

Examples of words to watch out for
~~At no point did t~~The crew member <u>did not</u> notice anything abnormal about the bearings on the wagon.
~~Again, t~~There was no report of an abnormal condition.
The driver ~~would have~~ noticed the fault but did not ~~even~~ report it.
The second driver ~~took the time to~~ walk<u>ed</u> back to investigate the cause.
The pilot ~~finally~~ decided to ~~take~~ act~~ion~~.

Notes:

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Writing, editing and style issues

Abbreviations

Rule	Examples
Do not use a full stop when the abbreviation includes the last letter of the word. Exception: 'no.' which needs a full stop to distinguish between 'number' and the word 'no'.	Dept *(Department)* Pty Ltd *(Proprietary Limited)*
Do not abbreviate an aircraft registration number.	VH-WHO
Use a full stop when the abbreviation does not include the last letter of the word, except if plural (see below).	Inc. vol. (vols) no. (nos)
Use a full stop if the abbreviation is plural or repeats a letter.	pp. (for pages) ed. (eds)

Acronyms

See Shortened forms

Active voice not passive voice

Write in the active voice unless there is a good reason to use the passive voice.

Why?

Active voice:

- often uses less words
- makes reading easier and faster
- makes it clear who does what
- puts ATSB front and centre
- avoids misleading the reader
- avoids giving the impression the author is hiding something (for example, who did what).

How?

Verbs have two voices—active and passive.

- If the subject does the action, the verb is active.
- If the action is done to the subject, the verb is passive.

Examples

Passive	Active
The freight train is owned and operated by Johnson and Co.	Johnson and Co. owns and operates the freight train.
The partner bearing was examined by the ATSB's failure analysis specialists.	The ATSB's failure analysis specialists examined the partner bearing.
The safety report was completed by the department.	The department completed the safety report.
The new policy was implemented by the ATSB.	The ATSB implemented the new policy.
Initial discussions were held by the ATSB and the airline on how to improve the safety record.	The ATSB discussed with the airline how to improve the safety record.
It was indicated that the portainer driver was 'pretty busy' at the time of the accident.	The portainer driver was 'pretty busy' at the time of the accident.
It was reported that the train crashed.	The train crashed.

When to use the passive voice

1. When you do not know who did the action or when it is irrelevant who did the action.

    Example: The report was sent to the department last week.

2. When you want the doer of the action to remain anonymous, because you do not want or need to assign blame.

    Example: The investigation was not completed on time.

3. When the doer of the action is not as important as the rest of the content in the sentence.

    Example: The airport runway was cleared by early this morning.

Bills before Parliament

Rule	Examples
Cite exactly as on original—do not alter spelling or capitalisation	Regulation of Genetic Material Bill 2012
Always cite in full on first mention with shortened form if there is one in brackets	Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) 2012
	(CT(RAS) Bill)
Do not italicise	As above

See also 'Legislation' and 'Regulations'.

Capitalisation

Use minimal capitalisation as a rule.

Rule	Example
Atmospheric phenomena	cyclone Tracey
Common nouns with date, number or letter	appendix C
	wagon 69
	runway 37
	model MU-2B
Company names	Boeing
	DuPont
Document names, when full name is used	Airworthiness Directive 89–1
	Safety Recommendation R20000115
	Manual of Air Traffic Services
	Note: partial titles do not need capital letters.
	The airworthiness directive is detailed.
	The pilot had not read the safety recommendation.
	ATSB needs to update the manual.
Geographical names—cities, countries, mountains, rivers, towns and official names of areas	Baltic Sea
	Blue Mountains
	Murray River
	Port Germein
	Western District
	Withnell Bay
	Yung An (Taiwan)
	Note: partial names do not need capitals.
	The ship sailed the sea.
	The crowd gathered at the port.
	The town's police were involved.
	The river was murky.
	Note: descriptive and unofficial titles do not need capitals.
	eastern Australia
	central Australia
	far north Queensland
	northern France

