

1. GOLDEN RULES FOR GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATORS

- Government publications should provide a balanced presentation without bias, distortion, undue emphasis or omission. Any defamatory information based on hearsay or unsubstantiated allegations or claims is prohibited.
- In reporting and commenting, all government publications should be fair, honest and considerate.
- Produce well-researched information based on facts.
- Check all facts, figures, dates, citations, titles, initials and the spelling of names.
- All sources of information, unless stated otherwise, must always be acknowledged.
- Do not copy text from other sources without acknowledging the source. Always acknowledge the source or original report you are referring to.
- In any piece of writing, bear in mind the five Ws and an H (what, where, who, when, why and how). Answer these questions to make sure you have covered everything.
- Defamatory, racist, gender-insensitive, blasphemous or offensive material is prohibited.
- Avoid using gender-sensitive words. Use chairperson instead of chairman and chairwoman/lady, and spokesperson instead of spokesman; also police officer, fire officer and staff nurse (instead of sister).
- The introduction must be brief and logical – and less than 30 words.
- Your writing should be brief and clear:
 - Use direct expressions and avoid unnecessary words and phrases.
 - Use the correct word order to avoid ambiguity.
 - Punctuate sentences correctly.
 - Use short sentences and simple language that everybody can understand.
 - Use simple vocabulary, for example:
 - often not frequently; use not utilise; put into operation; not operationalise.
 - Avoid redundant words that repeat what the initial words stand for: ATM machine, HIV virus, PIN numbers, ID document, ISBN number, etc.
 - Avoid redundant phrases or words such as: begin to be seen to, basically, in terms of, essentially, in accordance with, in regards to, on a ... basis, etc.
 - Every sentence must have a verb. Sentences can be either active or passive, e.g:
 - The professor teaches the students (active);
 - The students are taught by the professor (passive).
 - Try to use active verbs where possible. Avoid nounisms (nouns derived from verbs) wherever possible: inform not information; govern not government; invest not make an investment in. Also, collaborate, not to partner with. (See sections 3 and 6.3 below.)
- Use “the” to precede a noun when referring to a specific or known instance: the former President of South Africa, Mr Nelson Mandela.
 - Use “a” or “an” when referring generally: a former president; a commuter; an ATM. I’m looking for an ATM; the ATM you need is around the corner illustrates the difference in usage between “a” and “an” in direct speech.
 - In formal or official writing, write out words in full: was not instead of wasn’t.
 - Double-check your work for correct spelling and punctuation.
 - Use double quotation marks. “...” For quotes within a quote, use double outer quotation marks and single inner quotes.
 - Spell out all abbreviations the first time you use them, with the abbreviation in brackets; and abbreviate thereafter. Use capital letters for abbreviations (e.g. CSIR, HSRC), but upper and lowercase for acronyms (e.g. Nepad, Cosatu) (“If it’s spoken like a word, use the lowercase acronym form; if one letter at a time is pronounced, use uppercase”). Note that there are exceptions to this rule (e.g. AsgiSA, dplg, AIDS, UNESCO etc.).
 - Use full stops in abbreviations such as e.g., i.e., etc., Adm., Brig., Col., Gen.
 - Spell out numbers from one to nine; use figures from 10 upward. Exception: when there’s a string of three or more numerals in a single paragraph, then, to make comparison easier, make them all figures.
 - Write decimal and negative numbers as numerals: 3,3 and -4. Use the decimal comma*, not the decimal point: 17,4 million.
 - *When South Africa adopted the metric system, it also adopted the comma as its decimal mark. However, be alert to the fact that many other countries, use the decimal point.*

- Do not begin a sentence with a numeral: either spell out the number or rewrite the sentence to move the number from the beginning. Hyphenate written-out numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine. Do not hyphenate one hundred, two hundred, etc.
- Hyphenate ages in the form of four-year-old, 16-year-olds, etc.
- Note: two hyphens, not one.
- Use numerals with million (The deal was worth R4 million), but use a hyphen when it is used adjectivally (It was a R4-million deal).
- No space between number and %, e.g. 5% or between number and °, e.g. 16°.
- The SI (metric) system requires a space to be inserted between numerals and symbols: 5 kg, 150 km, 60 s and 18 °C. Only symbols derived from proper nouns (names) should be uppercase: K (the kelvin), Pa (the pascal), etc.
- Words go with words numbers go with symbols: I.e. six micron but 5 mm.
- Use a space, not commas, to indicate thousands: 3 000; 20 000.
- Date format: 19 November 2010.
- Reported speech is written in the past tense: The minister said she was considering amending the act ...; or He said the weaknesses needed to be addressed
- Avoid using too many adjectives and adverbs. These may be used to a limited extent in subjective stories or essays, usually published under a byline (e.g. in internal newsletters), but not in official brochures, posters, etc.
- Do not use Mr, Mrs/Ms, only write a title if the person has a professional title such as Dr, Prof. and military and police ranks.
- Dr does not take a full stop because the last letter is also the last letter of the title. Titles such as Prof. and Rev. do take a full stop because the word is cut off in the middle.
- Words from languages **other than South Africa's 11 official languages** must be written in italics.
- Use British, NOT American, spelling (e.g. apologise not apologize, programme not program (except for computer program), centre not center, colour not color).

Standard reference tools:

Butcher's Copy-editing (4th edition, 2008)
 G.V. Carey Mind the Stop: A Brief Guide to Punctuation (Penguin, 1980)
 Martin Manser Collins Dictionary for Writers and Editors (2007)
 New Hart's Rules (2005)
 New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors (2005)
 Oxford Manual of Style (2002)
 South African Concise Oxford Dictionary (2002; 2nd edition, 2010)

2. CHECKLISTS FOR VARIOUS FORMS OF WRITING

2.1 Writing a communication strategy

The following is the official format for writing a communication strategy:

- background
- objectives
- environment
- communication challenges
- messages and themes
- messengers, audiences and channels, types of event
- a phased communication programme
- structures and processes
- action plan, including budget implications.

- Use decimal numbering. Indent subcategories such as 1.1, with a further indentation for subsequent subcategories, such as 1.1.2. After this level, use a, b, c or bullets. This allows for easier reference.

1
1.1
1.2
1.2.1
1.2.2
1.2.3

a
b
c

1.3

- The complete guideline on strategising for communication is available from the GCIS Project Desk.

2.2 Writing articles

A successful article includes:

- a title
- author's byline
- abstract (maximum of 100 words)
- a clear introductory paragraph that answers the five Ws and an H (what, where, who, when, why and how). Keep it short. It should contain the thesis statement
- a coherent and logical development of ideas
- subheadings that act as "signposts" to the reader, indicating the content to follow
- the correct facts and details
- simple language and sentences
- a powerful concluding paragraph that draws together the main ideas (it must conclude, not just summarise)
- a readable layout
- perfect grammar and spelling
- footnotes or endnotes, where necessary.

2.3 Writing reports

A report is always written for a specific audience and has a definite purpose. Reports are often used to help in decision-making.

Reports:

- have clearly defined sections
- are clearly and logically written and organised
- are objective and use a formal, impersonal style
- are based on careful research and facts
- do not use:
 - abbreviated grammar (can't, shouldn't; or sentences without subjects or finite verbs)
 - first-person reporting (I, me, we)
 - colloquialisms or slang
 - jargon that potential readers will not understand
 - writer's personal opinions.

The traditional format of reports is as follows:

- title page
- terms of reference (brief)
- summary of the report (“executive summary”), which must comprise one sentence per section of the report
- table of contents
- introduction giving the background and listing the aims
- main text of the report, subdivided into sections, if the report is long
- finding(s)
- conclusion(s)
- recommendation(s) (if appropriate)
- list of sources consulted
- appendices.

Each of these should be the subheading for each section of a report.

2.4 Writing proposals

A proposal is similar to a report, but it is a document intended to motivate or persuade the reader. The format of a preliminary proposal is usually:

- a statement of the problem and objectives
- methods to be used and recommendations
- projected costs.

The traditional format of a full proposal is the following:

- title page
- table of contents
- summary of the proposal (one sentence per section)
- background to the research
- proposed action to be taken
- project budget
- schedule of work with time frames and deadlines
- evaluation of the anticipated success of the project
- appendices (as necessary).

Each of these should be the subheading for each section of a report.

2.5 Writing minutes

Minutes are not a verbatim account of proceedings, but a written record of decisions taken. They may serve as a legal document and should therefore be accurate.

Minutes ensure that proposed actions and responsibilities are recorded and therefore they should have an action and deadline column in which the person responsible for an agreed action and the deadline are recorded.

Minutes should:

- be governed in their form by the agenda for the meeting
- be concise (without being too brief)
- indicate the date, time and place of the meeting, list the names of those present and who absented themselves, and indicate who presided over the meeting
- cover all the major points discussed
- be objective, factual and not contain opinions about matters or people

- be accurate, so that there can be no argument or misinterpretation
- be detailed regarding all contracts and financial matters, appointments to positions, authorised actions and resolutions passed
- be written in the past tense (The matter was raised, debated, noted on, passed unanimously)
- contain a list of actions to be taken and by whom and when, as well as decisions made, at the end of the minutes.

2.6 Writing business correspondence

Business correspondence is often the only communication people have with an organisation. Any written communication serves as a legal document. Correspondence includes business letters, memos and e-mails.

2.6.1 Business letters

- Must always be written on a letterhead.
- They follow a fixed format: writer's address; recipient's address; date; greeting (Dear ...), subject line, body of letter, salutation, signature and name of writer.
- Use simple language and short sentences and paragraphs.
- Ideas must flow logically, stating the main point of the letter up front, followed by supporting statements.
- Use link words (first, second; therefore; conversely; in addition; consequently; however, etc.) to connect ideas and statements between sentences and paragraphs.
- Write a clear, brief and meaningful subject line and put the most important information first.
- Never use jargon, clichés or unnecessary abbreviations.
- Do not rely on your spellchecker (trail, trial; may, many; it's, its are all legitimate, but could be a misspelling) – always read the documents through and check for errors, especially spelling errors.
- End off with a pleasant, positive final paragraph, if possible.

2.6.2 Memos

- Memos are used internally between colleagues and departments to pass on information and request action, or they serve as a record or reminder.
- They follow a fixed format.
- Memos use brief, clear writing and a friendly tone, without being colloquial.

2.6.3 E-mails

- Give a suitable, clear subject line so that the recipient knows immediately what it's about.
- Use full sentences, short, logical paragraphs and correct punctuation.
- Preferably limit the message to one idea per paragraph, otherwise some ideas might not be read.
- Confirm with recipients beforehand whether they want an attachment e-mailed.
- Print and file all messages that contain instructions or policy decisions.
- Double-check whether recipients have received their e-mails by following up with an e-mail request.

3. USING PLAIN LANGUAGE

It is important to follow plain language principles when writing documents and correspondence. These are set out in the section below.

- 3.1** Do not assume your reader will understand what you know. In fact, accept that they will not understand what you will be conveying. This way, you'll explain or describe it simply and clearly and make sure that all technical or difficult terms and concepts are explained or glossed. Whenever possible, use simpler words and shorter sentences, because these make it easier for readers to access information. **Plain language writing should not**

be confused with underestimating your readers' intelligence. It is therefore writing in a concise and straightforward way.

3.2 Write as you speak

- This does not mean you should use slang, bad grammar, poor English or jargon, but you can use a more personal tone to address your readers.
- By using personal references such as we and you, readers will feel that you are talking to them personally: not “Your letter of 3 May refers” but “I write in response to your letter of 3 May”.
- If you use complicated or unfamiliar words you will frighten your readers off or make them feel inadequate: not “remuneration” but “pay”; not “take cognisance of” but “consider”.
- If you use over-long sentences, you either intimidate your readers or frighten them off. Long sentences not only look daunting, but are also difficult to follow. (On average, your sentences should be between 10 and 13 words long for Grade 12 and first-year university students.)

3.3 Plan before you write

- Plan what you are going to write before you start. The more you plan, the more organised and effective your writing will be.
- Write a skeleton outline or a mind-map of the main points you know you must cover. Get them in the correct order first, then flesh them out into logically arranged sentences and paragraphs.
- Asking questions is a good way to plan. For example:
 - Who am I writing for? (reader-centredness)
 - Who are my readers? Look at factors such as age, gender, culture and education. Your answer to this question will determine your word choice, sentence length and level of abstraction.
 - What do they need to know?
 - Do I need to address problems they might have with the information?
 - Will they understand the technical terms I use? If not, and if I can't avoid them, should I gloss them somehow?
 - What is their attitude towards the topic? Favourable or hostile?
 - Have I answered all their questions?
 - Why am I writing?
 - What am I trying to achieve with my writing? Describe? Explain? Justify? Convince? Defend? Or simply respond to a question or a set of questions?
 - Will I be able to achieve my aim with the information I have or do I need to gather more information?
 - What response do I want from my readers once they finish reading my document?
 - Will my readers be clear about what I want once they finish reading my document?
 - What is the most important point?
 - What is the most important thing I want my readers to know? How do I ensure it is communicated clearly and strongly?
 - Am I clear about the central issue of my document? Have I given it sufficient prominence?
 - Am I going to confuse my readers if I give them all the details of my research? If yes, then either summarise the salient points briefly or relegate it to an appendix or eliminate the detail completely.
 - Can I cut out some of the information? Identify information that can be deleted (and be ruthless in doing so).
 - What is the one thing I want my readers to remember? What technique do I employ to ensure that this happens?

