



## Dictionary of Sydney Guide to writing for online use

### Introduction

Thank you for considering contributing to the Dictionary of Sydney. The most important thing about your entry will be its content, as well as its clear, tight prose and lively, vivid style.

We know you will be sensitive to issues such as gender, ethnicity, Indigenous protocols and regional differences. All contributions will be reviewed and edited. During this process you may be asked to make amendments or additions to your entry.

Final copy will be signed off by you and you will appear as the author of the article on the site. You will need to sign our license documents and provide a one-sentence description of yourself for your contributor page.

### Features of writing for online use

Writing for online use is subtly different from writing for printed text, although many of the features of good writing remain the same. The differences arise from the way online readers interact with text.

Screen text is harder to read than printed text, because resolution is lower and many people find reading onscreen to be tiring and tedious. Reading on screen can be up to 25 per cent slower than reading from a printed page.

Because of this, keep in mind some principles for online writing when you write your entry.

#### Be concise

Online text needs to be concise, without being terse or oversimplified. It's a good idea to avoid lengthy restatements of argument, and overly long sentences and paragraphs. This does not mean 'dumbing down' your argument, just being conscious of the requirements of online reading.

#### Be clear and engaging

Online readers do not tolerate ambiguous or boring text, and will click on to find something clearer. When engaged by an entry, however, they will read at great length.

Online reading involves scrolling through text. The main point should be at the beginning of the paragraph, as the end of any paragraph may not be on screen at the same time as the beginning. Similarly, avoid long inverted sentences, where the point is at the end.

## **Make it easy to read on screen**

Long paragraphs are difficult to scan, and will lose many online readers. We break up text with clear, meaningful subheadings and frequent paragraph breaks. Quotes from primary sources are indented, and also serve to break up long blocks of text.

## **Be consistent and minimise errors**

Inconsistency will annoy and confuse readers of more than one entry on the site. Maintaining the tone, format and styles described in this document will help us to make the content as consistent as possible. Be aware that during the editing and linking process, every entity named in your text will be researched and cross-referenced to other mentions in the Dictionary. This means that we have to investigate and resolve any contradictions or disagreements between articles. Accuracy helps us a lot.

## **Use the strengths of hypertext**

Hypertext links allow us to move tangential or supplementary material to other pages, where it is still easily accessible for interested or less knowledgeable readers via hyperlinks. It also allows for 'progressive disclosure' where more complicated or detailed information is withheld until introductory or general information has been displayed.

Keep in mind that websites are rarely read sequentially and readers may not have read 'earlier' pages on the site. Each entry must provide as much context as necessary for a reader to understand it. This does not mean repetition, as popups or links to other pages can be used to provide readers with definitions or further information.

If you have interesting material that is not quite relevant to the entry itself, talk to us about including it as another short entry or description.

## **References and further reading**

Dictionary articles have endnotes, which need to be complete and accurate. All quoted material must be referenced. Please read the referencing guide below, and double check authors' names, titles and dates. If your endnotes are close to our preferred form, it saves us a lot of time.

Please provide a select list that you would recommend for further reading. This is provided at the end of your entry for readers who want to read more. It can include websites, which will appear as live links in the list of references.

## **Related material**

Your primary task is to write the entry. Each finished entry may include images, sound grabs, maps, documents, reproductions of relevant texts, poems or anything else that is relevant. If you know of other material that is relevant to your entry, please tell us.

Don't embed images, documents or other items in the text. Provide these separately, ideally in electronic form. Even a description and reference or URL will help us with the multimedia research.

Clearing copyright and reproduction fees for supporting material will be the responsibility of the Dictionary, but information you have about ownership and location of sources will be helpful. We may not be able to follow up or afford to use all the image and multimedia leads you suggest.

## **Formatting**

Minimise unnecessary formatting as it may interfere with processing.

It is easier to see the formatting if you turn on Word's formatting symbols. Click the ¶ symbol on the top toolbar.

Please avoid the use of pre-set columns, indents, hanging indents, tabs, line or paragraph numbering, justified text, centred text or other formatting devices. These can create problems in translating text between different computer systems.

Use Word's preset Heading 1, 2 and 3 styles for your headings, and the Normal style for your text. Avoid using multiple fonts, smart tags, fields from referencing programs such as EndNote, or other non-text materials. The simpler your document is, the more likely it is to translate smoothly into XML.

Leave only one space after full stops.

## Dictionary of Sydney Style Guide

Help us with the vast task of editing by keeping these guidelines in mind when revising your entry.

### Indigenous peoples

Preferred forms of reference to Indigenous peoples of Australia are: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; Aboriginal people(s); Torres Strait Islander(s); Indigenous Australians. Avoid the use of the word Aborigines.

### Abbreviations

Spell out words to be abbreviated on their first appearance.

No full stops in abbreviations: AJC, STC, ABC.

No full stops and spaces in names with initials: JC Williamson, JT Lang.

When directions are spelt out they are shown in lower case: west, south-east, east-north-east.

Words such as creek, street, mountain should also be spelt in full when part of a specific name – George Street, Eddy Avenue, Whites Creek.

New South Wales should be spelt out in full.