Rule	Example
Government, when full title is used	The Australian Government is responsible for the policy.
	Note: partial title does not need capital letter.
	The government proposes to introduce the legislation.
	The investigator examined government policy before making final recommendations.
Names of aircraft, ships, trains, models and classes of vehicles	*British Sapphire*
	Vega Gotland
	Beechcraft King Air
	Boeing 747
	Freight train 3PW4
	Wagon RKWY-4W5C
Names of organisations, bodies and companies when full name is used and following the style the organisation itself uses	Air Tractor Inc.
	BP Shipping
	De Havilland
	Pacific National
	Note: articles, prepositions or conjunctions do not need capitals.
	International Society of Air Safety Investigators
	Standards and Recommended Practices
Nationalities and distinct groups of people	Queenslander
	Filipino
	Indigenous

Rule	Example
Proper nouns and proper names (specific people, places, organisations, things)	Chief Commissioner of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau
Use capitals for official or abbreviated titles but not for generic or plural references	Minister for Infrastructure and Transport
	Copilot John Citizen
	Sydney Flight Service Centre
	Cessna Citation Flight Manual 2012
	Note: partial titles do not need capitals.
	The commissioner proposed the new review.
	The minister backed the department's recommendations.
	The centre's manual had not been consulted.
	The flight manual was detailed.
	The copilots made the call.
Radio transmission letters	Papa Alpha Charlie
Seasons	spring, summer, autumn, winter
States and territories	See 'States and territories'
Time zones—Australian	Central Standard Time
	Eastern Standard Time
	Western Standard Time
	Central Daylight-saving Time (lower case 's')
	Eastern Daylight-saving Time (lower case 's')
	Western Daylight-saving time (lower case 's')
	Notes: Include in full on first mention and use initialism thereafter (CST, EST, WST, CDT, EDT, WDT).
	All time zones included should be Australian, unless specified otherwise.

Compass points

In general text

Rule	Example
Spell out in full, do not capitalise	The train was travelling south.
Hyphenate compound forms	The aircraft took off in a north-westerly direction.

Tables

Rule	Example
Abbreviate in capitals, no full stops in-between initials	50 km NNE Gold Coast Airport, Queensland
	25 km WNW of Leongatha, Victoria

In report titles

Rule	Example
Use the abbreviated form in ATSB report titles	Collision with terrain involving a Robinson R22, 41 km NW of Dubbo, NSW

Contractions

Rule	Correct	Incorrect
Do not use in safety or research reports except if the contraction is in a direct quote	are not	aren't
	could not	couldn't
	did not	didn't
	it is	it's
	would not	wouldn't
Example general text People **are not** likely to report any risk-related event if they think that **they will** be punished for doing so.		
Example direct quote 'People **aren't** likely to report any risk-related event if they think that **they'll** be punished for doing so,' said the investigator.		
Contractions may be used in less formal publications such as leaflets, brochures and the safety summary.		

Country names

In general text

Rules	Examples
Spell out in full in general text	New Zealand
Capitalise as the country itself capitalises	Papua New Guinea
	United Kingdom
	United States (not United States of America)

In tables, illustrations, notes, lists and where space is a premium

Rules	Examples
Use shortened form	NZ
Capitalise	PNG
No full stops between initial letters	UK
	US (not USA)

Notes:

Dashes (or rules)

Symbol	Name of symbol	Keys	Rules	Examples
-	Hyphen (no space either side)	Hyphen key	Use for compound words and some prefixes Use Macquarie Dictionary and mandatory references pp. 2 including for homonyms (words having the same spelling or sound but different meanings *recover (retrieve) or re-cover (cover again) resigned (acquiescent) or re-signed (signed again)	*Examples of correct use* de-ice diesel-electric system off-track system two-year plan long-term development hand-held radio pre-eminent take-off adj. take-off n. take off v. *Examples where hyphens are not used* outboard motor in service near collision wheel sets
–	En (short; width of an n) Where the rule links a single word or set of numbers there is no space. Use spaces if there is more than one word on either side.	Ctl+Minus key (Use the minus on the numeric key pad)	Use for linking spans of figures, dates, time and distances (usually means 'to' or 'between') Use for an association between two entities	2011–12 pp. 9–13 60–65 pounds 0300–0700 September–December 2011 Canberra–Sydney flight Victoria–New South Wales border a Commonwealth – New South Wales agreement the Alice Springs – Darwin railway

| — | Em (long; width of an m) (no space either side) | Alt+Ctl+Num | Use to signify abrupt change in a sentence, amplify, explain or set apart Use for words, phrases and clauses that add to, but are not necessary to, the completeness or meaning of the sentence. These are called interrupters or parenthetical elements. | The primary factors associated with accidents— poor judgment, overconfidence and lack of expertise—have changed little over the years. Three carriers—Qantas, Virgin Blue and British Airways—responded to the request. |