3.4 Principles of writing in plain language

- Write informative headings and subheadings to guide your readers and to whet their appetites.
- Use plain (i.e. simpler) words: “try”, not “endeavour”; “place side by side”, not “juxtapose”.
- Avoid jargon and clichés: they often contain “hidden” meaning that not everyone can access. For example, what does “as the crow flies” mean literally? And “to leave no stone unturned”? Phrases such as “in terms of” and “over and above” are also clichés that should be avoided.

- Minimise the use of acronyms (Unisa) and abbreviations (SADC). If you want to use an abbreviation or an acronym, write out the word in full and put the contracted term in brackets after it, or use a glossary to give their meanings. Only explain the acronym and abbreviation once. Thereafter, refer only to the acronym.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) decided to cancel customs duty. Delegates at the SADC conference were positive about the new developments.

- Get rid of needless words: “a necessary prerequisite” should be reduced to “a prerequisite”; “set up and established” should be reduced to either “set up” or “established”; use “about” or “of” instead of “in terms of”.
- Use the active voice: “I will repair your watch.”, not “Your watch will be repaired by me.”
- Use strong verbs: “I’d like to cooperate with you”, not “Cooperation with you will be good”; “He wants an assistant.”, not “An assistant is wanted by him.”
- Write short sentences and paragraphs: for example, at Grade 12 and first-year university level, sentence length should average between 10 and 13 words! Place a limit of one main thought per paragraph.
- Use vertical lists and tables. These make text visually appealing and much clearer.
- Give texts a clear layout and display features on a page that give clues to the content and encourage further reading.

4. ENGLISH GRAMMAR TROUBLESHOOTING

4.1 Parts of speech

In this section, we cover aspects of the usage of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions and articles – particularly those aspects that typically give writers and editors trouble. Typical problem areas are highlighted, where necessary, and correct forms given.

4.1.1 Nouns

A noun is a word used for naming objects such as people, animals, places or things: Harry, cat, Pofadder (the place), store, ladder, Prime Minister.

Problem areas: mass vs count nouns; classical vs modern plurals; group nouns: singular or plural?; nouns in apposition; capital letters or not?

- **Mass vs count nouns**

Nouns such as water, sugar and sand are known as mass nouns – you can’t count any of them. When we ask questions about them, we ask, for example, “How much ...?” And we also use “less” when comparing one mass to another: “There is less sand in this bucket than in that bucket.” Similarly, we talk about the “amount” of a mass noun: “They’ve delivered a large amount of sand to the building site.” And we also use “much” in connection with mass nouns: “How much water do you drink every day?”

Nouns such as marbles, coins, bottles and people are known as count nouns – you can count individual items. When we ask questions about them, we ask “How many ...?” And we also use “fewer” when comparing one mass to another: “There are fewer people here today than there were yesterday.” Similarly, we talk about the “number” of a count noun: “A large number of people attended her funeral.” And we also use “many” in connection with count nouns: “How many bottles of water should I put out?”

Also, although you can physically count money, it is regarded as a mass noun. You therefore say: “How much money do you have.”

Tip: Make sure whether a noun is mass or count before you use it in these contexts. A common error, for example, is to write of “A large amount of people” instead of a “large number of people” and “I have fewer water than you” instead of “I have less water than you” and “There are less pens in that box than in this one” instead of “there are fewer pens in that box than in this one.”

- **Classical vs modern plurals**

English has inherited many nouns from classical Latin and Greek. While such words have retained their classical spellings (including plural forms), a large number have acquired “modern” spellings over time. Unless we know the roots of some words, we’re likely to get their singular and plural forms wrong. Nowadays, we’ll find both stadia (classical) and stadiums (modern) as plural forms of stadium, for example. We must be careful, however, not to apply this convention to ALL nouns of classical origin.

Singular Classical plural Modern plural

- stadium - stadia - stadiums
 - forum – for a - forums
 - criterion- criteria - criteria (not criterias)
 - phenomenon - phenomena - phenomena (not phenomenas)
 - virus - viri - viruses
 - bacterium - bacteria - bacteria (not bacterias)
 - medium - media - media/mediums*
 - datum - data - data+
 - formula - formulae (in science) - formulas (generally)
 - stigma - stigmata - stigmata/stigmas
- Mediums are people who communicate between the dead and the living. Media are things like newspapers, magazines, radio, television and billboards. Although in the past some editors have insisted that the word media is always plural this is now redundant. It is completely fine to say, The media is... when referring to newspapers, magazines etc.
 - Generally, data is plural (data are); in IT, though, data is singular (data has).

Tip: Memorise the correct modern singular and plural forms. For more about plurals, refer to section 6.2 Plurals.

- **Group nouns: singular or plural?**

Are nouns such as board, committee, company, province, team and university singular or plural? Well, they can be either depending upon the context. Context determines whether the entity as a whole or the individual components are being described. For example, on two newspaper posters we read:

Province gets clean audit (singular)
Province take on Blue Bulls (plural)

In the first sentence, “province” is singular because it refers to an entity, the provincial government. In the second sentence, “province” is plural because all the individual members are being referred to. Now consider these two sentences:

England expects every man to do his duty.
England are playing well at present.

The first sentence refers to “England” the country (an entity; or it is symbolical of the English people). In the second sentence, “England” refers to the individual players who comprise the team. But we could also read, quite correctly,

“England is top of the league this season.” Here the team, the entity, is meant.

Tip: To test for singular or plural, insert “the members of (the)” before the noun. If the insertion reads correctly, then the plural form is intended in that context.

- **Nouns in apposition**

When we place two nouns that refer to the same person or thing side by side, we call this arrangement “appositional”:

Mr Jones, the baker, is our neighbour.
Novelist Susan Rees is our friend.

In both sentences, we have two descriptions of the same person – their name and their title or job description – side by side. Jones and baker, and novelist and Susan Rees are nouns, and by placing them this close together (either with or without a pair of commas – a pair, note) writers create what is called “nouns in apposition”. It’s a useful way of writing briefly.

Note that an appositional structure is different from a structure such as Mr Jones, who is a baker, is our neighbour. “who is our baker” is called an adjectival clause (which tells us more about Jones), rather than two nouns side by side.

- **Titles: Initial capital letter or not?**

It’s helpful to apply this general rule: if the title precedes a person’s name, or if it is the full or official title of someone or something, then use initial capital letters; if none of these, then use a lowercase initial letter:

President Smith; but: the president chaired the meeting.
Queen Elizabeth II; but: there is currently a queen on the throne, not a king.
Director-General Phuri; but: the director-general, Alexander Phuri, addressed us.

Often the use of “a” before a title is a clue to using a lowercase initial letter for the title, because “a” indicates general, not a specific instance.

4.1.2 Pronouns

A pronoun is a word taking the place of a noun and used to refer to a person or thing without giving a name.

Problem areas: using reflexive pronouns as personal pronouns; using possessive pronouns with an apostrophe; using that instead of who/whom when referring to people; confusing who and whom; when to use that and which; when and how to use “one”.

There are five main types of pronouns:

- **Personal pronouns:** *he, she, we, they, us, them, him, her, it.*
- **Reflexive pronouns:** *himself, herself, themselves, itself, oneself.*
Do not use reflexive pronouns as personal pronouns:
Incorrect: *My friend and myself went to the party.*
Correct: *My friend and I went to the party.*

- **Possessive pronouns:** *his; her/hers; their/theirs; my/mine; our/ours; its*
Do not use a possessive pronoun with an apostrophe:
Incorrect: *The baby drank it's bottle. (its) That ring is her's. (hers)*
- **Interrogative pronouns:** *Why? Where? When? Who? How? How much?*
They always occur at the beginning of questions.
- **Relative pronouns:** *that, which, who, where, when, why.* They introduce descriptions that relate back to a noun or a pronoun:
The place where we will meet is my study.
Use *who* or *whom* to refer to people; use *that* and *which* to refer to animals and things.
Incorrect: *He is a person that I admire. (whom I admire)*

Who or whom? Consider:

People who hold public office must be honest.

He is a person who/whom I admire.

In the first sentence, the pronoun comes before the verb “hold” (i.e. it is its subject), so *who* is the correct form. In the second example, try this quick test: isolate the group of words “who/whom I admire” and express it as a statement: “I admire who/whom”.

Then replace “who/whom” with “he/him” and say the sentence out loud: *I admire he; I admire him.* The second version sounds more correct, because it is correct! (*Him* is the object in that sentence.) So if you replace “him” with “whom” in the original sentence: *He is a person whom I admire.*

- **That or which?** In general, use *that* to define something, *which* to describe, not define; *that* for essential information, *which* for incidental information. Consider these sentences:

The house that is painted green is mine.

The Oxford Hotel in Durban, which Thabo stayed at last year, has burnt down.

In the first sentence, the house is identified or defined (or set apart from all the other houses in the street) by “that is painted green”. “That” is correctly used here; there is no punctuation around the defining information, “that is painted green”. In the second sentence, the more important, defining information is “has burnt down”; incidentally, Thabo stayed at the hotel (non-essential information). “Which” is correctly used here as the defining information is already given. Note that the incidental information is placed between a pair of commas.

- **When and how to use “one”**

“One” is used for generalisations, especially when the speaker or writer wants to avoid making reference to a particular individual:

One should be grateful that one has received a good education.

If a speaker or writer begins to generalise in this way, the generalisation must be sustained by using *one’s* and *one-self*. Avoid constructions such as:

One should be grateful that you have been able to educate yourself.

(See also Pronoun as object of preposition, under 4.1.6 Prepositions.)

4.1.3 Adjectives

An adjective is a word used to describe a noun or a pronoun: beautiful, old-fashioned, oily, tall, big-hearted, fast, lonely.

Problem areas: when to hyphenate (or compound) adjectives and when not to; using commas (or not) between adjectives; using adjectives as adverbs; forming comparatives and superlatives. (See also 4.1.5 Adverbs.)

- **When to hyphenate (compound) adjectives and when not to**

Consider these two sentences:

A well-known author will be addressing us.
He is well known for his work on malaria.

In the first sentence, “well-known” appears before a noun (“author”) and to avoid ambiguity we hyphenate the adverb to the adjective to form a compound adjective (we call this the “attributive form”). In the second sentence, “well known” appears after the verb (“is”), so they are left as two words (we call this the “predicative form”). Both the adjectives in sentences above are correct therefore.

An adverb ending in -ly should never be hyphenated to the adjective that follows it:

A richly rewarded act of kindness.
The heavily overbearing personality.
A perfectly honed performance.

- **When to use commas between adjectives**

There are two main kinds of adjective: classifying (French, geometric, green [i.e. enviro-friendly] and qualitative (tall, handsome, yellow, rough). When adjectives of the same kind are listed, insert commas between them:

She’s wearing a long, blue skirt. (two qualifying adjectives)

When the list includes both classifying and qualitative adjectives, no commas are required between them:

She’s wearing a blue silk blouse.
That’s a typical Spanish dance.

Notice that the qualitative adjective usually precedes the classifying adjective. It sounds unnatural to write or say “That’s a Spanish typical dance.”

- **Do not use adjectives as adverbs**

Incorrect: *You write so beautiful. (You write so beautifully.)*

- **Forming comparative and superlative degrees**

To form the comparatives and superlatives of adjectives, you can do three things:

- add -er or -est as a suffix: faster, slower, healthier, smoothest, cleanest, happiest
- place “more” or “most” in front of the word: more resilient, most trustworthy
- change the word entirely: good, better, best; bad, worse, worst.

In general, the shorter the word (monosyllabic or bisyllabic), the more likely one is to use the -er or -est suffix (taller, happier, redder); some bisyllabic and all polysyllabic words take more and most (more wholesome; most beautiful; most reliable).

Incorrect: *more happier; most worst.*

4.1.4 Adverbs

Words used to describe or tell you more about a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. In doing so, they act as intensifiers (strengthening or weakening the adjective further):

Adverb and verb: *He runs faster than she does. The truck is moving slowly.*

Adverb and adjective: *That's the most intelligent answer of all. It's all so exciting.*

Adverb and adverb: *He runs much faster than she does. The truck is moving very slowly.*

Problem areas: using adjectives as adverbs; hyphenating adverbs ending in -ly to the adjective that follows them; placing an adverb in the incorrect position in relation to a verb; order of adverbs in a string.

- **Using adjectives as adverbs**

In most cases, though not in all, the adverb form ending in -ly should be used when a verb, an adjective or another adverb is being intensified:

He behaves so respectful toward his elders. (respectfully)

The cars moved so slow along the highway. (slowly)

I'm going direct to my office now. (directly)

- **Hyphenating adverbs ending in -ly to the adjective that follows them**

Avoid this practice:

My house is fully-covered by insurance. (fully covered)

I'd like the lightly-battered fish, please. (lightly battered)

His house is heavily-subsidised. (heavily subsidised)

- **Placing the adverb in the incorrect position in relation to a verb**

This decision usually needs to be made in the case of verb phrases:

I would have been early had it not been for the traffic.

Where would you insert "normally" in this sentence?

I normally would have been ...

I would normally have been ...

I would have normally been ...

I would have been normally ...