### Spelling

Use Australian spelling (e.g. colour, flavour); use 'ise' endings (familiarise, realise). Word will help you with this, if you set the document's Language to English (AUS). Choose Language/Set Language from the Tools menu, and select English (AUS).

Use *The Macquarie Dictionary* first spelling.

### Italic text

Titles of publications and other works referred to should appear in italics. For journal (and other) articles, short poems, songs and other single musical pieces, use single quotation marks:

In her novel *Aunts Up the Cross*, Dalton describes  
Lawson's poem 'Sydney-Side' describes...

We use italics for non-English words and phrases not in common usage, so we would italicise *fin-de-siecle*, but not entrepreneur.

Ship names should be set in italic text. For example:

The family arrived in 1868 on the *Coromandel* and settled at Earlwood.

Latin scientific names for species should be set in italic text, with the Genus term capitalised. For example:

As well as *Eucalyptus grandiflora*, other plants such as downy wattle, ironbark and grevillea thrived.

## Capital letters

In general, keep capitalisation to a minimum.

For institutions, office bearers, official movements, enactments, places and so on, only use capital letters when the word is part of an official title. Do not use capitals for plurals.

Common names of plants and animals should be lower case, even when derived from Latin terms.

For example:

Governor Bligh was one of the most unfairly maligned of all New South Wales governors.

Residents lobbied for the establishment of a post office, and in 1898, Smallville Post Office was opened by the local member.

As well as *Eucalyptus grandiflora*, other plants such as downy wattle, ironbark and grevillea thrived.

## Endnotes and references

Please make sure that endnotes are properly inserted in Word (using the Reference command under the Insert menu), and marked with numbers, not Roman numerals. These will display in a pop up when readers roll their mouse over the endnote marker, and in a list at the end of your entry. Because online readers may only look at one or two endnotes in an entry, each endnote must be complete in itself. Do not use short titles, or the Latin terms 'op cit' and 'ibid'. This will look repetitive in your document, but that worries us less than readers having to hunt back through hyperlinked footnotes for the full details of a reference.

Selected references will also appear at the end of your entry to provide further reading for interested users.

Order references by author's surname.

Endnotes and references are in the same format and should include:

### Books

Author's first name or initial and surname

title of publication (italics)

publisher, place, and date

page numbers (if necessary)

Example: Malcolm Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2008, p 9

### Journal/newspaper articles

Author's first name or initial and surname

Full title (in single inverted commas)

Journal name (italics)

Number and date of issue

Page numbers for article cited, with an en-dash (not hyphen) showing the range.

Example: Malcolm Prentis, 'The Scots in Sydney', *Sydney Journal*, vol 1 no 2, June 2008, pp 81–89

### **Articles or chapters of books**

Author's first name or initial and surname

Full title (in single inverted commas)

Editor's name followed by (ed)

Book title (italics)

Publisher, place, date

Page numbers for article cited

Example: Michael Darcy, 'Housing: the Great Divide', in John Connell (ed), *Sydney: the Emergence of a World City*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, pp 24–60

### **References to online material**

Website title

Page or section title

Viewing date

URL

Example: National Archives of Australia website, *Uncommon Lives*, viewed 4 December 2008, <http://www.uncommonlives.naa.gov.au/>

Please note our use of minimal punctuation in endnotes and references. In particular they do not have closing full stops.

Manuscripts and archives should be cited in the form used by each repository. Include enough information to ensure it can be readily located, remembering that abbreviations will make things unclear to overseas readers. Spell out State Library of NSW, State Records, Mitchell Library, Land Titles Office and so on.

## **Punctuation**

The purpose of punctuation is to make the meaning of a text as clear as possible. Unnecessary punctuation can be offputting or distracting. Keep punctuation to the minimum necessary for clarity and readability.

### **Full stops**

Full stops mark the end of sentences that are statements or commands.

Do not use full stops to end headings, subheadings, footnotes or references.

Do not use full stops in abbreviations.

## Apostrophes

We use apostrophes for two purposes:

- to indicate missing letters in a contraction, such as *can't* (cannot) or *she's* (she is), and
- to indicate possession, as in *the company's reputation* (singular), and *the customers' preferences* (plural)

All proper nouns take an apostrophe and an 's', regardless of their sound (*Judge Isaacs's ruling*). If there is joint ownership, only the last name has an apostrophe, as in '*Shirley Fitzgerald and Stewart Wallace's report*'. If the ownership is not joint, each name has an apostrophe, as in '*Microsoft's and Apple's software*'.

Do not use apostrophes for:

- place names, such as Watsons Bay, St Marys
- possessive pronouns, such as *its*, *ours*, *hers*
- expressions of time, such as three years jail, two nights stay, or
- groups of letters, dates or numbers, such as *747s*, *1990s*

## Commas

Use commas to indicate pauses in sentences and help the reader understand sentences that might otherwise be ambiguous. We use commas sparingly in the following situations:

- to mark both sides of a parenthetical clause in a sentence, such as  
Timber-cutting was the first industry in the Cherrybrook area and, after the land was cleared of trees and scrub, orchards were established in the 1850s.
- to separate a series of words or phrases in a list, such as  
Similar races were held in Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane and Hobart.