Dates

In general text

Item	Rules	Examples
Days of week	Spell out in full Initial capital letter only	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday
Months	Spell out in full Initial capital letter only	January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December
Full dates	Present as day, month, year No commas (except after day if used)	15 January 2011 Thursday, 3 March 2012
Decades	No apostrophe or short form	1990s (not 1990's or '90s)
Spans of years (calendar and financial)	En dash, no space either side No forward slash Both years in full when spanning a decade En dash, no space either side No forward slash	2011–12 (not 2011 – 2012 or 2011/12) 1999–2000 (not 1999–00 or 1999/2000)
Plain presentation	Do not use 'nd', 'rd', 'th'	2 May (not 2nd May) 23 October (not 23rd October) 4 July (not 4th July)

In charts, figures, tables

Item	Rules	Examples
Days of week	Abbreviate with full stop	Mon., Tues., Wed., Thurs., Fri., Sat., Sun.
Months	Abbreviate with full stop (except May, June, July)	Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.
Full dates	Present as day, month, year Use full stops	12 Sept. 2011 (not 12/09/11 or 12-09-11, but month in abbreviated form as per examples above)
Plain presentation	Do not use 'nd', 'rd', 'th':	2 November (not 2nd November) 3 August (not 3rd August) 24 June (not 24th June)

Dot point and numbered lists

Item	Rule	Example
Semi-colons or commas	Do not use at end of dot points	ATSB promotes safety by: • publishing investigation and research reports • providing information on its website • delivering presentations.
And	Do not use at the end of the second last item in the list	See above
Or	Place on separate line to show alternatives, but only when more than two alternatives provided (otherwise just leave out)	*Correct* Three options are available to improve your writing: 1. take a writing course 2. study on your own or 3. get a writing coach. *Incorrect* Three options are available to improve your writing: 1. take a writing course or 2. study on your own or 3. get a writing coach.

Item	Rule	Example
Full stop	Only use at end of last dot point.	Examples above.
Complete sentences	Only use capitals and full stops in list items when they contain complete sentences. *Note:* Do not combine full sentences and sentence fragments in the same bulleted or numbered lists.	*Correct* The commissioners came to two important conclusions: • The ATSB should undertake research into the three areas identified in the report. • Funding should be sought from government sources. *Incorrect* The committee came to two important conclusions: • that ATSB investigators should research three areas identified in the report • Funding should be sought from from government sources.
Number of dot or numbered points	Do not use more than six. If more than six required, rework material to present another way (for example, in columns or tables).	
First level list	Use black bullet style.	ATSB promotes safety by: • publishing investigation and research reports • providing information on its website • delivering presentations.

Item	Rule	Example
Second level list	Use en dash (–) Indent	ATSB promotes safety by: • publishing investigation and research reports, including on accidents in: – aviation – marine – rail • providing information: – on the website – in publications – on bulletin boards • delivering presentations.
Third level list	Do not use Rework material to present another way	
Avoid repetition	Do not repeat wording at beginning of each dot point Adjust lead-in sentence to include the repetitive thought	*Incorrect* It states the knowledge required includes: • methods of launching survival craft • methods of recovering survival craft • methods of launching rescue boats • methods of recovering rescue boats. *Correct* It states the knowledge required includes methods of recovering and launching: • survival craft • rescue boats.
Introducing lists	Introduce points with a lead-in sentence Place a colon at end of lead-in sentence Ensure content of each dot point follows logically from lead-in (see 'Parallel construction' below)	As above (correct)