In the case of a three-word verb phrase, the most "natural" position to have placed it would be as in example 2 above, that is, between the two auxiliary (or helping) verbs (see 4.1.5 Verbs and tenses). (Second choice would be example 1.)

In the case of a two-word verb phrase, the most “natural” position to place the adverb is between the auxiliary and the main verb (“have been”):

I have always been honest with you.

- **Order of adverbs in a string**

There are adverbs that tell us about time, place, manner, reason, cause and condition. We’ll focus on the first three here. Consider this sentence:

He arrived at 11 o’clock by car at the office. (time, manner, place)

And then this one:

He arrived at the office at 11 o’clock by car. (place, time, manner)

The more “natural”-sounding order for adverbs of time, place and manner is illustrated in the second example, i.e. place, time and manner

4.1.5 Verbs and tenses

A verb is a word used to describe an action or existence: is, are, can, was, kicked, running, have. A verb is a doing word.

Problem areas: verb tense formation (normal, continuous and mixed verbs); reported speech (used in minutes and reports, for example); “can” vs “may”; “may” vs “might”; subjunctive mood (vs indicative mood); hyphenating prefixes and verb roots; splitting the infinitive; subject-verb agreement.

We investigate these problem areas after covering some fundamental aspects of verbs.

There are different types of verb: normal, non-continuous and mixed. Investigate each of these:

4.1.5.1 Normal verbs

Most verbs are “normal verbs”. These are usually physical actions that you can see somebody doing. They can be used in all tenses.

Examples: to run, to walk, to eat, to fly, to go, to say, to touch.

- Simple present tense **for a fact or a habit**: I eat dinner every day.
- Present continuous tense for **currently occurring activity**: I am eating dinner now.
- Simple past tense for an activity completed in the **recent past**: I ate dinner at 6 pm yesterday.
- Past continuous for an activity that **was happening when another activity occurred**: I was eating dinner when there was a knock at the door.
- Present perfect for an activity recently completed in the **present**: I have eaten too much today.
- Past perfect for an activity that **was completed before another activity**: He had already eaten his meal by the time I arrived.
- Future perfect for an activity that will be completed **by a certain time in the future**: By this time tomorrow, I shall have eaten my dinner.

4.1.5.2 Non-continuous verbs

These verbs are about things you cannot see somebody doing. For example, to be, to want, to cost, to feel, to seem, to need, to care, to contain, to owe, to exist, to have, to own, to belong, to like.

- Using non-continuous verbs correctly:

For **statements of fact**, it is correct to use the **simple present tense**, not the present continuous:

He is needing help now – Incorrect.

He needs help now – Correct.

He is wanting a drink now – Incorrect.

He wants a drink now – Correct.

I am thinking that he is right – Incorrect.

I think that he is right – Correct.

4.1.5.3 Mixed verbs

Mixed verbs have more than one meaning, depending on whether they are used as non-continuous or as normal verbs. For example:

to have:

I have a lot of things to do. (non-continuous verb)

There are many things I need to do.

I am having fun now. (normal verb)

I am experiencing pain.

to look:

The minister looks tired. (non-continuous verb)

The minister appears tired.

Faraaz is looking at the pictures. (normal verb)

She is looking at the pictures with her eyes.

to see:

I see her. (non-continuous verb)

I see her with my eyes.

I am seeing a lawyer. (normal verb)

I am visiting or consulting a lawyer. (Also used with dentist and doctor)

I am seeing her. (normal verb)

I am having a relationship with her.

He is seeing ghosts. (normal verb)

He sees something others cannot see. for example, ghosts, auras, a vision of the future, etc.

to think:

He thinks the test is easy. (non-continuous verb)

He thinks the test is easy.

She is thinking about the question. (normal verb)

She is pondering the question.

4.1.5.3 Reported speech (used in minutes and reports, for example)

Direct speech reflects what a person actually says:

“This is the correct procedure to follow.”

“We will order two more fighter jets.”

“I did that yesterday.”

“Sit down here!”

Note the underlined words in the example sentences carefully.

But when we report what someone said, for example during an interview or at a meeting, we have to change certain words to indicate that. Compare the underlined words below with those above:

She said that that was the correct procedure to follow.
The captain said that they would order two more fighter jets.
He claimed that he had done that the previous day.
She commanded him to sit down there.

Some pronouns changed: this became that; we became they; I became he (or she).
Adverbs changed: yesterday became the previous day; here became there.

The verbs all changed, from the present to the past (is became was; will order became would order); or from the near-past to further in the past (did became had done).

These are typical ways in which report writers and minute takers will write, because they are describing events that occurred in the past; or because they are writing about people and times and places at a distance (or removed from) from the writer's present.

4.1.5.4 Can vs may; may vs might

Can conveys the sense of ability; may conveys the meaning of permission:

You can swim, I know; but today you may not.

The past tense of can is could:

In the past you could swim, but now you're out of practice and cannot.

The past tense of may, is might:

But "might" can also suggest slight possibility (slighter than may):

There's a 30% chance of rain, they say, so do you think it might rain?
Be careful, that rotten branch may fall on you!

4.1.5.5 Subjunctive mood (vs indicative mood)

Most of the statements we utter are in what we call the "indicative mood". They are usually rooted in reality or fact:

When I am 65, I will retire.
It has rained all day today.
She has trained as a musician.

When we express a wish or speak about an imagined or hypothetical situation, or when something is conditional upon another thing, we can't use the indicative mood (which is associated with facts and reality); so we resort to the "subjunctive mood":

If only I were rich, I would retire immediately. (not was or will)
I really should not eat chocolate. (not shall)
The music student wishes she had learnt the piano instead of the violin. (not has learnt)

4.1.5.6 Hyphenating prefixes and verb roots

Why do we write “reopen” and “reiterate” and “reassess” when we write “re-edit”, “re-enter” and “re-educate”, on the one hand, and “re-bound”, “re-create” and “re-sort”, on the other?

When the last and first vowels of a prefix and a verb root are different (as in “reopen”), then there’s no need to hyphenate the two components.

When the two vowels are identical, it is clearer to the reader to hyphenate them (eg “re-educate”). For this reason, we follow a general rule that two e’s like this must be hyphenated.

The problem to avoid with “re-sort” and the other examples is different: resort, rebound and recreate all have distinct meanings from the root verbs with “re-” attached to them. So the hyphenated forms are very important in conveying different meanings from the unhyphenated forms.

4.1.5.7 Splitting an infinitive verb

A verb preceded by to, as in to like, is called an infinitive verb. Try to avoid splitting infinitives as it could cloud meaning and lead to awkward sentence constructions:

He really seems to like it, not He seems to really like it.

Do not write:

The minister said we have to actively participate in the voting process.

However, it is unnecessary to change well-known constructions such as: to boldly go where no man has gone before.

4.1.5.8 Verb agreement (concord)

Singular subjects have singular verbs, and plural subjects have plural verbs:

The man is resting, but The men are working.

However, not all sentences are that simple. Fortunately, there are some straightforward rules to follow:

1. Two nouns joined by and are followed by a plural verb: The politician and the farmer have arrived, i.e. two people have arrived. If you were to write: The politician and farmer has arrived, it implies that one person, who is both a politician and a farmer, has arrived. (If they are two distinct people, apart from a plural verb form, “the” would have to be inserted before “farmer” in the second example sentence.)
2. Collective nouns (army, crew, herd, team, committee, group) take a singular verb if the collection is thought of as a whole. It is not, however, wrong to use a plural verb. As a guide to deciding which form to use, decide whether you want to emphasise the unit or the individuals who make up the unit:

The South African cricket team is going to Australia.

Here we mean that one team is going to Australia. But consider this sentence:

The South African team were unanimous in their condemnation of Australian umpiring.

Here, all the members of the team agreed that the umpiring was bad, so the plural verb “were” is correct.

3. Two or more singular nouns joined by *or*, or *nor*, are followed by a singular verb:

Either Peter or Bill is going to pay.

4. When a singular and a plural noun are joined by *“or”* or *“nor”*, the verb takes its number from the noun nearer to it:

Either the workers or the supervisor is wrong.
(supervisor is singular, so you must use *is*).

Neither Mr Jones nor the boys were there.
(boys is plural, so you must use *were*).

5. Each, every, either, neither, nobody, everything, anybody and everybody all imply one thing and, as such, take singular verbs:

Every worker receives his or her wages.
Nobody is able to answer.

6. Much and little are singular; many and few are plural:

Much time is wasted on petty details.
Only a few were willing to take the plunge.

7. Some can be either singular or plural, depending on the context:

Some money is missing. (money is a mass noun)
Some of us are lazy. (us is a count noun)

8. Plural nouns denoting a whole usually take singular verbs:

R1 000 is a large sum of money. (not are)
Four months’ maternity leave is now standard. (not are)

9. Fractions are regarded as singular:

Three-quarters is larger than two-thirds.

10. None means no one, and is singular:

No one is going to take responsibility. None of us is.

11. Words that are plural in form but which are a label for a singular concept are regarded as singular:

Mathematics is an essential subject for engineers.
With globalisation, logistics goes to the core to many companies’ business models.
Today’s news has been pretty shocking.

12. When a singular subject is separated from its verb by a plural qualifier, the verb must be singular, not plural:

The noise of the drills outside is deafening.

The behaviour of the strikers was unacceptable.

The advent of democracy and a constitutional form of government is a breakthrough for our country.

4.1.6 Prepositions

A preposition is a word used for showing what one person or thing has to do with another person or thing, or the position of one thing in relation to another: with, under, on, above, in, beside.

The book is on the table. She sat next to him. He conducts himself in accordance with the law.

Problem areas: using the incorrect pronoun form after a preposition; writing into or in to; onto or on to.

What follows a preposition is called its object. When a pronoun is an object, it usually takes a special form:

Pronoun as subject Pronoun as object of preposition

He is my friend. But: *She sat next to him* (not he).

You and I will help. But: *Between you and me* (not I).

We are friends. But: *He looks after us* (not we).

They went home. But: *This is for them* (not they).

• Prepositional (or phrasal) verbs

Verbs take on a special meaning when they become linked to (or associated with) particular prepositions. We call these prepositional (or phrasal) verbs: for example, the verb tune.

I have to tune my guitar before every performance.

I need to have my car's engine tuned up.

I tune in to my favourite radio station every morning.

Here, tuned up and tune in have different meanings from tune, thanks to the influence of the prepositions. Prepositional verbs are the reason why in to and on to are sometimes written separately:

Tune in to Radio XYZ (not into).

Let's move on to the next topic (not onto).

But:

She dived into the swimming pool.

Pick up the bowl and put it onto that surface.

4.1.7 Conjunctions

A word used to join words and clauses: and, but, when, while, therefore, although.

Problem areas: punctuation around conjunctions; commas, semi-colons and lists of items; semi-colons vs conjunctions; while vs whereas.

There are two types of conjunction: coordinating and subordinating:

Mike likes tea but Sue prefers coffee. (coordinating)

Whereas Mike drinks only tea, Sue prefers coffee. (subordinating)

Sue prefers coffee, although she drinks tea sometimes. (subordinating)

Coordinating conjunctions create compound sentences from two or more simple sentences that carry equal weight (Mike likes tea and Sue prefers coffee in the first sentence above). Subordinating conjunctions (and relative pronouns) create complex sentences in which some parts are less important than others (and are usually bracketed off from the more important parts – as in *whereas Mike likes tea* above), and therefore labelled “subordinate”.

- **Punctuation around conjunctions**

There was a time when it was regarded as incorrect not to punctuate around conjunctions, but the convention has been relaxed.

Some people prefer nowadays to have less rather than more punctuation. These sentences are all acceptable:

She is clever, and she is also diligent.

She is clever and she is also diligent.

She is clever, but it is her diligence that makes her successful.

She is clever but it is her diligence that makes her successful.

The conjunction *however* must always have commas around it when it occurs inside a sentence, a comma after it when it starts a sentence, a comma before it when it ends a sentence:

It is her diligence, however, that makes her successful.

However, it is her diligence that makes her successful.

It is her diligence that makes her successful, however.

Where a writer positions *however* in a sentence is often a matter of where they want the emphasis of the contrary statement to fall: at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the sentence.

- **Commas, semi-colons and lists of items**

In a list of three or more items, House Style or the need for clarity will determine whether a comma is inserted before the final *and*:

The colours on the flag are red, green and blue.

On his breakfast plate were tomato, beans, toast, eggs, and bacon.

In long lists, it is often wise to replace some of the commas with semi-colons to create sub-lists that the reader is better able to absorb. In such instances, it is usual to group like items together:

In the toolbox you will find hammers, pliers and screwdrivers; nails, screws and tacks; masking tape, glue and other adhesives; and a selection of sandpapers.

- **Semi-colons and conjunctions**

Usually, conjunctions are not used together with a semi-colon (the one exception is “*however*”):

He is honest, but he is also stupid.

He is honest; he is also stupid.

He is scrupulously honest; however, his honesty often works to his disadvantage.

Incorrect: *He is honest; but he is also stupid. He is honest; and he is also stupid.*

Note the semi-colon before however in the sentence above, and also the comma after it.