We do not use a comma before 'and' or 'but'.

- to indicate a pause, as in  
Cherrybrook is the newest of Hornsby Shire's suburbs, created out of the area known as West Pennant Hills.

Commas also make large numbers easier to understand. Use commas and no spaces in numbers of four digits or more. See also Numbers, in this document.

## Colons and semicolons

Colons and semicolons should be avoided. It is generally better to rewrite or divide the sentence, or to use a spaced en-dash. To achieve an en-dash, press Shift + Ctrl + hyphen.

## Hyphens and dashes

Hyphens are the shortest dashes available in typed text. Use them without spaces to connect words in compound adjectives and adverbs, and to link prefixes to words. Hyphens can be produced with one keystroke on all keyboards. Use hyphens in the following situations:

- to link words that describe another word, such as four-wheel-drive vehicle, cross-country run, half-hour shower, three-quarter-length sleeves
- to link some words with prefixes, such as neo-conservative, semi-conductor, sub-standard

Rules for hyphenation change over time, so check the *Macquarie Dictionary* if in doubt.

A longer dash, known as an en-dash (or en-rule – because it is the same width as an 'n' character in the font), is used to indicate pauses in text and ranges using numbers or words. We use en-dashes in the following situations:

- to connect words or numbers which set up a span between them, such as

Melbourne–Sydney flights, 9 am–5 pm, 1914–18, pp 21–34, August–September 2001.

Note that the dash should not have spaces around it.

- to mark both sides of parenthetical material in a sentence, such as

The new aviation standards – which were released in April 1930 – greatly changed the situation.

Note that the dashes should have spaces on both sides.

- to indicate a pause, or an abrupt change in the subject matter of the sentence, such as

The scenery sped past the windows, the music played on the radio – what was that fireball in the sky?

Note that the dash should have spaces on both sides.

To get an en-dash on a PC, press Ctrl + minus on the Num Pad.

The longest dash, the em-dash (or em-rule — because it is the same width as an 'm' character in the font), is not used in the Dictionary of Sydney.

It is worth using the Find command to check every hyphen in the article and make sure it is correct.

### **Parentheses**

Use parentheses, or round brackets (like commas and dashes – see above), to enclose material which is not essential to the sentence, but provides an amplification, aside or point of interest to it. For example:

Ranger James French (after whom Frenchs Forest is named), started the first local timber industry around 1856.

Where imperial measures have been used, please provide metric conversions inside parentheses. See Numbers in this document.

Material inside parentheses should have a full stop if it is a full sentence. We do not use any more punctuation around parentheses than the sentence would require without the parentheses.

### **Quotation marks**

Use single quotation marks throughout your entry, unless you have a quotation within a quotation, where double quotes will have to be used inside the single quotes. Note that quotes over two lines should be indented in quote style to break up text.

Single quotes can also be used sparingly to indicate concepts or terms that may be newly coined or unfamiliar to readers. Examples include:

In 1868, the owners opened 'pleasure grounds' on the site.

Analysts call this the 'price-to-earnings ratio'.

Avoid using quotation marks around familiar expressions in general use.

## Numbers

### In text

Write out numbers up to nine, and use numerals for numbers from 10 onwards. The only exceptions to this rule are:

- write out numbers at the beginning of a sentence (consider recasting the sentence first to avoid this)
- use numerals for percentages and decimals, however small

Use commas in numbers greater than three digits.

### Dates

Use the format *23 May 2007* for all dates.

Use *1992–93* rather than *1992–1993* and *1906–07* rather than *1906–7*.

Spell out eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first century.

### Money

Use the accepted currency symbols (£, \$). Use commas in amounts greater than three digits. Million and billion should be spelt out on the first instance, then abbreviated to m and b. For example:

The cost was £1,260.

The company made a \$20 million bid for its major rival, including a \$2m shareholder benefits offer.

To get a pound symbol (£), use Insert/Symbol and choose the symbol, or press Alt, and type 0163 on the Num pad. The symbol will appear when you release the Alt key.

### Measurements

Where measurements involve numbers less than 10, spell out both the number and the unit of measurement, for example:

three pounds, five feet, six acres.

Where measurements involve numbers greater than nine, express them as numerals, with spelt out units following, for example:

233 pounds, 400 yards, 29 acres.

At the beginning of a sentence, however, such amounts must be spelt out, as in

Thirty kilograms of paper was saved in one week.

Provide metric conversions in parentheses in a form that fits the syntax of the sentence, for example:

The Fagans' 240-acre (97-hectare) farm produced 300 cases of fruit in a season.

A conversion utility can be found at: <http://www.calculateme.com/index.htm>. Numbers should be rounded to one decimal place.

If you give temperatures in degrees Celsius, include a space after the number before the degree symbol: 31 °C. To get a degree symbol using a keyboard shortcut, hold down Alt and type 0176 on the Num pad – the symbol appears when the Alt key is released.

### **Fractions**

In text, fractions should be spelt out and hyphenated, such as three-fifths, three-quarters of an hour. In tables, write them as numerals.