Item	Rule	Example
Parallel construction (presenting items the same way)	Each list must: • start with a noun or verb, but not a mix • be a full sentence, phrase (sentence fragment) or short paragraph, but not a mix • start with an upper case word or lower case word (unless first word is a proper noun), but not a mix.	*Incorrect* Canberra Airport has taken several actions, including: • the distribution of radios to operators • developing new radio procedures • provision of training. *Correct* Canberra Airport has taken several actions, including: • distributing radios to operators • developing new radio procedures • providing training. OR Canberra Airport has taken several actions, including the: • distribution **of** radios to operators • development **of** new radio procedures • provision **of** training.
Using numbered lists	Use numbers or letters in an itemised list when you need to: • emphasise sequence • show rank • draw attention to the quantity of items.	The ATSB made four recommendations, listed below in order of priority: 1. review this investigation report in detail 2. address all safety issues identified 3. monitor implementation 4. communicate which safety actions worked and which did not work.

Ellipsis (…)

Rule	Examples
Use to indicate omission of words in quoted material Use three full stops only Follow spacing pattern shown in the examples.	*At the beginning of a quote:* …no manufacturer in the world requires mandatory fitment of such aural warnings.
	In the middle of a quote: As soon as the craft is waterborne make sure the wave compensation button is pressed once… To stop wave compensation bring the lever down lower into position.
	At the end of a quote: No manufacturer in the world requires mandatory fitment of such aural warnings…

Email and Internet addresses

Rule	Examples
Do not enclose in brackets Do not use bold or italics No full stop when in a sentence Use full stop if the address forms the end of the sentence	The reader was directed to director@atsb.gov.au for more information. Program details are available on www.atsb.gov.au.
Avoid deep links to individual documents or files on a website. Provide a link to the content page or a link to the website with general instructions.	*Incorrect* www.atsb.gov.au/media/4027315/AO-2012-100%20 Final.pdf *Correct* The ATSB research report, *Australian aviation wildlife strike statistics 2004 to 2013* (AR-2014-075), is available from the ATSB website. Visit www.atsb.gov.au and follow the link on the Aviation tab to aviation statistics.

Exclamation marks

Do not use unless quoting written material that uses an exclamation mark.

Figures, charts, tables, illustrations, graphs, maps, photographs

Use these aids to help the reader clarify information and/or absorb information quickly.

See *Safety Investigation Guidelines Manual—Reporting.*

Footnotes

Rule	Examples
Use sparingly and for requirements listed under 'Examples'	Use footnotes to: • define technical terms • explain or supplement material not needed in general text • cross reference other parts of work • acknowledge quoted or borrowed material.
Place all reference numbers outside of all punctuation (including within a sentence and at end of sentence)	The emergency response was not well coordinated.[1] This changed the tower's centre of gravity,[2] causing the scaffolding to collapse. The special instructions included to:[3]
Separate multiple reference numbers with a comma but no space after the comma	Additional reports[4,5] were examined during the investigation.
Do not split over two pages	

Gender

Use gender-neutral language. Avoid gender-specific pronouns.

Grammar

See **Style manual** (6th edition), pp. 63–77.

Headings and sub headings

Rule	Correct	Incorrect
Use minimal caps	Technology used in this report	Technology Used In This Report
Do not include full stop at end	Post occurrence	Post occurrence.
If using a numbering system keep it clear and consistent		
When stepping down through headings, don't skip heading levels.	Heading level 3 follows heading level 2	

Initialisms

See 'Shortened forms'

Internet addresses

See 'Email and Internet addresses'