- **While vs whereas**

In general, the use of while should be limited to conveying a sense of time or timing; whereas should be used to indicate a contrary instance or situation:

While I typed up the document, while she proofread what I'd completed.
(one activity occurring at the same time as another)

Simon prefers to work late at night, whereas Simone prefers early mornings. (contrasting behaviour patterns)

Ambiguous: *James likes exercising at the gym, while Judy does aerobics at home.* (simultaneous or contrasting?)

4.1.8 Articles

An article – the, a, and an – belongs to a group of words known as “determiners”: some, any, most, none, two, all, first, and so on.

They usually appear before a noun; their purpose is to help specify, or narrow down, the noun:

Some people are very kind; other people can be cruel.
None of the teachers appeared at the hearing; only two teachers were off sick; no teacher excused him- or herself.

Problem areas: when to use the or a/an; when to use a as opposed to an; using the and a/an in a list.

- **When to use the or a/an**

Use the definite article “the” to precede a noun to suggest a specific or known instance, an indefinite article (a or an) to suggest a general or vague instance:

“Do you know where I can find an ABC Bank ATM?”
“Yes, the ABC Bank ATM is over there.”

In the first sentence of this typical question-and-answer conversation, “an” is used because the speaker means any ABC Bank ATM; in the second, “the” is used because the person supplying the information is directing the speaker to a particular ATM.

A and an are also used for general statements:

For most people, a sunny day is preferable to an inclement one.

In contrast, “the” is used to refer to particular instances:

The rainy day that preceded my birthday was followed by the sunniest day of the year.

- **When to use “a” as opposed to “an”**

Use the indefinite article “a” before a consonant sound:

A lovely day, a hotel, a union, a eucalyptus tree.

Use the indefinite article “an” before a vowel sound:

- to indicate in writing the breathing spaces and pauses that normally occur in speech
- to convey or support meaning
- to join or separate items in lists
- an African trip, an heir, an FA Cup final, an SABC newsreader.
- BUT A UN agreement.

- **Using “the” and “a/an” in a list**

In a string of items, remember to use the correct indefinite and definite articles before each:

*I’ve collected a pen, an antique watch, a set square, and an eraser to begin with.
The dog, the cat, the hamster and the parrot needed care while we were away.
The dog, cat, hamster and parrot needed care while we were away.*

*Incorrect: I need a banana, apple, pineapple and apricot for the salad, please.
Incorrect: The dog, cat, hamster and the parrot needed care while we were away.*

4.2 Punctuation

The purpose of punctuation, broadly speaking, is threefold:

1. to indicate pauses or breathing spaces in normal speech
2. to support or convey meaning
3. to join or separate items in a list.

- **Punctuation indicates pauses or breathing spaces**

At one level, punctuation reflects the different lengths of breathing space and pause as follows, from shortest to longest:

comma (,) and parentheses (); semi-colon (;); colon (:); and dash (–); full stop (.), query (?) and exclamation mark (!)

- **Punctuation conveys/supports meaning**

In addition – sometimes in combination with the first purpose – punctuation helps to convey or support meaning:

These are my brothers. These are my brother’s. These are my brothers’.

In each sentence here, the words are identical; it’s the punctuation that changes the message being conveyed.

*My cousin who lives in PE turns 21 today.
My cousin, who lives in PE, turns 21 today.*

In the first sentence, the speaker presumably has more than one cousin and has to specify (“define”, “restrict”) the one who turns 21: “who lives in PE” tells us which one; so we call it a “defining clause”. In the second sentence, the information between the commas is incidental (“non-defining”), presumably because the speaker has only one cousin, so no definition or distinction is necessary.

- **Punctuation for emphasis**

Punctuation can also be used to convey various degrees of emphasis, usually conveyed by a speaker’s posture, gesture and intonation:

If you do it well (and I mean really well) I shall reward you handsomely.
If you do it well – and I mean really well – I shall reward you handsomely.

The statement between parentheses is intended as an aside or a “whisper”; the same statement between dashes is more emphatic. The words are identical, though.

- **Punctuation of lists**

Three basic models can be employed:

1. full sentences: initial letter uppercase, end all items in full stops
2. incomplete sentences: initial lower case, and no further punctuation
3. one- or two-word items: initial lower case, no end punctuation

For example:

Items on today’s agenda includes:

- *annual review of capital gains tax*
- *increasing VAT*

(no capitals in bullets and no punctuation)

Duties and responsibilities included:

- *teaching national curriculum to Grade 1 pupils*
- *reaching attainment targets and improving learning performance*
- *developing extracurricular sports programme*

(no capitals in bullets and no punctuation)

BUT

The agenda for tonight is as follows:

- *We will conduct an annual review of capital gains issues.*
- *The senior tax manager will talk about increasing value-added tax.*

We now consider some aspects of the punctuation marks – particularly those that give wordsmiths trouble: full stops; commas, semi-colons and colons; apostrophes; parentheses and brackets; the ellipsis, and the query and exclamation mark.

4.3.1 Full stops

Do not use full stops in certain abbreviations: USA, UN, etc.

Do not use full stops after initials: NR Mandela.

Do not use full stops in abbreviations that end in the final letter of the complete word:

Col for colonel; Revd for Reverend; St for Street and Saint.

4.3.2 Commas, colons and semi-colons

Use commas (,) to:

- **separate items in a straightforward list:**

The colours of the rainbow are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

- **separate a phrase or clause that explains what went before:**

Peter, an architect, designed our house. The bus, which runs past our house, takes me to work every day. Before returning home, we stopped by the supermarket.

- **avoid ambiguities:**

A bright, yellow flower. vs A bright yellow flower.

- **indicate non-defining clauses (always a pair of commas):**

My house, which is painted blue and white, is Victorian.

- **between a string of adjectives of the same type (either classifying or qualitative):**

She's a tall, dark, beautiful woman.

The dog's long, brown, freshly washed coat gleamed in the sunshine.

- **Commas vs semi-colons**

Use commas to separate items in a simple list:

We learn about oceans, deserts, mountains and grasslands.

But use semi-colons (;) to separate items in a list of items which themselves contain commas:

Our journey took us to Italy, where we discovered the Roman civilisation; Egypt, which introduced us to some of the wonders of pre-history; and Greece, where we explored the early roots of Hellenism.

- **Semi-colons instead of conjunctions**

Use semi-colons instead of conjunctions to balance two complementary, supporting or contrasting statements:

To err is human; to forgive divine.

The country is on a knife-edge; the outcome of the elections will be decisive.

We tried hard; however, we failed.

Use a colon (:) to introduce a list of items or bullet points:

I will ensure that our services have the appropriate:

- *focus*
- *integrity*
- *professionalism*

Use a colon to break a sentence before an illustration, an explanation or a resolving statement:

He is correct: the only way to solve this problem is to hire more staff.

The frog is unique: it lives in water and on land.

The rose is associated with romance: for example, red roses symbolise love.

Notice that in all three examples the colon is followed by a lower-case initial. An upper-case initial should be used when what follows the colon is a self-contained sentence or a question, or a proper noun:

Late that evening in Sienna, we dined out in the village square: When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

4.3.3 Apostrophes

Apostrophes (') are often misused; they should be used in the following ways:

- **To show possession (singular): the cat's whiskers, the boss's view; (plural): business partners' investment; the provinces' MECs.**

Note: But not the possessive form of pronouns (his, hers, theirs, its) – see Pronouns above and below in this section.

- **To show that a letter has been left out: don't (contraction of do not), it's (contraction of it is).**
- **To show time or quantity: one month's notice, five metres' worth of fabric, a year's supply of rice.**

When NOT to use an apostrophe:

- **In words that are not contracted:**

Whose package is most profitable?

Not: *Who's package is most profitable?*

Its campaigns help create jobs.

Not: *It's campaigns help create jobs.*

That item is theirs. Not: That item is their's.

- **To show the plural of letters and words:**

There are two Ns in Johannesburg (not N's).

These are the dos and don'ts of writing (not do's and don't's).

- **For decades: 1990s (not 1990's).**
- **Plurals: Pty's (not Pty's); photos (not photo's); SMSs (not SMS's); companies not (company's); apples (not apple's); tomatoes (not tomatoe's).**

4.3.4 Hyphens, en-rules (–) and dashes (– or —)

Hyphens, en-rules and dashes each have distinct roles to play in documents.

Use hyphens (-) for:

- **e-words: e-mail, e-business, e-commerce, e-books**
- **compound nouns (where two or more nouns are joined): buy-out, cost-effectiveness, cross-reference**
- **compound adjectives (where two or more adjectives are joined) ONLY where the noun it describes follows it: cost-effective project (but the project was cost effective), risk-based portfolio, long-term commitment.**
- **nouns formed from phrasal verbs: a break-up (to break up); buy-out (to buy out); line-up (to line up); take-off (to take off).**

The following are a few basic guidelines regarding hyphens:

- hyphenate compound (attributive) adjectives: old-fashioned clothes, so-called champion
- hyphenate prefixes to proper names: un-Christian, sub-Saharan, trans-Karoo
- when pro means in favour, use a hyphen: pro-life
- with the prefix non: non-smoker, non-conformist, non-destructive; but nonconformist, nondescript, nonentity. Check your dictionary!
- with prefixes ending in e, when the root word begins with e: re-edit, pre-empt
- where a difference in meaning from a non-hyphenated word needs to be conveyed: re-bound vs rebound; re-sort vs resort; re-create vs recreate.
- use a hyphen when writing certain figures: eg thirty-six, three-quarters
- hyphenate titles such as director-general, lieutenant-colonel, inspector-general
- use a dash (–) to draw attention: The Budget will rise – from R10 billion to R15 billion – next year.

See “Words often misspelled” for words that are not hyphenated, including:

- abovementioned
- postgraduate
- subsection

When NOT to use a hyphen:

- When compound adjectives do not appear before the noun they refer to (they usually appear after a verb (predicative) – see Adjectives above):

day-to-day problems but from day to day
higher-rate tax but the higher the rate of tax
long-term insurance but in the long term
up-to-date system but keep up to date

- After an adverb ending in -ly:

widely read report

- Instead of a hyphen between figures (including dates) to mean to, use an en-rule (eg 3 – 12 March) (press Ctrl and the minus key on the numeric keypad)

4.3.5 Ellipsis (...)

An ellipsis is used almost exclusively within quoted passages and indicates that the author who borrowed the quoted matter did so selectively, leaving out unnecessary words intentionally. Treat an ellipsis like any other word with regard to spacing, therefore:

Michaels says "... it is difficult to credit Sauls with ... having been a proponent of liberal capitalist views ...".

In this quotation, the ellipsis at the beginning has a normal word space after it; the ellipsis in the middle has spaces either side of it; the one at the end of the quotation has a space before it. The quotation marks and final punctuation are set close up to the ellipsis.

Another use of the ellipsis is to indicate that a sentence or statement is incomplete, for whatever reason. In such instances, it would be wrong to terminate the sentence in a full stop:

Let's leave that to your imagination ...
I don't know what I feel about ...

4.3.6 Question marks

These are used only after actual questions:

Is it raining?; Are you coming?

No question mark in:

He asked if I was coming.

4.3.7 Exclamation marks

These are used only after actual exclamations:

I don't believe it!
Astonishing!
Eish!

If they are used, there should be only one per exclamation. They have almost no place in formal writing.

5. A TO Z GUIDE

A

abbreviations. Write out the first instance in each chapter/section, with the abbreviation in brackets; thereafter use the abbreviation only (except in headings). When abbreviating names of organisations, use the abbreviation only after the full name has been used first: The headquarters of the United Nations (UN) is in New York. The UN, the international body, announced that ... Plurals of abbreviations are written without an apostrophe: MECs, MPLs, SGBs, NGOs. If the sound of the first letter of an abbreviation is a vowel, write “an” before it: an MP.

about. Use in place of approximately, in the region of or around.

accept, except. Accept means “receive” or “agree with”: I accept your opinion; except means “to make an exception of”: Except for his tantrums, he’s a great fellow.

Act. When used in the legislative sense, the first letter is always capitalised: The Act provides for ... When mentioned for the first time, the Act must be named in full: the Revenue Laws Amendment Act, 2003 (Act 45 of 2003), was recently signed into law (note the comma after the last bracket).

accidental/incidental. An accidental happening occurs unexpectedly and unintentionally. Something incidental happens in relation to something else of greater importance.

action. This is a noun, not a verb. You do not action something, you do it, or carry it out, or implement it. You do take action, though.

additionally, in addition. Use additionally before an adjective to intensify it: The patient’s condition is additionally worrying in view of his medical history. Use in addition as a connector: In addition to going to gym, Joe runs 10 km twice a week.

adverse, averse. Adverse means “opposing” or “unfavourable”: They played the game in adverse weather conditions, and lost. Averse means “reluctant; unwilling”: I’m not averse to eating spicy foods.

advice, advise. Advice is a noun: I will ask for her advice. Advise is a verb: I will advise her what to do.

adviser. Not advisor.

advocate, advocate for. The first can be either a verb or a noun: I advocate rights for animals; that makes me an animal rights’ advocate. The second can be only a noun: He is an advocate of change. Incorrect: He advocates for change.

affect, effect. Affect is a verb meaning to make a difference to: The decision did not affect the outcome. Effect is both a noun, meaning a change that something causes in something else, and a verb, meaning to make something happen: The decision has a significant effect (noun); to effect changes (verb).

African (uppercase initial), Indian, but coloured, black and white (lowercase initials).

African Renaissance (uppercase initials); but We’re witnessing a renaissance of literature in South Africa.

ages. Should always be given in figures. Hyphenate: The 40-year-old unionist (adjectival), but don’t hyphenate: He was 21 years old.

agree to, agree with. Agree to means “consent to”: Do you agree to support us? Agree with means “have the same opinion as”: I agree with you that we must uphold the Constitution.

AIDS. Uppercase, as is HIV.

all of the. Use all the, all, or every.

all right. Always use all right, written as two words; not alright.

all together, altogether. All together means “simultaneously” or “in the same place”: We were huddled all together in the small tent. Altogether means “entirely; with everything included”: I shall have flown to Lanseria nine time altogether this year.

allude, elude. Allude means to mention indirectly: allude to a book. Elude means to escape: elude pursuers.

alot, a lot, allot. Alot does not exist; a lot means a large quantity or amount: He puts in a lot of time as a volunteer; allot means to parcel out: We were each allotted a small patch of land.

alternate, alternative. Alternate (adjective) means going back and forth between two things, as in alternate weekends (every other weekend). Alternative means “other” and applies when there are two opinions, as in an alternative plan.

among, between. Use among for more than two people or things and between for two people or things. Exception: in the case of agreements, pacts or contracts, the correct idiomatic use is “between”: The agreement was signed between the SADC member states. Avoid amongst.

and/or. Avoid using, except in a legal document.

anticipate, expect. Anticipate means foresee or regard as possible yet not sure, such as rain. If you expect something, you are sure about it happening, such as expecting a visitor.

antiretroviral (one word).

any more (two words)

apartheid (lowercase initial), not italics.

appendices (the plural of appendix).

approximately. Use about.

archaeologist.

as. Do not use as for because: He left because he was tired not: He left as he was tired.

as well (as). Use “and” unless “in addition” or “over and above” is meant: He was impolite, dirty, foul-mouthed as well as dishonest. Don’t end a sentence with as well. Incorrect: aswell (one word).

as yet. Use yet, not as yet.

Asian (adjective and noun). Uppercase. Refers to people or products from Asia. Incorrect: Asiatic.

assure, ensure, insure. You assure (promise) a person that things will go well (instil confidence). You ensure (make sure) that work is done. You insure (guarantee or protect) something against loss or damage.

ATM. Stands for automatic teller machine, therefore don’t write ATM machine.

averse, adverse. If you do not like something, you are averse (opposed) to it. Adverse (bad) is an adjective, as in adverse conditions.

avocados.

B

backlog (one word).

basically, essentially, totally. Avoid. These do not add any meaning to a sentence.

basis. Avoid phrases such as on a regular basis (use regularly) and on an annual/weekly/daily basis (use annually/weekly/daily).

belief (noun), **believe** (verb). It is my belief that it will rain tomorrow; I believe in God.

benefit, benefiting, benefited (single t).

besides, beside. Besides means in addition to, apart from, moreover or other than. Beside means next to.

between ... and. not between ... to: Identify the prime numbers between 16 and 49.

biannual, biennial. Biannual refers to something occurring twice a year or half-yearly. Biennial means occurring every two years.

Bible, bible. Use Bible (not italics) to refer to the Holy Bible; use bible as a metaphor for a fundamental or indispensable work: This handbook is the motor mechanic’s bible.

bid, bade. Bid (n. or v.) refers to an offer (At the auction I bid for the diamond pendant; as it turned out, my bid was not the highest) or a greeting (I bid you farewell). The past tense verb form of bid (the greeting) is bade: On his retirement he bade his colleagues farewell.

Big Five (uppercase initials).

bilateral (one word).

Bill (uppercase initial). A draft of legislation presented to the members of Parliament for comment and possible amendment prior to enactment is a Bill.

binational (one word).

black people. lowercase b.

blind. Use visually impaired.

borrow, lend. You borrow from someone; you lend to someone.

British spelling throughout. Use -ise not -ize, metre not meter (except for meter as a measuring device), colour not color. (Make sure your spell checker is set to English UK or South Africa.)

Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE).

BuaNews. Always write as one word with a capital N. It should be written in normal font and not italics.

Budget. Use uppercase initial when referring to the national Budget or the Budget Speech.

burn, burned, burnt. Burned and burnt are both past participles of burn. Burned is used more as a verb. (His house burned as everyone looked on.); burnt is used more as an adjective (On my plate were burnt offerings instead of a hearty dinner.).

bushveld.

by the fact that. Avoid. Instead of: I am surprised by the fact that the report is incomplete, write: I am surprised the report is incomplete.

C

Cabinet (uppercase initial).

can, may. Can (past tense: could) expresses ability: She can play the piano. May (past tense: might) expresses permission: You may leave early. Might also expresses possibility, though with less certainty than may: It might rain.

canvas, canvass. Canvas (noun) is a type of cloth. Canvass (verb) means to visit someone to ask for their vote.

cellphone (one word).

census.

centre (not center). Centre on, not centre around.

century. Spell out in full and use lowercase c: 19th century.

certainly. Try to avoid using.

chairperson. Use in place of chairman, chairwoman or chairlady.

close corporation (CC). Not closed.

cohort, cohorts. Use cohort, which refers to a group not to individuals: The cohort of militiamen came marching up to us.

colour. not color.

coloured people, coloureds (lowercase initials).

communication, communications. Communication refers to written, spoken or non-verbal communication, whereas communications refers to technological communication.

compared to, compared with. Compared to expresses similarities: Compare the landscape to a Monet painting. Compared with assesses the relation or difference between things: Compare radio with television.

complement, compliment. To complement means to add to or bring out the best in something: Fish and tartare sauce complement each other. Compliment means to praise, and complimentary means something given away for free.

comprise. Use comprise(s) and not comprises of. e.g. The Olympic team comprises 90 athletes.

comprising, including. Comprising is used when all the components of the whole are mentioned. Including does not presume that everything has been mentioned. The team comprising 11 athletes left for New Delhi today. The whole team, including the coach and their manager, has left for overseas.

consensus.

consequent, subsequent. Consequent refers to the result or logical conclusion of something. Subsequent refers to the event or events immediately following something.

Constitution. Use a capital letter, but do not capitalise constitutional, other than in Constitutional Court.

continual, continuous. Continual means happening over and over again. Continuous means happening constantly without interruption. I can't stand his continual moaning and groaning in the office! The continuous drilling sound is disturbing us.

cooperate (one word).

coordinate (one word).

cornerstone (one word).

cost-effective.

council, counsel. A council is usually an elected body giving advice, guiding or doing administration. A counsel is a qualified person who gives advice, and is the same as a guidance councillor.

countrywide (one word).

criteria. Is the plural form of the singular criterion. There can be either one criterion or several criteria.

critique. It is a noun, not a verb. It does not mean purely criticise.

currency. Lowercase initial when written out: dollar, rand, euro. Symbols uppercase. No space between abbreviation and the figure: R500.

currently. Use currently or now instead of presently, at this point in time, at this juncture, at the present moment or at this point.

D

darkroom (one word).

data. Takes the singular. The data is complete.

dates. 16 June 1976; 1990s; Tuesday, 14 August.

daycare (one word).

D-Day.

deaf. Rather use hearing impaired or hearing challenged.

decimal commas. Use decimal commas, not points: R300,45 not R300.45; 1 234,56 not 1,234.56.

degrees. Use the degree symbol: 40°C or 30°S.

Democratic Republic of Congo (not the Congo).

Denotation, connotation. Denotation is the exact meaning. Connotation is the implied meaning.

Department, department. When referring to a specific department by its correct title, e.g. Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, use uppercase initials. When referring to a department generically or in the plural, use lowercase: the justice department, the departments of labour and of education.

dependant, dependent. Dependant (noun) means a person who is dependent (adjective) on someone else.

director-general. Plural: directors-general. Initial uppercase in full title; Director-General of Basic Education.

disabled. People with a disability or disabilities.

disinterested, uninterested. Disinterested means unbiased or neutral about an issue: Judges should be disinterested – they can't afford to take sides while hearing trials! Uninterested means not interested. I'm not interested in your excuses.

doctoral degree, doctorate.

downscaling, downsizing (one word).

due to. Use owing to or because of: The prices have escalated because of increased demand. But the amount of R500 is due.

E

each other, one another. Two people talk to each other; more than two talk to one another.

Earth. Uppercase initial when referring to Earth, the planet; lowercase when referring to the soil: tilling the earth; what on earth do you mean?

economic, economical. Economic is used in relation to finances and cost. Economical refers to giving good value or avoiding wastage. The economic climate in South Africa is fairly healthy at present. A 5 kg pack is more economical than a 1 kg pack.

educators. Not teachers.

e.g. and i.e.. Eg stands for the Latin *exempli gratia*, meaning for example; i.e. stands for the Latin *id est*, meaning that is – it should be followed by a clarifying statement, not an example: His recent bad behaviour, i.e. his rudeness and lack of consideration for others, is totally out of character.

elections. Use instead of polls.

endeavour (n.). Use the plainer try or attempt instead.

enquiry, inquiry. Enquire is a formal word for ask; inquire is used for an investigation. However, for the sake of simplicity, it is acceptable to use only enquire.

equally, equally as. Use equally: Peter and Paul are equally clever. Or Peter is as clever as Paul. Or Paul is just as clever as Peter.

etc. Use with a full stop after and a comma before. Do not use etc. if a list is preceded by "for example", "for instance" or "such as"; only actual examples should follow.

every day, everyday. "Everyday" (adjective) means occurring every day, not out of the ordinary, commonplace: An everyday event happens every day.

except, accept. Except means to make an exception of: Except for his tantrums, he's a great fellow. Accept means "receive" or "agree with": I accept your opinion.

F

farm workers. (two words)

farther, further. Use farther for physical distance and further to mean additional or continued: travel farther down the road but pursue an issue further.

fewer, less. Use fewer with numbers of items or people: Fewer than 10 delegates attended. Less refers to quantity: Less than half the delegates arrived. Less power is needed to warm the water.

First Economy.

first world.

flout, flaunt. Flout means “to break rules openly and even with contempt”: Flouting the law regarding after-hours liquor sales could land you in trouble. Flaunt means “display oneself ostentatiously; show off”: The young billionaire flaunts his wealth in the form of flashy clothing and motor cars.

focus, focused, focusing. One s.

forego, forgo. Fore means before. The foregoing text provides the background to the story. But: In prison he had to forgo the luxuries in life.

formula, formulae. Use formulae not formulas as the plural of formula.

fractions. Hyphenate fractions: one-half, two-thirds. Treat them as singular: two-thirds is greater than one-quarter.

from ... to. The distance from A to B is a day’s journey.

fulfil. But fulfilled, fulfilling.

fully. Fully fledged programme. Don’t use a hyphen because of the -ly ending.

G

G5 (no hyphens).

G8 (no hyphens).

GCIS. Government Communication and Information System. There is no s suffix on Communication or System. A shorter version can be used: Government Communications (GCIS).

glamorous. Not glamorous.

go-ahead (n.), **go ahead** (v.). The department has received the go-ahead ...; but: go ahead with executing the board’s instructions.

gold mining, gold mines, but goldfields.

Gospel, gospel. Capitalise when referring to the Bible, use lower case when using as an adjective: The gospel singer reads from the Gospel every night.

got, gotten. Use got, not gotten. The latter is American English; South African English has its roots in British English, so got is the acceptable option.

government. Use lowercase initial in all cases, except when referring specifically to the Government: the South African Government, but government projects.

governance, government. Governance is the action or manner of governing: Sound corporate governance. But: Since 1994, South Africa has had a constitutional system of government.

grassroots (one word).

Green Paper (initials uppercase).

gross domestic product (GDP).

groundbreaking.

H

handicapped (person). Use person with a disability.

hectare (ha). Non-breaking space between number and abbreviation: 700 ha.

he or she and his or her. Using they instead of he or she and their for his or her is grammatically incorrect. Ways to avoid he/she and him/her, if so required: use plural nouns and pronouns; use the instead of pronouns; or remove the pronoun entirely: Students should study hard if they want to pass the examinations.

head. People head committees; they **do not head up** committees. Use lowercase initials for head of department (HoD).

headings. First initial uppercase, all other words in heading lowercase, except names: Arts and culture, National symbols, but Department of Arts and Culture. Do not use abbreviations in headings.

healthcare (one word).

historic, historical. Historic means a significant or important event that will stand out in history: the historic democratic election. Historical refers to any past occurrence.

HIV (uppercase).

HIV and AIDS. Not HIV/AIDS.

highveld.

home owner. But home-owner's allowance.

honorary. Honorary degree, not honourary degree.

honours degree. No apostrophe.

human-resource development (HRD). Not resources; use lowercase initials.

HRD Strategy.

I

i.e., e.g. Do not confuse these two abbreviations. I.e. means "that is" and introduces an explanation or clarification. E.g. means "for example" and simply introduces one or more examples. His siblings, i.e. his older two brothers, are supporting him.

immunise.

impact is a noun, not a verb: The impact of the fuel and energy price increases will be enormous. Not: The fuel and energy price increases will impact us greatly. Try to avoid this word as impact has more to do with a collision.

incidence, incident. They should not be used interchangeably as synonyms. Incidence (an abstract n.) can mean "the rate or frequency of occurrence of a phenomenon"; "incident" means "a distinct occurrence or event": The greater the number of incidents of crime, the higher we can say the incidence of crime is.

independent, not independant.

in depth/in-depth. Research students pursue a specific aspect of their subject in depth. In-depth (two words) is an adjective: indepth analysis of the figures.