Italics

Item	Rule	Examples
Legislation and legal cases—Acts and Ordinances	Use italics with full and formal titles for Australia Do not use italics with full and/or formal titles for other countries	*Transform Reform Act 1993* (Cwlth) but Transform Reform Act *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (WA) but Equal Opportunity Act *Huges and Vale Pty Ltd v. New South Wales* Sale of Floods Act 2000 (UK)
Bills before Parliament, regulations and other forms of delegated legislation	Do not use italics	Navigation (Confidential Marine Reporting Scheme) Regulations 2008 Transport Safety Investigation Regulations 2003 Regulation of Genetic Material Bill 2012
Departmental programs, policies and initiatives	Do not use italics	The department's safety management system was released yesterday.
Email and Internet addresses	Do not use italics See 'Email and Internet addresses'	director@atsb.gov.au www.atsb.gov.au
Names of ships	Use italics for the names of ships, aircraft. Do not prefix ships with names with 'the'.	*Atlantic Blue* *Queen Mary* *Lady Bird Walton* *Orient Express*
Quoted material (regular or indented)	Do not use italics	See 'Quoted material' under Q
Technical terms and terms being defined	Use italics the first time only Do not use single quotation marks	In this instance the term *buffer zone* means an area of land that forms a natural protective barrier.
Titles of books, reports, journals and periodicals	Use italics Do not use quotation marks	According to Transport Canada, in *Introduction to Safety Management Systems*, all management systems provide for goal setting, planning and measuring performance. *Failure Analysis and Prevention* indicates that discolouration often results from surface heating.

Latin forms

Rule	Correct	Incorrect
Do not use Latin shortened forms.	for example and others	e.g et al.
Present in full in English.	including, or and so on that is among other things by way or by means of	etc.* i.e. inter alia via

* Using etc. can also suggest imprecision and/or offhandedness.

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Legislation

Rule	Examples
Cite exactly as on original—do not alter spelling or the capitalisation	
Always cite, in full, on first mention with the shortened form, if there is one, in brackets	*Transport Safety investigation Act 2003* (TSI Act)
	Occupational Health & Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991
	Public Service Act 1999
	Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 (NSW)
Always use italics when citing in full	As above
Do not use italics when citing shortened form after first mention.	the TSI Act
	the Commonwealth Employment Act
	the Public Service Act
	the OH&S Act
Specify jurisdiction on first mention (Commonwealth, state or territory) by: • abbreviating, in parentheses and in roman type after the date or • including in full before the name of the Act.	the *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003* (Cwlth)
	the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (WA)
	the Commonwealth's *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003*
	Western Australia's *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*
Cite divisions or units as per examples Shortened forms: • lower case • full stop following • space between shortened form and number.	*Beginning of a sentence (in full)*
	Section 4 of the…
	Within a sentence singular
	In s. 3 of the…
	Within a sentence plural
	The *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003*, ss. 4–7, state that…
	Subsections
	The *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003*, s. 19(1)(1)(iii), states that…

See also 'Bills' and 'Regulations'.

Location of incident

Rule	Rule	Examples
Provide a clear description of the incident location	Present location as a simple statement	130 km east of Sydney
		150 km north-east of Cairns
		20 km south-south-west of Melbourne
		overhead Batam Island, Indonesia
Provide exact latitude and longitude coordinates in a footnote if necessary	When providing latitude and longitude coordinates insert a space after the degress	37° 12.105' S
		153° 06.005' E

Money

See *Style manual*, (6th edition) pp. 174–5.

Numbers

Item	Rule	Examples
Decimals	Use figures	An average of 4.3 a year.
In general text	Spell out one to nine, but 10 and above in figures	The department wrote reports on eight accidents in the year.
		ATSB held 10 writing training workshops in July.
	Exception: When comparing several numbers in one sentence, use figures	A total of 15 passengers were killed (5 female and 10 male) and 3 were injured (1 female and 2 male).
		Seats rows 8 through 17 remained attached.
Scientific, mathematical, technical and statistical work where figures appear regularly	Use figures not words	