Indian (n. or adj.). Uppercase.

informal settlement. Use in place of squatter camp.

information and communications technology (ICT). Lowercase initials.

information technology (IT). Lowercase initials.

install. But instalment

instil. One "l"; but instilled, instilling.

inter alia. Rather use among other things (and certainly not among others).

interactive.

interdepartmental.

interdependent.

intergovernmental.

Internet (uppercase initial).

intra-racial.

intra-sectorial.

-ise, -ize. Use -ise for all words spelt with -ize: eg organise not organize. Exception: first prize.

italics. Should be used sparingly to emphasise the meaning of words. Always use for non-South African words and phrases; titles of publications, albums of music recording, operas, ballets, and movies; the titles of Green and White papers; lawsuits (Smith v Jones; Ex party Lawson); website addresses (www.sayearbook.gov.za); and the names of ships (SAS Protea), aircraft and spacecraft.

its, it's. "It's" is a contraction of it is: It's hot today. Its is a possessive meaning of it: Among its various provisions, the Constitution ensures equal rights for all.

J

JSE Securities Exchange Limited (JSE). This is the official name.

jewellery.

judgement, judgment. The driver's judgement was impaired by alcohol. The court's judgment is due in two weeks.

K

Khayelitsha.

kick off. Soccer events and projects kick off, but conferences and campaigns open, begin or start. The noun form is kick-off: The kick-off is due at 15:30.

kilolitre (kl). Not the American or Afrikaans spelling, kiloliter.

kilometre (km). Not the American kilometer. Non-breaking space (Shift+Ctrl+Spacebar) between the figure and the km: 3 000 km. Never use kms.

knobkierie.

knock-and-drop.

knockout (boxing).

KwaZulu-Natal (with a hyphen in the position shown).

L

landowners (one word).

land-users (hyphenated).

languages. There are 11 official languages in South Africa:

- Afrikaans
- English
- isiNdebele
- isiXhosa
- isiZulu
- Sesotho sa Leboa (Sepedi)
- Sesotho
- Setswana
- siSwati
- Tshivenda
- Xitsonga.

latter, last. Latter is used of two people or things; last of three or more. Of feathers and lead, the latter is the denser matter.

lead, lead, led. The metal is lead (Pb); I'll lead the way, provided you're prepared to be led by me.

leaders, leadership. The trade union has several leaders, but they are sadly lacking in leadership (i.e. the quality of leading) skills.

learn, learned, learnt. Learned and learnt are both past tense forms of learn: At school we learned arithmetic and spelling. Have you learnt nothing about good manners? Learned is used in a special way as an adjective (to mean "wise"), with the stress on the "ed": the learned professor; my learned colleague, the judge.

lekgotla. Gathering. Plural: makgotla.

lend, borrow. You lend something to someone and borrow something from someone: I lend my pen to you; May I borrow your pencil?

less, fewer. Less refers to quantity, fewer refers to number: Fewer than 10 delegates attended; Less than half the delegates arrived.

(See also Nouns.)

letsema. Communal volunteerism.

licence (n.), license (v.).

lifelong.

life-size.

light. Correct: In the light of that information, we must act. Incorrect: In light of that information ...

like. Avoid using to mean such as or as if.

Limpopo. Not Limpopo Province.

Limpopo River. But Limpopo and Orange rivers.

line-up (n.), line up (v.). The police line-up was delayed. We had to line up to see Oprah.

loan, lend. Use loan as the noun and lend as the verb. Lent is the past tense.

locally. No hyphen when used adjectivally because of -ly ending: locally developed vaccines.

longstanding (one word).

long term. Hyphenate when it's used as an adjective, otherwise write as two words: long-term investment; In the long term, my finances will be fine.

lose (v.), loose (adj.). I often lose my keys. My shoelace is loose.

lowveld.

M

macrobenefits.

macroeconomic.

maize meal.

mangoes.

may, might. May expresses both permission and possibility, while might expresses only possibility: May I leave the room? It might rain today.

mealiemeal.

medium (singular), **media** (singular/plural).

media conference. Covers both print and electronic media.

Medium Term Budget Policy Statement and Medium Term Expenditure Framework. No hyphens. But medium-term arrangements.

megalitre (Ml). Refers to a million litres.

Mercosur. The trading block. Not MERCOSUR.

microlending.

millennium.

million tonnes (Mt). Write in full, separately from numerals: 32 million.

Minister. Capitalise when used as a title: the Minister of Finance, Mr Govan Reddy, or Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan; but the finance minister and the minister. Also use lowercase when the plural is used: the ministers of health and of communications.

ministry, Ministry. Capitalise only when written out in full: The Ministry of Justice, but the justice ministry or the ministry.

money, plural: moneys, not monies.

moneylending.

Mpumalanga. Not Mpumalanga Province. Note the spelling.

multidimensional.

multilingualism.

multimedia, multimillion (one word).

multitude. Is a singular concept: A multitude of ideas is buzzing in my head.

myself, I. Incorrect usage: Myself and Susan will be attending (Susan and I will be attending); my friend and myself are going (my friend and I are going). Otherwise, use only in the reflexive form, as in I baked the cake myself; I myself do that regularly.

N

National Budget (uppercase N).

national Department of Human Settlements (lowercase N).

nation-building.

nationwide.

New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad).

newsroom.

non-. The prefix "non" indicates the negative sense of words with which it is combined. Hyphenate, as in non-smoker. But nonconformist, nondescript, nonentity.

non-governmental organisation (NGO). Lowercase initials. Plural: NGOs.

no one (two words).

North West (the province). No hyphens. Not North West Province. But: North-West University.

northern hemisphere. Lowercase initials.

numbers. Use words for one to nine, numerals from 10 onwards. Decimal and negative numbers are rendered as numerals. Write out numbers at the beginning of a sentence. For millions, use the numeral: R4 million. Hyphenate million only when used adjectivally: R4,5 million but R4,5-million investment. Use a space for thousands: R168 050.

numerous. Rather use many.

O

of, off. Of is a preposition, off can be an adverb or a preposition. Avoid mistakenly using off as a preposition, as in I picked it up off the floor. Off the top of my head, I'd say we made R2 million profit last year.

one another, each other. Two people talk to each other; more than two talk to one another.

ongoing.

online (one word).

onset, outset. Do not confuse them. Onset means "commencement, outbreak"; outset means "start, beginning". The onset of influenza is characterised by headache and fever. From the outset, the project has been beset by delays.

organise, organisation. See -ise.

overcrowded (no hyphen).

overexpenditure (no hyphen).

P

pandemic. Use to denote the global AIDS problem. Use epidemic to denote the problem in South Africa.

Parliament, parliamentary. The South African Parliament (uppercase) or the Parliament, but parliamentary briefings.

passed, past, last. Passed is the past tense form of pass; past is the adjective derived from pass, and it means "the time gone by"; last means "final". I passed him in the corridor on my way to the office. This past year has been so busy. In the last few months of his life, he was fit and active.

peacekeeping (no hyphen).

per annum (pa). In text, use a year or each year, not per annum or per year. However, pa may be used in tables or where space is limited, provided it is explained in full below or first.

per cent (two words); but percentage.

peri-urban.

persons, people. Both are plural forms of "person", but persons belong more to legal or official documents and notices. (Admission only to persons over the age of 18), whereas people should be a part of in everyday usage (there are too many people who drive alone to work).

PhD.

phenomenon (singular), **phenomena** (plural).

plus-minus. About or approximately. Do not use ±.

police, police officer. Use instead of policeman, policewoman or cop.

post-apartheid.

practice (n.), practise (v.). At soccer practice we practised our dribbling.

premise, premises. A premise is a previous statement or proposition from which another is inferred or follows as a conclusion: You can't operate on the premise that women are less productive than men. Premises (only plural) comprise a house or building together with its grounds, or a building housing a business, for example.

The Presidency (uppercase initial when referring to the institution); The President's Office (uppercase initials).

President, president. President Jacob Zuma; but our president, or the president of a company.

principal, principle. Principal means "main, head". Use principal as a synonym for most important or main, or instead of headmaster/headmistress. Principle means a moral guideline or fundamental truth.

prizewinner (one word).

proactive (no hyphen).

probably, likely. In South African English, each of these words belongs to a unique phrase: That mine will probably close. That mine is now likely to close. Incorrect: That mine will likely close.

Prof. (with a full stop). Abbreviation of Professor.

programme, program. Programme on TV or radio, but computer program.

prove, proven, proved. Proved is the past tense form of prove: He proved me wrong at our meeting yesterday. In front of a noun, proven tends to be preferred: It is a proven fact that water freezes at 0°C.

public service. Use instead of civil service.

publications. Titles of publications are set in italics: *Vuk'uzenzele*, *South Africa Yearbook*, etc.

Q

quatercentenary. 25th anniversary. No R between qua- and -tercentenary.

quite, quiet. Quite is an adverb meaning very or fairly (you are quite right; that was quite good); quiet is an adjective meaning making little or no noise: You are quite right. She is a quiet person.

R

R500 (no space).

race. African, Indian and Asian get an uppercase initial; black, coloured and white are lowercase.

reason. The construction the reason being is ... is incorrect. Replace it with the reason is ... or the reason being put forward is ...

recently. Use instead of yesterday or last week, depending on the degree of urgency.

regard, regards, regarding. These two words each belong to unique contexts and phrases and cannot be used interchangeably: I regard you as my friend. It is usually safer and better to use "about" or "regarding" instead of with regard to/as regards in contexts such as: With regard to our friendship, I can say little more. As regards our friendship, what else is there to say? A letter may be ended with the phrase Kind regards. Incorrect: With regards to this matter ...

reign, rein. To reign is to rule or govern; a rein is a leather strap used to control a horse when riding it: The dictator's reign ended abruptly in a coup d'état.

renaissance. Capitalise only if it is used with "The" and refers either to the historic period or the African Renaissance.

Rev. (with a full stop). Abbreviation of Reverend.

ringleader.

role player. Two words. But role-playing game

roll out (v.), roll-out (n.).

S

savanna. Also savannah – use one or the other consistently in a single document.

school-leaver.

schoolteacher, schoolmaster, schoolchildren, schoolboy, schoolgirl (one word).

Section 21 company.

Section. Section of an Act takes an uppercase initial: As we read in Section 15(1)(e) of the Act.

Sector Education and Training Authority (Seta).

semi-arid.

semi-colons. Use commas to separate items in a simple list, but use semi-colons to separate items in a list of items which themselves contain commas. (See also 4.3.2 Commas, semi-colons and colons.)

service delivery. But service-delivery programme.

service providers (two words).

shareholder.

since. Do not use since to mean “because”; this can lead to ambiguity: Since he has been promoted, he no longer greets me. (because, or from the time?)

sister. Use staff nurse.

small, medium and micro-enterprise (SMME). Plural: SMMEs.

South Africa Yearbook. African is incorrect.

southern Africa.

southern hemisphere (lowercase initials).

spokesperson. Use instead of spokesman or spokeswoman.

stakeholder.

State, state. Capitalise when referring to an organised political community under or belonging to or in the interests of one government: The building belongs to the State, but state visit or state-owned company.

stationary, stationery. Stationary means standing still. Stationery is writing material supplied by a stationer.

storeroom (one word).

subdirectorate.

subprogramme.

substantial, substantive. Substantial means of solid material or structure; ample and nourishing of ample or considerable amount or size: Have a substantial meal before you start fasting; It was so substantial that it took two men to push it. Substantive means “having a separate and independent existence; self-sufficient; important, significant, considerable”: He wrote volumes of substantive essays that contribute to the world of learning. Incorrect: The facilitator played a substantive role in their learning experience.

subtropical.

sugar cane.

supersede. Not supercede.

T

talk show (two words), but talk-show host.

taxpayer (one word).

technikons. Now universities of technology.

tercentenary. 300th anniversary.

than, then. Than is used to indicate comparison: His work is better than mine. Then indicates a time-based sequence: They ate dinner, then they went out dancing.

that, which. Use that to introduce a defining clause: This is the house that Jack built. Use which to introduce a qualifying clause: This house, which was built by Jack, is up for sale. As a general rule, where a phrase can be put in parenthesis or between commas, it is introduced by which.

that, who. Use that with animals and inanimate objects; who with people: This is a man who cares for his staff and his family. People who say that are stupid.

there, their. There is an adverb meaning “in, at or to that place”: Look there; There’s where you’ll find your pen. Their(s) means “belonging to them”: Those are their books; The books are theirs.

till, until. Avoid using till as a substitute for until.

time frame (two words) Rather use within a specific time.

time limit (two words).

to, too. Too is an adjective that means also (he went too) or excessively (too much). To is a preposition used to introduce a noun (He went to the office) or as part of an infinitive verb (to go, to report).

turnaround (n.), to turn around (v.).

U

ubuntu (Nguni), **botho** (Sotho). Means humanity.

underprivileged.

underqualified.

under-resourced (hyphenated).

underserved.

underused. Use instead of underutilised.

underway.

unfazed.

upside down (not hyphenated).

US (adjective), **USA** (noun). US Marines; US foreign policy; the USA. US\$50 – no spaces.

use. Means “take, hold or deploy as a means of accomplishing or achieving something”: Use your money wisely. Use it instead of utilise, unless to convey the meaning “to make practical and effective use of”: We must utilise the resources we have to the best of our advantage.

V

very. Avoid. It has been so overworked it often weakens the sentence rather than strengthening it.

voters' roll. Apostrophe after the s.

W

the **(World Wide) Web.**

webmaster.

website (one word). For website addresses exclude http.

well-being.

whereas. Use it instead of while, to avoid ambiguity. Michael is an architect, whereas Sara is a doctor.

whereby, whereupon, etc. Use by which, upon which, etc.

whether, weather. I do not know whether they have arrived or (whether) they have not; The weather is sunny but cold. Avoid whether or not.

whether, if. Whether (as explained above) introduces alternatives; if introduces a condition: I don't know whether it's going to rain today; If you do your homework, you can watch TV.

while. Avoid the use of whilst. Do not use while to mean whereas (see above).

White Paper on Arts, Culture ... Italicise White Paper titles.

white people. lowercase w.

who, that. Use who to refer to people; that to refer to animals and things: The person who committed the crime should be punished. It is behaviour that should not go unpunished.

will. Avoid the use of shall.

winegrowers.

winemaking.

withhold.

woman. Plural women; possessive is either woman's (singular) or women's (plural – the apostrophe before the s).

workforce.

workplace.

worldwide.

wrongdoing.

X

xenophobia.

Xmas. Do not use as an abbreviation for Christmas.

X-ray. Uppercase X.

Y

yearbook.

year-end.

years. Financially speaking, use 2009/10; otherwise 2001 – 03. When used adjectivally, hyphenate age: The 10-year-old boy couldn't swim, but He was 10 years old. Incorrect: The 10-year old boy.

yellowwood.

yesteryear.

yield.

your, you're. Your is a possessive pronoun: Is this your book? You're is a contraction of you are: You're my best friend.

Z

zero tolerance. Hyphenated only when used adjectivally: zero-tolerance campaign.

zookeeper.

zoom lens.

6. WORD LISTS

6.1 Words often misspelled

A

abattoir
 abovementioned
 absolutely
 accede
 access
 accidentally
 accommodation
 acquaintance
 acquainted
 acquiesce
 acquire
 advice (n.), advise (v.)
 affect (make a difference to)
 ageing
 albumen (egg white; protein found in egg white)
 albumin (form of protein soluble in water)
 allomorph
 allopathic
 alumni, alumnus
 anaesthetic
 analogy, analogous
 analyse
 anoint
 appearance
 appropriate
 arbiter, arbitrator
 archaeology
 architecture
 arrest

asbestosis
 assess

B

battalion
 beach
 beauty
 been
 beginning
 being
 belief (a firmly held/religious conviction)
 benefited, benefiting
 biased
 breath (n.), breathe (v.)
 by-law

C

cacao
 cache
 campaign
 canister
 census
 centre, centring
 challenge
 chauffeur
 citation
 colossal
 coexist
 combating
 complement (to add to or bring out the best in something)
 compliment (praise)
 comprise
 concomitant
 conducive

connoisseur
consciousness
conscientious
consensus
cooperate
coordinate
copyright
cost-benefit
criticize
critique

D

deceive
definite, definitely
dependant (n.)
dependent (adj.)
descendant
develop, development
dialogue
diarrhoea
dietician
disappoint
disc (flat, thin, round object)
disk (storage device for computers)
dissatisfaction
dissipate
drunkenness
dual (purpose)
duel (contest)

E

ecstasy
effect (a change that something causes in something else)
eligible
eliminate
embarrassment
encyclopaedia
enquiry (general questioning)
enrol, enrolment
entrepreneur
exacerbate
exceed
existence
extant (adj.)
extend (v.)
extent (n.)
extension

F

faecal
faeces

feisty
fiery
focuses
focusing
foetal
foetus
foreseeable
forego (precede)
forgo (do without)
formally
formerly
forthcoming
franchise
frenzied, frenzy
fulfil, but: fulfilled, fulfilling
full-time

G

gauge
goodwill
gorilla (animal)
gouge
guerrilla (fighter)
gynaecologist, gynaecology

H

haemorrhage
harass
height
heist
helpdesk
helpline
high-risk
homeopath
homogeneous
honorary
humorous
hygiene, hygienely
hypocrisy

I

Idiosyncrasy
idiosyncratic
immediately
illegible
inadvertent
inauguration
incidentally
independent
indigenous
indispensable
infra-red

innate
inoculate
inquiry (official investigation)
insistent
install
instalment
irresistible

J
jealous
jeopardy
jewellery
judgement (more legal)
judgment (general)

K
ketchup
Kimberley, kimberlite
knowledgeable
knuckle
kwashiorkor

L
lead (present tense and the metal)
led (past tense)
liaise, liaison
licence (n.), license (v.)
lifelong
life-size
liquefy
liquidise
loath (adj.), loathe (v.)
lose (to no longer have)
loose (not tight)

M
marginalised
marquee
metaphor
methamphetamine (tik)
micro-enterprises
millennium
millionaire
minuscule
miscellaneous
misdemeanour
monetary
myriad

N
nauseating, nauseous
nautical

necessary (adj.), necessity (n.)
neighbour
neglect
nemesis
nuclei, nucleus

O
oblivious
obvious
occasion
occult
occurred
occurrence
ongoing
online
organogram
outcast

P
parallel
paralysed
Parliament
pastime
pavilion
penetrate
perpetrator
perseverance
personal
personnel
pertinent
playwright
possession
postgraduate
post-mortem
post-partum
preceding
precis
predominantly
prejudice
principal (head of school, or a main element)
principle (a rule or belief governing one's behaviour)
prise (force)
privilege
prize (award)
proactive
proceeding
procreate
professional
professor
program (computers)
programme (radio, concert, theatre)
prominence, prominent

promiscuity, promiscuous
 pronounce
 pronunciation
 prophecy (n.), prophesy (v.)
 psyche
 psychiatry
 psychoanalysis
 psychology
 purge
 pursuant, pursue

Q

quality
 quandary
 quantify
 quantum
 quarrel
 quarter-final
 quartermaster
 questionnaire
 queue
 quiet (silent)
 quintile
 quite (rather or extremely)
 quorum

R

racecourse
 radioactive
 ratepayer
 re+e: re-edit, re-educate, re-embark, re-enter
 re-bound vs rebound
 recede
 receipt
 receive
 reception
 recession
 recommend
 re-create vs recreate
 referral, referred
 reign (of a ruler; of terror)
 rein (with which to lead a horse)
 renaissance
 repetition, repetitive
 re-sent vs resent
 re-sort vs resort
 restaurateur
 rhyme
 rhythm
 ridicule, ridiculous
 rogue

S

sacrilegious
 scholar
 school-leaver
 schoolteacher
 seismic
 seize
 seizure
 semi-final
 separate, separation
 shepherd
 sheriff
 siege
 sight (view)
 significant
 similar
 simile
 site (place)
 skilful
 social
 sort (kind or type)
 sought (past tense of seek)
 specialise (v.), specialist (n.)
 sphere
 stationary (not moving)
 stationery (writing material)
 storey (of a building)
 subcommittee
 sub-contract
 subpoena
 subtle
 subsection
 sub-standard
 succeed
 succession
 summon (call)
 summons (order to appear in court). Past tense: summoned
 superintendent
 superior
 supervisor
 supposedly
 surreptitious
 syndrome
 systemic

T

tariff
 taught (past tense of teach)
 taut (tight)
 teamwork
 tempestuous

thematic
theory, theoretical
threshold
thumb
thyroid
toll-fee
toll plaza
toll road
tortuous
trial (in court)
trail (of an animal or a hiker)
truly
tranquillity
tyranny, tyrant

U
ubiquitous
unanimity
unanimous
uncooperative
undoubtedly
unilateral
unique
unshakeable
usually

V
vicissitude
victoriously
villain
visitation, visitor
vociferous
voluminous

W
woman abuse (not women)
weird
who's (who is)
whose (which person's)
withdrawal
withhold
workforce
workplace

Y
yearbook
youngster
youth, youthful

6.3 Redundancies (or tautologies) and plainer alternatives

Avoid

12 midnight
12 noon
a great deal of
a number of
a person who is honest
a total of 14 birds
absolutely spectacular or phenomenal
advocate for
afforded the opportunity
approximately
around
as to whether
at this point in time
attached herewith
attempt
basically the same, etc.
basis, on an annual/a regular, etc.
biography of her life
by means of
circle around
close proximity

Rather use

midnight
noon
many, most or much
a few, some, many, or several
an honest person
14 birds
spectacular or phenomenal
advocate
given the opportunity
about
about, on
whether
at this point or now
attached
try
the same, etc.
annually, regularly
biography
by
circle
proximity, closeness

compartmentalise	divide into compartments
completely unanimous	unanimous
concretise	make concrete, give a concrete example
conceptualise	think up, think of
consensus of opinion	consensus
conversationalise	converse, make conversation
cooperate together	cooperate
each and every	each
enclosed herewith	enclosed
end result	result, outcome
endeavour	try
enhance	improve
escalate	increase in importance (or urgency)
exactly the same	the same
final completion	completion
for the purpose of	for, to or of
frank and honest exchange	frank exchange or honest exchange
free gift	gift
he/she is a person who ...	he or she
implement	carry out
important or basic essentials	essentials
in many cases/instances	often, frequently
in order to	to
in spite of the fact that	although or despite
in terms of	on, about, regarding
in the context of	for or about
in the event that	if
in the first place	first or firstly
inception	start or beginning
incorrect	wrong
infrastructure	be specific in the context (eg roads, railway lines, buildings, tel ecomunications links)
job functions	job or functions
maximilisation	maximise, make the most of
month of June, etc.	June, etc.
new innovations	innovations
numerous	many
one and the same	the same
operationalise	put into operations
participate (in)	take part in
particular interest	interest
period of four days	four days
personal opinion	opinion
personally I think/feel	I think or I feel
pertaining to	relating to or belonging to
purchase	buy
puzzling in nature	puzzling
the reason being is that	the reason being that, the reason is that
reasons why	reasons
reconstruct	rebuild
refer back	refer
your letter refers	I/we refer to your letter

in regard to, with regard(s) to	of, on, about, under, according to, regarding
relating to	about
repeat again	repeat
return again	return
revert back	revert
shorter/longer in length	shorter or longer
small/large in size	small or large
square/round/rectangular in shape	square, round or rectangular
structures	be specific in the context (eg street committees, planning committees, community groups/representatives)
summarise briefly	summarise
surrounded on all sides	surrounded
surrounding circumstances	circumstances
systematic	organised
the fact that	that
the future to come	the future
there is no doubt about that	no doubt
to a larger degree	largely
usual/habitual custom	custom
utilise	use
we are in receipt of	we have received

6.4 Common abbreviations

A

AA	affirmative action
AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
AA	Automobile Association
AAA	Association of Advertising Agencies
ABC	Agricultural Business Chamber
ABC	Audit Bureau of Circulations
Abet	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACDP	African Christian Democratic Party
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific states
ACS	Agricultural Credit Scheme
Acsa	Airports Company South Africa
Adm.	Admiral
AEC	African Economic Community
AFP	Agence France-Presse
AFU	Asset Forfeiture Unit
A-G	Attorney-General
A-G	Auditor-General
AGM	annual general meeting
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
Alssa	Association of Law Societies of South Africa
AMD	acid mine drainage
AMPS	All Media Products Survey
ANC	African National Congress
ANCWL	ANC Women's League
ANCYL	ANC Youth League
Anfasa	Association of Non-Fiction Authors of Southern Africa

AO	accounting officer
AP	Associated Press
Apla	Azanian People's Liberation Army
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
ARC	Agricultural Research Council
Arm Scor	Armaments Corporation of South Africa
ART	antiretroviral treatment
ASA	Advertising Standards Authority
ASAIB	Association of South African Indexers and Bibliographers
ASD	assistant director
Asean	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATKV	Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging
ATNS	Air Traffic and Navigational Services Company
AU	African Union
Azapo	Azanian People's Organisation
B	
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BA	British Airways
BAC	Business Against Crime
BAS	Basic Accounting System
Basa	Business and Arts South Africa
BBBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
BBC	Black Business Council
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBI	Black Business Initiative
Bcawu	Building Construction and Allied Workers' Union
BCCSA	Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
BEEC	Black Economic Empowerment Commission
Bifsa	Building Industries Federation of South Africa
BLNS	Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland
BMF	Black Management Forum
BNC	binational commission
Brig.	Brigadier
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
C	
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme
CAF	Confederation of African Football
Capt.	Captain
Caricom	Caribbean Community
CBO	community-based organisation
CBRTA	Cross-Boarder Road Transport Agency
CC	Competition Commission
CC	Constitutional Court
CCF	credit-card format
CCMA	Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration
CCTV	close-circuit television
CDA	Central Drug Authority