Item	Rule	Examples
Start of a sentence	Always fully spell numbers If large number rewrite sentence and use figures.	Twenty-five years ago, the government introduced the policy. A total of 132 people were affected by the accident. ***not*** One hundred and thirty-two people were affected by the accident. *and not* 132 people were affected by the accident.
Four-digit numbers and above in general text and tables	Set without a space Use comma before each group of three figures ***Note:*** this rule differs from the Style manual	5,293 16,000 234,000
Mathematical signs (addition, subtraction, multiplication)	Space either side Use en dash (not hyphen) for minus No space between positive or negative sign and number Use en dash (not hyphen) for negative sign	$15 - 9 = 6$ $16 \times 5 = 80$ $+100$ -253 -50
Ordinals	When using ordinals ('first', 'second', 'third' etc.) Do not use abbreviations to specify general ranking. Use when repetition demands it (example: reporting a rail accident involving multiple wagons). Do not superscript. No spacing after number.	Do not use 'nd', 'rd', 'th' It began to traverse the third and longest bridge. The 20th wagon was the first derailed followed by the 31st and 45th.
Percentages in general text	Use figure and word per cent (as two words)	9 per cent
Percentages in tables, figures, charts, and statistical work	Use figure and per cent symbol No space between	9% 15.4%

Item	Rule	Examples
Ratios	Use colon No space before or after colon	1:10,000
Spans of figures (including dates)	Use en dash (not hyphen) to link En dash usually means 'to'	pp. 402–05 9–12 45–50 475–89 440–553 2011–12
Adjacent set of numbers	Insert a comma between two sets of numbers or rearrange the sentence	By 2012, 152 more staff will be needed. or By 2010, an additional 152 staff will be needed.
Fractions	Use figures for measurement and distance Use full font size Use words in other instances except in references	1/2-inch pipe (not ½-inch pipe 3/4 km west (not ¾ km west) Only one third agreed. The second report was filed.
Metric	Follow style example	25 kg (not kilograms or kilos and space between figure and kg) 2,000 m (not metres and space between figure and m) 35 mm gap (not millimetre and space between figure and mm)
Symbols of measurement	Space between number and symbol	500 kg (not 500kg) 20 mm (not 20mm)
Time	Use figures not words	1 second 10 hours 13 years 7 minutes 24-hour clock 0001 hours 5 hours 53 minutes (no 'and' between)

Item	Rule	Examples
Time—24-hour clock	Number hours consecutively from 1 to 24, beginning at midnight 0000)	
	Always use four digits (first two indicating hours and last two minutes)	1830
	Use zeros to indicate no hours	0050
	Use zero to indicate whole hours	0600
	No punctuation or spacing between hours and minutes	As above
	Indicate the correct time zone	0745 EST 1230 WST
	Note: times are always taken to be Australian, unless specified otherwise.	
Units of measurement	See Units of measurement	

Photographs and captions

Rules
All photographs must be credited with the name of the organisation and/or photographer from which they have been sourced (the copyright owner).
All photographs must have a clear caption explaining what is in the photograph.

See report templates for more information.

Pronouns

Rule	Correct	Incorrect
Do not use personal pronouns in formal reporting unless in a direct quote	The ATSB investigated the accident. 'We investigated the accident,' said the ATSB Marine Investigation Team Leader.	We investigated the accident.

Proofreading

See 'Spelling and proofreading'.

Quoted material

Rule	Examples
Use single quotation marks except when quoting within a quote.	'We investigated the accident and the pilot said: "I couldn't see because of the fog." This is why the weather was an important factor,' said the ATSB Aviation Investigation Team Leader.
	According to the training workbook:
	To maintain safe and efficient operations the team leader must be the "frontline supervisory person" and the link between management and operational personnel.
Use single quotation marks to enclose titles of chapters or sections from books, manuals, titles of article in magazines.	'Beyond Safety Management Systems', in *Aero Safety World*, is an excellent resource.
Do not use quotation marks to enclose titles of guidelines, handbooks, magazines, manuals, newspapers, pamphlets, periodicals, proceedings, published books.	ICHCA International has published two pamphlets—*Safe Working on Container Ships* and *Container Terminal Safety*.
Do not use quotation marks around indented quoted material.	The instruction stated:
	Start wave compensation by means of pushing button on portable remote control station.
Do not italicise.	The driver said: 'I did not know about, and had not been trained to perform, preventative maintenance inspections.'

Regulations

Rule	Examples
Cite exactly as on original—do not alter spelling or capitalisation	Navigation (Confidential Marine Reporting Scheme) Regulations 2008
	Transport Safety Investigation Regulations 2003
Always cite in full on first mention with shortened form, if there is one, in brackets.	Transport Safety Investigation Regulations 2003 (TSI Regulations)
Do not italicise	As above
Cite divisions as per examples. Shortened forms: • lower case • full stop following • space between shortened form and number	*Beginning of sentence (in full)* Regulation 32 of the Transport Safety Investigation Regulations 2003 states that… *Within a sentence singular* ATSB investigators must take special note of Navigation (Confidential Marine Reporting Scheme) Regulations 2008, r. 18. *Within a sentence plural* ATSB investigators …Regulations 2008, rr. 18–21. *Subregulations* ATSB investigators …Regulations 2008, r. 82 (2)(1)(iii).

See also 'Bills' and 'Legislation'

Shortened forms

There are two types—acronyms and initialisms.

Acronyms (strings of initial letters, and occasionally other letters, pronounced as a word)

Rules	Examples
Always fully spell on first mention unless the acronym is well known to the reader (not author).	Qantas
No full stops between letters	ANZAC
Keep name in full unless used more than three times in the body of work or edit to include generic reference.	safety management system and then 'the system' (no need for SMS) quick reference handbook and then 'the handbook' (no need for QRH)
Always use capital letters unless the proper name does not do so.	Qantas
Do not use single quotation marks around acronyms (long or short form).	*Incorrect* The procedures are documented in their 'Wagon Maintenance Manual'. 'DAFWA' conducted an internal review. *Correct* The ATSB investigated the accident.

Initialisms (strings of initial letters, and occasionally other letters, not pronounced as a word)

Always spell out on first mention unless the initialism is well known to the reader (not author).	information technology (IT)* New South Wales (NSW) consumer price index (CPI)* gross domestic product (GDP)* visual flight rules (VFR)* *no need for caps in full
The shortened form ATSB should be used in all communication that is preceded by the ATSB logo. When there is no logo, spell out Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) at the first mention, then use ATSB for all future mentions.	The ATSB contributes to the wellbeing of all Australians by maintaining and improving transport safety and public confidence.
Follow other general rules as under Acronyms.	

Slash (/)

Rule	Examples
Use to indicate alternatives ('or') Do not include spaces either side of the slash	Yes/no Enter/exit Train control/signalling
Do not use to mean 'both'	*Incorrect* They were expected to follow the safe work instructions/guidelines. [means one or other] *Correct* They were expected to follow the safe work instructions and guidelines. [means both]
For 'per', 'a' or 'an'	60 km/h
Do not use in dates	11 Mar 2012 (not 11/03/12)

Spelling and proofreading

Rule	Examples
Set your spelling and grammar checking software program for Australia.	
Use the Macquarie Dictionary—the Australian Government's approved dictionary—as priority reference (if more than one option is listed in the dictionary use the first one). If a technical term is not in the Macquarie Dictionary use the appropriate mandatory reference (see page 2).	'ise' rather than 'ize' (organise) (except for the names of actual organisations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization where the 'z' is used.) 'our' rather than 'or' (colour) 'yse' rather than 'yze' (analyse) one 's' only in some words (focused) two 'lls' in some words (equalled, travelled, fulfilled)
Do not change the spelling of proper name or titles (person, places or things—including manufacturer's spelling of vehicles, equipment, components).	Pearl Harbor not Harbour
Do not solely rely on spelling or grammar checkers in software because they do not catch all incorrect spelling and cause embarrassing mistakes.	their there public pubic son sun check cheque trial trail plaque plague

Temperature

Rule	Correct	Incorrect
Express in Celsius		
Express in numerals unless starting a sentence (precise or approximate)	3 °C Three degrees Celsius	Three °C
Follow numeral with space and then °C.	15.5 °C	15.5°C
Place a 0 before the decimal point for temperatures of less than 1 degree.	0.8 °C	.8 °C
Do not put full stop after °C except at end of sentence.	The temperature at the time of the accident was 11.6 °C.	It was 11.6 °C. at the time of the accident.
Use the word 'to', not a dash for spans of temperatures.	0.6 °C to 10.5 °C	0.6 °C–10.5 °C
Use an en dash (–), not a hyphen, to represent minus.	−1.8 °C	-1.8 °C

States and territories

In general text

Rule	Correct
Spell out in full on first mention.	Australian Capital Territory
Use full presentation unless space is limited or name is repeated often.	
If abbreviating, use list to right as guide, following use of capital letters, spacing and full stops as required.	ACT NSW NT Qld SA Tas. Vic. WA

In tables, figures, notes, references, bibliographies

Rule
Use abbreviated form, following rules above.

Underlining

Rule
Do not use for emphasis.

Units of measurement

The ATSB uses the following common units of measure in accordance with the *Système Internationale d'Unités* (SI).

SI Base Units

Base quantity	Name	Symbol
length	metre	m
mass	kilogram	kg
time	second	s
electric current	ampere	A
thermodynamic temperature	kelvin	K
amount of substance	mole	mol
luminous intensity	candela	cd

The ATSB uses non-SI Australian legal units of measurement that have been adopted for use within Australia under the *National Measurement Act 1960*.

Non-SI Australian legal units of measurement

Quantity	Name	Symbol
sound power	decibel	dB
sound pressure	decibel	dB
sound intensity	decibel	dB
area	hectare	ha
energy	electronvolt	eV
length	nautical mile	NM
mass	tonne	t
plane angle	degree	°
plane angle	minute	'
plane angle	second	"
time interval	day	d
time interval	hour	hour
time interval	minute	minute

See *Style manual*, (6th edition) pp 176–186 for further details.

Questions and more information

If you have any questions or are looking for more detail or advice on writing or style matters, contact the Communication Manager or visit TheHub.

Notes:

Appendix A: Reduce unnecessary words

Only include words that are necessary and add value. Drawings have no extra lines and machines no extra parts. Writing should not have extra words.

These editing exercises illustrates how to keep writing trim and slim by deleting words not needed and/or making simple adjustments to the text.

Rail

The position of derailed wagons and the <u>site's</u> environmental sensitivity ~~of the site served to~~ ma~~d~~<u>k</u>e the recovery operations ~~a~~ challenging ~~task~~.

~~A total of 15~~ <u>Fifteen</u> wagons ~~sustained~~ <u>were</u> damage<u>d</u> and the track restoration site extended over ~~a distance of~~ about 550 m.

It is likely that both bearings ~~had been~~ <u>were</u> overhauled before ~~they were~~ <u>being</u> mounted on the axle but it was impossible to determine ~~exactly~~ which ~~of the~~ reconditioned bearing failed and which was the partner bearing.

Aviation

He had ~~a total of~~ 470 hours ~~of~~ flight experience in turboprop aircraft, 80 hours of which were on the King Air C90 ~~aircraft type~~.

~~In order f~~<u>F</u>or the masks to supply oxygen to the crew and allow for radio communications during normal or emergency operations, they ~~crew's masks~~ had to be connected into the dedicated oxygen and microphone connections ~~that were~~ positioned in the ~~left and right~~ cockpit sidewalls.

Hypoxic hypoxia can create a sense of wellbeing <u>while</u> ~~at the same time as it is~~ degrading ~~the subject's~~ mental and physical performance.

Marine

<u>None of t</u>~~T~~he training establishments contacted ~~specifically did not~~ covered <u>wave</u> compensators <u>in</u> ~~as part of~~ their courses, although some advised they may discuss them ~~in the course of their overall training~~.

<u>National and international</u> guidance is available ~~at both national and international levels~~ to assist stevedoring operators develop ~~appropriate~~ safe work procedures and instructions in order to reduce the risk of waterfront accidents. ~~on the waterfront.~~

Despite the action taken, the ATSB believes that ~~by~~ not following the ~~investigatory guidance provided in the~~ procedure <u>meant</u> the process undertaken might not have been as effective and ~~as~~ transparent as ~~it could have been~~ <u>possible</u>.

Notes:

Approved ATSB variations

The following items have been approved by the Chief Commissioner.

Note: these rules differ from the *Style manual:* for authors, editors and printers.

Rule	Variation
nautical miles	NM
numbers	use of comma before each group of three figures
knots	knots or kt
take-off	use of hyphen in noun form
ATSB	see page 30

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

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