CDW	community development worker
Cedaw	(United Nations) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEF	Central Energy Fund
CEM	Council of Education Ministers
CEO	chief executive officer
CFO	chief financial officer
CGE	Commission on Gender Equality
CGIC	Credit Guarantee Insurance Corporation
CHE	Council of Higher Education
CHOC	Childhood Cancer Foundation South Africa
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of State and Government Meeting
CIO	chief information officer
CISA	Consumer Institute of South Africa
Cites	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CJS	criminal justice system
ClaRA	Communal Land Rights Act
ClIr	councillor
Cmr	commissioner
CNN	Cable News Network
Col.	Colonel
Contralesa	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
COO	chief operating officer
Cosab	Council of South African Banks
Cosafa	Council of Southern African Football Associations
Cosas	Congress of South African Students
Cosatu	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPA	Consumer Protection Act
CPA	Cotonou Partnership Agreement
CPF	community policing forum
CPI	consumer price index
CPO	citizen's post office
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRC	Criminal Record Centre
CRLR	Commission on the Restitution of Land Rights
CSBP	Centre for Small Business Promotion
CSG	Child Support Grant
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CWC	Chemical Weapons Convention

D

DA	Democratic Alliance
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DC	diplomatic corps
DCEO	deputy chief executive officer
DCF	District Communicators' Forum
DD	deputy director
DDG	deputy director-general
DG	director-general
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
Dir	director/directorate
Dissa	Disability Sport South Africa
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo

E

EAP	Employee Assistance Programme
EC	European Commission
ECD	Early Childhood Development
Ecosoc	(United Nations) Economic, Social and Cultural Council
Ecowas	Economic Community of West African States
Efta	European Free Trade Association
EIA	environmental impact assessment
EIP	environmental implementation plan
eNaTIS	Electronic National Traffic Information System
ENE	Estimates of National Expenditure
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
ESI	electricity supply industry
EU	European Union
EWT	Endangered Wildlife Trust

F

F	Fahrenheit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FAS	foetal alcohol syndrome
Fawu	Food and Allied Workers Union
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FBO	faith-based organisation
FCA	Foreign Correspondents' Association
FCI	Federated Chamber of Industries
FDI	foreign direct investment
Fedhasa	Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa
Fedsal	Federation of South African Labour Unions
Fedshaw	Federation of South African Women
Fedusa	Federation of Unions of South Africa
FET	further education and training
FETC	Further Education and Training Certificate
FF+	Freedom Front Plus
FFC	Financial and Fiscal Commission
FICA	Financial Intelligence Centre Act
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FIG	foreign investment grant
FRD	Foundation for Research Development
FRU	Film Resource Unit
FSB	Financial Services Board
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
FTA	free trade agreement
FTFA	Food and Trees for Africa
FXI	Freedom of Expression Institute

G

GAP	Gender Advocacy Programme
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCF	Government Communicators' Forum
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
GCP	Government Communication Programme
GCS	Government Communication Strategy

GDP	gross domestic product
GDS	Growth and Development Summit
Gems	Government Employees Medical Scheme
GEPF	Government Employees Pension Fund
GET	general education and training
GG	Government Garage
GIC	Government Information Centre
GLTP	Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park
GMT	Greenwich Mean Time
GNP	gross national product
G20	Group of Twenty
G77	Group of 77
G8	Group of Eight

H

HDI	historically disadvantaged individual
HDP	historically disadvantaged person
HITB	Hospitality Industries Training Board
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HoC	head of communication
HoD	head of department
Hospersa	Health and Other Service Personnel Trade Union of South Africa
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
HR	human resources
HRD	human-resource development
HRIS	Human-Resource Information System
HRM	human-resource management
HSGIC	Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council

I

IAAF	International Association of Athletics Federations
IAJ	Institute for the Advancement of Journalism
IBO	International Boxing Organisation
IBSA	India-Brazil-South Africa
Icasa	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ICC	International Cricket Council
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICD	Independent Complaints Directorate
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	information and communications technology
ID	identity document
ID	Independent Democrats
Idasa	Institute for Democracy in Africa
IDB	illicit diamond buying
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IDT	Independent Development Trust
IDZs	industrial development zones
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party

ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMC	International Marketing Council
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMM	Institute for Marketing Management
IMR	Institute for Medical Research
Interpol	International Criminal Police Organisation
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IOL	Independent Online
IOR-	ARC Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation
IPO	initial public offering
IRT	Integrated Rapid Transit (system)
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
ISP	Internet service-provider
ISRDP	Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme
ISSN	International Standard Serial Number
IT	information technology
ITU	International Telecommunications Union

J**J**

JBC	Joint Bilateral Commission
JCC	Joint Commission of Cooperation
JCPS	Justice, Crime Prevention and Security Cluster
JPC	Joint Permanent Commission
JPCC	Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation
JSC	Judicial Service Commission

K

Kat	Karoo Array Telescope
kg	kilogram
km	kilometre
KNP	Kruger National Park
kWh	kilowatt hours
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal

L

LED	local economic development
LCC	Land Claims Court
LHR	Lawyers for Human Rights
LHWP	Lesotho Highlands Water Project
Liasa	Library and Information Association of South Africa
LLIM	Local Liaison and Information Management
LPG	liquid petroleum gas
LRA	Labour Relations Act
LRAD	Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development
LRC	Legal Resources Centre
LSM	Living Standards Measure
LSSA	Law Society of South Africa

M

MA	Master of Arts
MAPPP	Media, Advertising, Printing, Packaging and Publishing (Seta)

MBA	Master of Business Administration
MBChB	Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery
MCC	Medicines Control Council
MDB	Municipal Demarcation Board
MD	managing director
MDDA	Media Development and Diversity Agency
MDGs	millennium development goals
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MEd	Master of Education
Mercosur	South American Common Market
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
MFRC	Micro-Finance Regulatory Council
MHSI	Mine Health and Safety Inspectorate
MIDP	Motor Industry Development Programme
MinMec	Minister and Member of the Executive Council
Misa	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MISS	minimum information security standards
MK	Umkhonto weSizwe
MLC	metropolitan local council
MLO	ministerial liaison officer
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MP	Military Police
MPC	Monetary Policy Committee
MPRDA	Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act
MRC	Medical Research Council
MRM	Moral Regeneration Movement
MSc	Master of Science
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework

N

NA	National Assembly
NACF	National Anti-Corruption Forum
Nactu	National Council of Trade Unions
Nafcoc	National African Federated Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Nafu	National African Farmers' Union
Nam	Non-Aligned Movement
NAMC	National Agricultural Marketing Council
Nampo	National Maize Producers' Organisation
Napwa	National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS
Nasasa	National Stokvels Association of South Africa
Nasrec	National Sports, Recreation and Exhibition Centre
Nato	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NBFET	National Board for Further Education and Training
NBI	National Botanical Institute
NCACC	National Conventional Arms Control Committee
NCCS	National Crime Combating Strategy
NCOP	National Council of Provinces
NCPS	National Crime Prevention Strategy
NCRF	National Community Radio Forum
NDPP	National Directorate of Public Prosecutions

NDA	National Development Agency
NEC	National Executive Committee
Nedlac	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NEF	National Empowerment Fund
Nehawu	National, Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union
Nemisa	National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa
Nepad	New Partnership for Africa's Development
Nersa	National Energy Regulator of South Africa
NFVF	National Film and Video Foundation
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NHBRC	National Home-Builders' Registration Council
NHC	National Heritage Council
NHF	National Heritage Foundation
NHFC	National Housing Finance Corporation
NIA	National Intelligence Agency
Nicoc	National Intelligence Coordinating Committee
Nicro	National Institute for Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders
NIPILAR	National Institute for Public Interest Law and Research
NLS	National Language Service
NLSA	National Library of South Africa
NMT	non-motorised transport
Nocsa	National Olympic Committee of South Africa
Nosa	National Occupational Safety Association
NPA	National Ports Authority
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
NPI	National Productivity Institute
NPO	non-profit organisation
NPS	National Prosecuting Services
NPU	Newspaper Press Union
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRF	National Research Foundation
NRSC	National Road Safety Council
NSA	National Skills Authority
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
NSRI	National Sea Rescue Institute
NUF	National Union of Farmworkers
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
Numsa	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
Nurcha	National Urban Reconstruction and Housing Agency
NYDA	National Youth Youth Development Agency
NZG	National Zoological Gardens

O

OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ODA	overseas development assistance
OHS	occupational health and safety
Opec	Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
OPSC	Office of the Public Service Commission
OSD	Occupation Specific Dispensation
OSEO	Office for Serious Economic Offences

P

PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
Palama	Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy
PanSALB	Pan South African Language Board
PAP	Pan-African Parliament
PAYE	Pay As You Earn (income tax)
PC	Project Consolidate
PCC	Presidential Coordinating Council
PCF	Provincial Communication Forum
PDI	previously disadvantaged individual
PEC	Provincial Executive Committee
PEG	Professional Editors' Group
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PGA	Parliamentary Gallery Association
PGDP	Provincial Growth and Development Plan
PGDS	Provincial Growth and Development Strategy
PGM	platinum-group metal
PHC	primary healthcare
PHP	People's Housing Process
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PIFSA	Print Industries Federation of South Africa
Pillir	Policy on Incapacity Leave and Ill-health Retirement
PLL	Provincial and Local Liaison
PMS	Performance Management System
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission
Popcru	Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union
Potwa	Post and Telecommunications Workers' Association
Powa	People Opposed to Women Abuse
PPC	Presidential Press Corps
PPP	public-private partnership
Prisa	Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa
Prof.	Professor (note full stop)
PSA	Public Servants' Association
PSA	public service announcement
PSC	Peace and Security Council (AU)
PSC	Public Service Commission
PTA	parent-teachers' association

R

RAF	Road Accident Fund
REC	regional economic community
RDC	regional district council
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RICA	Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-Related Information Act
RRU	Rapid Response Unit
RTMC	Road Traffic Management Corporation

S

SAA	South African Airways
SAAO	South African Astronomical Observatory
SAAU	South African Agricultural Union

SABA	South African Booksellers' Association
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SABDC	South African Book Development Council
SABS	South African Bureau of Standards
SACAA	South African Civil Aviation Authority
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACE	South African Council for Educators
Sacob	South African Chamber of Business
SACP	South African Communist Party
Sactwu	Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union
Sacu	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
Sadtu	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
Safa	South African Football Association
Safcol	South African Forestry Company Limited
Safrea	Southern African Freelancers' Association
Sagda	South African Graduates Development Association
SAGNC	South African Geographical Names Council
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAIP	South African Institute of Physics
Salga	South African Local Government Association
SALRC	South African Law Reform Commission
Salt	Southern African Large Telescope
Sama	South African Medical Association
Samsa	South African Maritime Safety Authority
SANAC	South African National AIDS Council
Sanap	South African National Antarctic Programme
SANC	South African Nursing Council
Sanco	South African National Civic Organisation
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
Sanef	South African National Editors' Forum
SANParks	South African National Parks
Sanral	South African National Roads Agency Limited
Sanrec	South African National Recreation Council
Santaco	South African National Taxi Council
Sapa	South African Press Association
Sapohr	South African Prisoners' Organisation for Human Rights
Sapp	Southern African Power Pool
SAPS	South African Police Service
Sapu	South African Police Union
Saqa	South African Qualifications Authority
SARB	South African Reserve Bank
SARCC	South African Rail Commuter Corporation
Sarfu	South African Rugby Football Union
SARPCCO	Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
Sars	South African Revenue Service
SAS	South African ship
Sasar	South African Search and Rescue Organisation
Sasco	South African Students Congress
Saspu	South African Students Press Union
SASS	South African Secret Service

Sassa	South African Social Security Agency
SATI	South African Translators' Institute
Sawen	South African Woman Entrepreneurs' Network
SAWS	South African Weather Service
SDI	spatial development initiative
Seda	Small Enterprise Development Agency
SET	science, engineering and technology
Seta	Sector Education and Training Authority
SFF	Strategic Fuel Fund
SHI	Social Health Insurance
SIPP	special integrated presidential project
Sita	State Information Technology Agency
Site	Standard Income Tax on Employees
SIU	Special Investigation Unit
SKA	Square Kilometre Array
SMMEs	small, medium and micro-enterprises
SOEs	state-owned enterprises
SoNA	State of the Nation Address
SPCA	Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
SRSA	Sport and Recreation South Africa
S&T	science and technology
STD	sexually transmitted disease
STI	sexual transmitted infection
T	
TB	tuberculosis
TDCA	Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement
Tefsa	Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa
TFCA	transfrontier conservation area
Thrip	Technology and Human Resource for Industry Programme
Ticad	Tokyo International Conference on African Development
Tisa	Trade and Investment South Africa
TKC	Trans-Kalahari Corridor
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TRP	Taxi Recapitalisation Programme
Twib	Technology for Women in Business
U	
UCB	United Cricket Board
UCDP	United Christian Democratic Party
UDM	United Democratic Movement
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
UK	United Kingdom (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)
Umalusi	General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Council
UN	United Nations
Unctad	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
Unep	United Nations Environment Programme
Unesco	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
Unga	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees

Unicef	United Nations Children’s Fund
Unido	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
Unifem	United Nations Development Fund for Women
Unisa	University of South Africa
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
URP	Urban Renewal Programme
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

V	
VAT	value-added tax
VCT	voluntary counselling and testing
VEP	Victim Empowerment Programme
VIP	very important person

W	
Wan	wide area network
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization (note spelling)
WHP	Women’s Health Project
WID	Women in Development
Wims	Ward Information Management System
WRC	Water Research Commission
WTO	World Trade Organization (note spelling)
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature