Writing and style guide
St Helena Government

March 2024
Version 1.0

Contents

Introduction

Good communication is an essential government tool.

Communicating clearly and consistently means that information provided to the public is easily accessible and understandable. Doing so will mean that government policies and procedures are understood, and public services are delivered effectively.

St Helena Government (SHG) has many functions, delivering all manner of services. Inconsistencies in how the organisation communicates not only looks unprofessional but can also cause confusion.

This guide aims to help standardise style, formats, and approach to written communications.

It also explains how to use plain English when communicating, and identifies some of the most common causes of uncertainty and misunderstanding when writing.

Objectives and purpose of the guide

This guide seeks to achieve three main objectives:

- To provide a useful resource to government officials in understanding how to present written information

- To ensure that the way information is presented and language used in written communications is consistent across the whole of SHG

- To ensure that information is presented to the public and stakeholders in a straightforward and easily understandable way

The principles and guidelines in this document should be applied to all official SHG written content.

Each officer is responsible for ensuring that the style guide is applied to the content and communications they are responsible for. This includes written (letters, email, etc.), published (policies, guides, posters, etc.) and digital (web, social media, etc.).

If you are unsure about anything within the guide, or how it applies to content you are producing or publishing, then get in contact with the Communications Hub.

Key principles

We can start by setting out some fundamental principles of good written communication:

- Use plain English and avoid long or complicated words when short or easy ones are available.

- Use active language, not passive. It is usually clearer, more direct and more concise, and does not disguise who is doing what. For example, "***We will make a***

*decision on your application once we have received your lette*r", not "*Once we have received your letter, a decision will be made on your application*"; and "*We recommend that you*…", not "*it is recommended that*…"

- Avoid technical language and jargon unless you are addressing a specialist audience, and even then use it with care.

- Use short sentences without multiple sub-clauses. Sentences should usually be no longer than 25 words.

- Use lowercase wherever possible.

- Spell out numbers up to nine and use figures from 10 onwards.

Get someone to check what you have written, especially if it will be read outside of the government. Read back what you write. If it sounds wrong or comes awkwardly off the tongue, then the meaning is probably obscure and you are not communicating effectively.

This means that broadly speaking, it is best to write as you would expect to hear someone else speaking UK English.

For example, never use a long word where a short one will do and never use a foreign phrase, a scientific or jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent. Think how you would describe the issue you are writing about to a family member or friend.

Too often we use technical terms that most people, including some of our own colleagues, do not understand. Our aim should be to open up government information so everyone can understand it.

Using and applying this guide

This guide is written to be accessible and provide a framework as to how SHG officials approach written content and communications.

Where the guide is explicit about what should be done, you must follow the guide.

This is so that SHG's written content and communications are consistent across our various channels, platforms and outlets, providing a consistent voice and tone to our users.

This guide is intended to complement government templates and provide a guide on the development of new templates.

Structuring our communications

There are some fundamental rules and conventions that should be observed in all government communications.

Spelling conventions

SHG employs UK English for the spelling of words.

This guide also provides specific references and guidance on how to write and present certain words, terms and phrases. Some of these are unique to St Helena, and some are more common. Where this guide provides specific guidance, that guidance should be followed.

Audience and accessibility

The range of SHG's functions and activities is broad and touch on many different audiences. It is important to consider the audience that the communication is aimed at before we start drafting, but in the vast majority of instances we would want to use plain English. This will ensure that the message is being communicated in the clearest and most concise way possible, and be accessible to the widest range of audiences.

The message should be understood first time and should include all of the information that can reasonably be expected to be needed or queried. This ensures that the reader will not need to come back with follow-up queries, which in turn saves government time and the taxpayer money.

Plain English

Don't use formal or long words when easy or short ones will do. Use everyday words that are used in conversation and are used by your audience. We are trying to engage our readers and make sure they understand the information we are providing to them. We are not trying to impress or confuse them.

Use words the reader is likely to know.

Short sentences, using simple words with punctuation, make it easy for readers to focus on your key points and stay engaged.

Using active language rather than passive language also achieves this.

A good way to think of this is to try to say exactly what you mean, as if you were talking to someone. Put the reader first, as if you were explaining the facts to them in person, making sure to use straightforward UK English.

That means using words like "***you***" and "***we***". This is better than using phrases like "*applicants*" or "*the government*". For instance, "***we wrote to you in January about your tax return"***.

Try to give clear instructions, or imperatives, where appropriate. Don't beat around the bush, or add / include unnecessary words. Where they can be removed and the language made clearer, do it.

Writing in the active voice is straightforward if you follow the 'who-does-what' sequence of (subject) followed by (action) followed by (object).

For instance, instead of writing "*applicants should complete the form, and the completed form should be returned by email*", write "**you should complete the form and email it back to us**".

Do write	Don't write
You should read the guidance, complete the form and email it back to us.	Applicants should read the relevant guidance. Applicants should then complete the form. Once completed, applicants should return the form by email.
Access to Jamestown Wharf will be restricted on Monday due to cargo operations. You are thanked for your understanding.	Restrictions will be in place in relation to access to Jamestown Wharf on Monday, as a result of cargo operations taking place. Port Control would like to thank the public in advance for their understanding.

You can find out more information on Plain English and how to use it from this guide: www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf.

Using words appropriate for the reader and avoiding jargon

It is easy to use jargon in our everyday work because it often saves time when the other person we are communicating with also uses that jargon. However, we want to avoid using jargon phrases that the reader may not understand.

When communicating with the reader, use the simplest form of words that communicate your message effectively. This does not necessarily mean only using simple words, just words that the reader will understand.

Jargon is a form of words that only a certain group of people will understand. This might be technical, legal or scientific terms, or a commonly accepted shorthand amongst a certain group of people.

Try to avoid using this when communicating with the general public, sticking to everyday English instead. If you would have to explain what the word meant to someone you were having a conversation with, then you should avoid using it.

If you can't avoid using a technical word, then explain what it means the first time you use it.

You should also avoid using words or phrases which are vague, don't mean anything or add confusion. Examples of this are "*going forward*", "*in order to*, "*dialogue*,* etc.

Do write	Don't write
To better understand the issue, we've spoken to stakeholders and decided that completing the form is no longer required.	In order to understand the issue better, SHG has been in dialogue with stakeholders. Going forward this will therefore no longer be required.
Your medical check-up with the doctor is at 08:00 on Friday 10 January.	A clinical examination has been arranged with the physician for 08:00 on Friday 10 January.
Any vessel entering James Bay must obtain a certificate of "pratique." Pratique is a maritime term that simply means a vessel has been inspected and is free of disease.	You will also need to obtain pratique.

Tone

Our tone of communications will depend on our audience, purpose and subject matter. However, we always aim to be open, positive, human and polite.

Positive language and phrasing tell the reader what is possible, is helpful, sympathetic and polite, and apologises where necessary. This means using words like "***can***", "***will***" and "***do***".

Negative language and phrasing implies your audience / reader is at fault, doesn't suggest alternatives, expresses no sympathy and can come across as aggressive. This can include words or phrases like "*not possible*", "*can't*" and "*does not have*".

Do write	Don't write
Based on the information provided, we haven't been able to process your application. Please submit additional evidence to show how you qualify. You need to do this within seven days. You can do this by email or in person. If no information is provided your case will be closed.	You didn't provide good enough information and your application has been rejected. If you don't appeal within seven days we will close your case.

That being said, you must be mindful of the language you deploy and ensure it is suitable for the situation at hand. Whilst we want to use positive language, this is not always going to be appropriate.

Using such positive, or even absolute, language in the wrong situation can lead to SHG overcommitting or exposing itself to risk, both financial and reputational. In some

situations, it is best to avoid using words such as "*will*" and instead use words like "**expected**", "**anticipated**" or "**scheduled**".

We are an isolated island, with long and sometimes irregular supply chains, and we have limited scope to absorb these impacts locally. This means that sometimes dates move, and understandably so. It is therefore best to avoid giving cast iron dates or assurances for certain things, such as project completion dates or ship arrivals and departures. This better manages expectations from the outset.

Do write	Don't write
The *MV Helena* is **scheduled** to arrive at St Helena on Sunday 01 January. Ship work is **expected** to take four days, sea conditions permitting, after which it will depart.	The *MV Helena* **will** arrive at St Helena on Sunday 01 January. Ship work **will** take four days, and *it will* depart on Friday 06 January.

Setting up the document

The way you set up a document at the start of the drafting process has a big impact on how well the finished document reads, looks and feels.

If a document has multiple authors or editors, those reviewers will tend to follow the structure and style that you set in your first draft. It is harder to fix a poorly structured document at the end than it is to get it right at the start.

If there is a template available that is suitable for the document you are writing, use that template. Templates will give you a blank document that is already consistent with this guide, and often prompt you about things that should go into your writing. For example, a template might prompt you for information on consultation or a discussion of legal risks.

Fonts, sizing, etc.

SHG's standard is:

Font	Arial, black, size 12
Line spacing	1.15
Paragraph spacing	Space after paragraph
Sentence spacing	Single
Aligned	Left

This standard has been selected for ease of readability.

The sizing and spacing are known to be easier formats for readers to follow, improving accessibility of government documents.

Secondary typefaces can be used for more creative publications, such as newsletters, glossies and posters. There might also be a need for design and graphic houses to produce work for SHG where the Arial typeface might not be used. Please ensure that

all secondary typefaces selected remain professional and can be read clearly in a variety of applications, devices and backdrops.

If using SHG templates, follow the structure and style of those templates.

SHG communication is for everyone and it is important to remember that not everyone has the same capacity to read text.

For further guidance, please contact the Communications Hub.

Coat of Arms

SHG, and its portfolios, use the St Helena coat of arms as its logo.

The primary position of the coat of arms in most standard materials (letters, press releases, etc.) is in the top left hand corner on a white background. Other background colours may be used, but only if the background colour provides enough contrast to clearly see and recognise the crest.

When used in partnership with other organisations' logos, the position of the SHG logo should reflect SHG's involvement in the project. If SHG is the main participant or contributor, the logo should be more prominent than the others, and should be positioned top left.

If SHG is an equal partner, the logo should appear the same size as the others, with the logo top left and the partner logo top right. If there is more than one partner, then the logos can be placed one after the other following the SHG logo on the top left.

If a particular template calls for different positioning, then follow that template.

Headings

Using headings helps to break up longer pieces of text, making them easier to read and improving the structure of your text. It helps to signpost to your reader what is being discussed, highlighting important points from each section.

When using headings, remember that they should draw out the key elements of the text. This then helps the reader to navigate the information more effectively.

For instance, if your text is about different types of visas needed to enter St Helena, having several headings or sub-headings for the types of visas will allow the reader to quickly and easily navigate to the one relevant to them. Once there, they can get the information that they need without having to wade through the rest of the document.

Just like this guide, for longer documents, having headings also allows you to put a table of contents at the beginning. This means that the reader can quickly navigate the entire document from the first page.

Using lists

Lists are a useful tool for splitting up information, making it easier for the reader to digest.

There are two main types of lists.

- A list that is a continuous sentence with several listed points picked out at the beginning, middle or end.

- A list of separate points with an introductory statement (like this list).

In the list above, each point is a complete sentence so they each start with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

With a list that is part of a continuous sentence, put semicolons (;) after each point and start each one with a lowercase letter. For instance:

If you can prove that:

- ***you have lived in St Helena for the last five years;***

- ***you applied before the deadline; and***

- ***you are over 21;***

you will be approved.

In the above example, the next to last point has "*and*" after the semicolon. If you only had to prove one of the three points instead of all of them, this word would be "*or*".

Numbers, dates time and money

Many people will often have to write about numbers and figures. Sometimes it can be hard to incorporate these into written work in a way that ensures a document is easy to read and understand. However, by applying the following principles and conventions it will make it easier for the reader to understand the information you are trying to get across.

Dates

The standard government style for dates is DAY DD MONTH YYYY, so ***Monday 24 January 2013***. It is not MONTH DD YYYY / January 24 2013.

Avoid using ordinal numbers for dates, such as *24th April/April 24th*.

As many countries have different conventions and order their dates differently, avoid writing dates entirely in numbers, such as *01/12/2014*.

If a span of time is involved, avoid hyphens or dashes and write it as "***The pilot scheme will run from 01 to 30 April***" or "***The pilot scheme will run from 01 April 2013 to 31 March 2014***". For financial years, use an oblique stroke, not a hyphen, so ***2012/13***.

Times

Time should be written in the 24 hour clock format, so *08:30* or *22:00*. This makes it easier to understand what time is being referred to and avoids confusion over morning or afternoon. This is also a universally used and recognised time format, avoiding the confusion that other time formats often causes.

Do not use formats such as *1000*, *1000hr*, *10.00*, *10.00 a.m.* or *1000 AM*.

In text, hours and minutes should be referred to in full, such as "*one hour thirty minutes*".

If writing for an international audience consider including the time zone too. St Helena is on *GMT* (Greenwich Mean Time).

Avoid using 'bi' as a prefix for words related to time or dates, as this can be confusing. Bimonthly can mean either every two months or twice a month, biannual means twice a year and biennial means every two years. For ease just use plain English to say what you mean, such as "*voting takes place every two years*," rather than *"voting takes place biennially"*.

Numbers

Single digit numbers (numbers up to nine) should be written alphabetically (e.g. *one*, *two*, *three*) and any numbers with two or more digits (10 and over) should be written using numerical figures (e.g. *11*, *50*, *100*).

This means spelling out numbers under 10, unless they are part of a financial amount or a unit of measurement (e.g. *£5* or *8 tonnes*).

For values above nine, use figures unless it produces an unbalanced result that mixes figures and words, such as "*The projects take between eight and 11 years to complete*". In this example, it would be better to just use figures, so say "*between 8 and 11 years*…"

Separate figures over 999 with commas to make them easier to distinguish: *1,000; 10,500; 105,000*.

Spans or ranges should be spelled out. For example, "*from £3 million to £5 million*" rather than "*£3 million-£5 million*".

Use the defining unit at both the start and end of the range, so "*£3 million to £5 million*" and not "*£3 to £5 million*". Generally, spell out "*million" and "billion*". Financial papers containing numerous figures would be an exception.

That being said, you should be consistent in scaling numbers. That means not arbitrarily changing between *£0.5m*, *£500k* and *£500,000*. It is acceptable to abbreviate thousand as *k*, million as *m,* and billion as *bn*.

Percentages

Always use figures and symbols for percentages. That means writing **20%** and not *twenty percent* or *20 percent*.

Be careful when referring to percentages of percentages. In such cases, it is best to refer to the number of percentage points rather than a percentage of a percentage. For example, write "***inflation fell 3 percentage points from 5% to 2%"*** not "*inflation fell by 60% from 5% to 2%".*

In English, both *per cent* and *percent* are correct. For consistency, use the spelling **percent**.

Decimals

The use of decimal points is permitted where it adds to the meaning of the document, but you should exercise care to ensure that readers are not led to believe a figure is more precise than it really is. For example, write "***inflation is expected to be 4.5%"*** not "*inflation is expected to be 4.468%".*

Money

When referring to money, do not use unnecessary decimal points. This means using **£5** and not *£5.00*, and **5p** rather than *£0.05*.

The '**£**' symbol when used in SHG materials is presumed to refer to the St Helena Pound. If you are referring to both the St Helena Pound and the UK Pound, then be clear about those figures that relate to the UK pound by using the **GBP** prefix. For clarity, you can also use the **SHP** prefix to refer to the St Helena Pound.

Financial papers containing numerous figures may be an exception to the guide on writing units out in full, where repeated stating of the units is unnecessary.

Do write	Don't write
At **09:00** on **Monday 24 January 2013**, **20%** of the **1,000** tickets will go on sale. This means **200** tickets will be on sale, at a price of **£5** each.	At **9am** on **24th January 2013**, *twenty percent* of the **1k** tickets will go on sale. This means two **hundred** tickets will be on sale, at a price of **£5.00** each.

Confused words

Many words we use every day can be confused. This occurs for various reasons, including:

- There are two different words that sound the same or similar, but we have not ever had to work out which spelling to use when we write it.
- There is a common mispronunciation of a word or term that many people use in day-to-day language.

- The English language does not have consistent rules for dealing with certain words (especially place names) and the accepted version of a word is different to what many English language rules would usually require.

When speaking, most people will not notice the difference, but it can become obvious in a written document.

Commonly misspelled or misused words

There are a number of commonly misspelled or misused words in English. This can happen because they sound similar or are sometimes used incorrectly, meaning people can confuse their spelling and use.

If you're not sure about a word, or it's not listed here, then you should look it up in a dictionary to check.

Word	Rationale	Examples
Affect / effect	The word 'affect' means 'to produce an effect on'. The word 'effect' means 'the result of an action' or, as a verb, 'to bring about or make something happen'.	Research has been looking at the ways cancer affects people and how to support them. One effect of the 'Quit smoking' campaign was the overall decline of the number of smokers by 12%. The manager wanted to effect change in the team.
Apostrophe / apostrophy	The word apostrophe refers to a punctuation mark. The word apostrophy is a common incorrect spelling of this.	You should use an apostrophe to indicate possession (e.g. Harry's socks)
Breath / breathe	The word breath is a noun, meaning the air inhaled and exhaled when breathing. The word breathe is a verb, meaning to inhale air and expel it again.	St Helena is a breath of fresh air. You will need to breathe hard if you want to make it to the top of Jacob's Ladder in record time.
Complement / compliment	The noun 'complement' means 'something that completes	I enjoy working with my team members. Our

	something else' or, as a verb, 'to complete something'. The noun 'compliment' means 'an expression of praise' or, as a verb, 'to praise'.	skills complement one another perfectly. It is important to compliment the team when they meet a deadline.
Could have / could of	Sometimes people mishear the verb form 'could have' as 'could of'. Always write 'could have' or the contracted form 'could've'. 'Could of' is incorrect.	I could have taken action on it if I had known sooner.
Council / counsel	The word 'council' means 'a formal advisory body of people'. The word 'counsel' means 'advice' and 'to advise'. It also refers to a barrister or other 'legal adviser'.	At the recent meeting, the council voted in favour of raising rates by 5%. If I had followed their counsel I would have achieved a better outcome. Our legal counsel advised seeking an out-of-court settlement.
Dependant / dependent	A 'dependant' is a person who relies on another, especially for financial support. The word 'dependent' is usually followed by 'on', and means 'conditional' or 'subordinate'.	Please fill out this request for subsidy on behalf of your dependant. The expansion of the programme is dependent on funding.
Disinterested / uninterested	The word 'disinterested' means 'impartial' and 'unbiased by personal interest'. The word 'uninterested' means 'not interested', 'indifferent' or 'unconcerned'. 'Disinterested' is often used to mean 'uninterested', but this use is not correct.	The judge's deliberation was disinterested and considered. The invitation to the concert was wasted on me because I'm uninterested in jazz music.

e.g. / i.e.	E.g. means *exempli gratia* or 'for example'. It's used to introduce examples and illustrate a statement. I.e. stands for *id est* or 'that is'. It's used to clarify the statement before it. Both i.e. and e.g. are abbreviations for Latin expressions. When used they should be bracketed.	There are many types of music played at the venue each month (e.g. rock, jazz, classical). Research at three British zoos suggests that meerkats "showed increased positive interactions" (i.e. they were happier) when human visitors returned after COVID lockdowns.
Licence / license	The word 'licence' is a noun. It means 'a document from an authority giving formal permission'. The word 'license' is a verb. It means 'to obtain or grant a licence'.	The SHG website has information about getting and renewing your driving licence. Visit our website if you would like to license your pet.
Lose / loose	The verb 'to lose' means 'be deprived of' or 'cease to have'. The word 'loose' is usually an adjective, but is also a noun, adverb or verb. Two of the meanings as an adjective are 'not held by bonds or restraint' and 'not held together'.	If we don't meet the deadline, we may lose the bonus payment. Some of the screws on his desk were loose so he worried about workplace health and safety.
Passed / past	The word 'passed' means 'moved onwards', 'overtook' or 'handed over'. The word 'past' can be a noun meaning 'previous time', an adjective meaning 'gone by in time' or an adverb meaning 'beyond'.	While driving yesterday, I passed the portfolio's new offices. In the past, staff would have to book a room to have a meeting. We have moved past that; now we meet online.

Practice / practise	The word 'practice' is a noun. It means 'a repeated activity' or 'a habit'. It also refers to the 'business of a professional', for example, of a lawyer or doctor. The word 'practise' is a verb. It means 'to repeat an activity', 'to undertake a pattern of behaviour' or 'to pursue a profession'.	It's not good practice to use long sentences. The new law graduate landed an internship at his lecturer's practice. Practise your speech until it is perfect. She hopes to practise medicine.
Program / programme	Programme is the preferred use in UK English and should be used (although it is acceptable to use program in some specific computing contexts).	One of the most challenging aspects of our work is designing programmes that can be implemented quickly.
Regardless / irregardless	Always use 'regardless'. It means 'without regard', 'independent of' or 'anyway'. It is often followed by 'of'. 'Irregardless' is likely a combination of the words 'irrespective' and 'regardless'. It is not accepted as standard UK English.	Our aim is for all staff to have access to this training, regardless of location. The following instructions will work regardless of which mobile platform you use. These are interesting times but we must carry on regardless.
Stationary / stationery	The word 'stationary' means 'not moving'. The word 'stationery' means 'writing and office equipment' such as paper, pens and paper clips.	The truck collided with a stationary car. The notebooks are in the stationery cupboard.
Would have / would of	Sometimes people mishear the verb form 'would have' as 'would of'. Always write 'would have' or the contracted form 'would've'. 'Would of' is incorrect.	If I had known we were over budget, I would have changed the scope of the contract. This would've spared us a lot of stress.

Commonly misspelled place names

Place names do not always follow modern language or writing conventions. This is because many are historic names, drawing on outdated writing styles or previous ways in which a language was spoken and written.

Word	Rationale
St Helena	It is styled St Helena in the Constitution, and this is how it should be written in all SHG content. We do not use Saint Helena or St. Helena.
Banks Point / Banks Valley / Banks Battery	Banks Point, Banks Valley and Banks Battery do not have a possessive 's', so does not have an apostrophe.
Bates Branch	Bates does not have a possessive 's', so does not have an apostrophe.
Bottom Woods	Bottom Woods is sometimes wrongly written with a possessive 's' at the end of woods.
Bradleys	Bradleys does not have a possessive 's', so does not have an apostrophe.
Cleughs Plain	Cleughs Plain does not have a possessive 's', so does not have an apostrophe.
Half Tree Hollow	Half Tree Hollow is three separate words. It is not 'Halftree Hollow'.
Hutts Gate	Hutts Gate does not have a possessive 's', so does not have an apostrophe.
James Bay	James Bay does not have a possessive 's', so does not have an apostrophe.
Rupert's Bay	Rupert's Bay has a possessive 's' with an apostrophe.
Thompson's Valley	Thompson's Valley does have a possessive 's', so does not have an apostrophe.
Turks Cap	Turks Cap does not have a possessive 's', so does not have an apostrophe

Inclusive language

Government communications should be inclusive of all people.

Generally, this means that we should not use language that presumes something about someone, describes someone in a particular way when it is unnecessary or could offend, or reveals a personal characteristic unnecessarily.

If there is no reason to refer to a person's personal characteristic, then it is best avoided.

Nationality and residency

St Helenian status is a right to reside in St Helena. However, many people who are resident in St Helena do not hold St Helenian status.

Further, whilst many people in St Helena will be British nationals, many visitors and residents will be nationals of other countries.

Unless it is necessary, all residents should be referred to as "*residents*", with no reference to whether or not they hold St Helenian status.

A person's nationality should not be referred to unless it is necessary.

Gender

Many words or commonly used phrases show a gender bias, or can be perceived as making assumptions about gender, and in the process show stereotyping. Use gender neutral language wherever possible, such as by using "***they"*** rather than "*him*" or "*her*".

Disability

Not everyone will agree on everything, but it is important not to generalise, make assumptions or label people.

People-first language is the most widely accepted language for referring to persons with disabilities. People-first language emphasises the person, not the disability, by placing a reference to the person or group before the reference to the disability. For example, use expressions such as "***students with dyslexia, people with intellectual disabilities, people living with HIV"*** or ***"persons with disabilities"***.

However, the people-first rule does not necessarily apply to all types of disabilities. There are some exceptions. For example, when referring to persons who are blind, we can say either "***blind persons"*** or "***persons who are blind***", and the same applies to "***deaf"*** or ***"deafblind persons"***.

Persons with disabilities should not be referred to as patients unless they are under medical care, and only in that context. You should also avoid labelling persons with disabilities by their diagnoses (for example, *dyslexic*), as this reflects the medical model of disability. Use people-first language instead, so say "***person with dyslexia"*** or "***has dyslexia"***.

Expressions such as "*suffers from*", "*afflicted with*" or "*stricken with*" are inappropriate. They suggest constant pain and powerlessness and carry the assumption that persons with disabilities have a poor quality of life. Instead, you can simply say that a person "**has [a disability]**" or "**is blind/deaf/deafblind**".

Medical conditions

When writing about medical conditions, the focus should again be on the individual. That means using neutral language to describe the condition and not labelling the person.

For instance, you would say "**a person with cancer**" and not "*a cancer patient*", or "**a person with diabetes**" rather than "*a diabetic person*".

Do write	Don't write
This year's St Helena Day celebrations were enjoyed by the island's **residents**.	**Saints and non-Saints** all enjoyed this year's festivities.
The **applicant** applied for the permit four weeks ago.	The **applicant, who is an Irish citizen but who has lived in Longwood for over 30 years**, applied for the permit four weeks ago.
The dietician will host a drop-in session for **persons with diabetes** on Wednesday at the library.	A drop-in session for **diabetics** will be hosted by the dietician on Wednesday at the library.
A session for **people living with HIV** was held at the library this week.	A session for **HIV sufferers** was held at the library this week.

References to things, people and places

There are numerous arms and branches of government in St Helena, but as an island territory there can sometimes be confusion as to where the distinction between these lies. It's important we are clear about this when communicating with our audience, so that we don't introduce any confusion in the process.

Other organisations, companies and natural phenomena also have certain conventions attached to how they are referred to.

How to refer to parts of St Helena and its government

Note that there is no legal definition of, or single entity called, "St Helena Government".

However, it is commonly accepted that St Helena Government (or SHG) is the metonym (a figure of speech where a concept is referred to by the name of something closely associated with it) by which many in St Helena refer to the various arms of central government, and the services delivered by them.

SHG can therefore be considered to be the apparatus through which the decisions of the Executive Council are turned into action. This includes the people or organisations that work for ministers, such as portfolios and the public service officials working within

them, noting that ministers are the ones that ultimately make decisions and determine the actions of these other bodies and organisations.

Some functions of the state are separate from the executive and therefore should not be referred to as SHG. This includes the Legislative Council, the judiciary (the courts), and certain statutory boards and offices (such as commissioners).

The following list provides some useful examples of how to refer to St Helena Island and different parts of the government:

- the Executive Council or executive, which includes the ministers and which the Governor acts on the advice of;

- the Legislative Council, which includes all elected members, including ministers;

- the St Helena public service, which includes the employees of portfolios and other state institutions;

- the St Helena Government (or SHG), which is any organisation or body implementing the decisions of the Executive Council and / or providing government-operated public services; and

- St Helena, which refers to the island as a whole. Depending on the context, St Helena may mean the island in a geographic sense, or mean the island in a legal context as it relates to other territories and countries.

As St Helena is both a geographic location and a territory, the prefix you use when referring to it will depend on the context. As an island, we can often default to wording things as "*on"* St Helena. However, this is only correct when referring to something that is physically on the island, and even then this can often be referred to as either "*on St Helena"* or "*in St Helena"*.

It is not correct to use "*on St Helena"* when referring to something related to legal or territorial matters. Instead you should use *"in"*, such as for "*paying tax in St Helena"*, "*residing in St Helena"*, or the "*employment laws in St Helena"*. For example, rules and regulations apply throughout St Helena as a legal entity, including its territorial waters. It therefore would not be correct to say that fishing restrictions or employment laws only applied "*on St Helena"*, as this only refers to the physical landmass of the island, ignoring the waters surrounding the island.

More information on specific areas or places in St Helena is contained in the commonly misspelled place names section.

More information on parts of the government and how these are styled is contained in the when to capitalise words section.

Do write	Do not write
The ***Executive Council*** has decided to increase fees and charges.	***SHG*** decided to increase fees and charges.
The ***Legislative Council*** passed a law that required St Helena to comply with international standards.	***SHG*** passed a law that required St Helena to comply with international standards.
SHG has written to those affected by the changes in charges.	The ***Executive Council*** has written to those affected by the changes in charges.

The **Chief Magistrate** today sentenced the defendant to six months in prison.	**SHG** today sentenced the defendant to six months in prison.
You are liable to pay tax **in St Helena** if you live here for a certain amount of time each year.	You are liable to pay tax **on St Helena** if you live here for a certain amount of time each year.
In St Helena, there is a closed season for lobster fishing.	**On St Helena**, there is a closed season for lobster fishing.

Common words not brand names

Avoid the use of brand names or trademarks where possible. This means using words like "**tissue"** rather than "*Kleenex"*, or "**vacuum cleaner"** rather than "*Hoover"*.

A trademarks is the intellectual property of its owner, so you must be careful about using these. Only use these if you are referring specifically to the product in question, and not generically to similar products or services.

Names of other organisations

Try to write the name of other organisations the same way that the organisation itself does.

Although names should always be capitalised, some organisations do not capitalise their first letter. Where this is the case, such as "**eBay"**, write it as they do.

Use a shortened version of the organisation's name only where they commonly do this themselves, such as "**Sure"** rather than "*Sure South Atlantic"*, or "**Defra"** rather than "*Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs"*.

Although SHG applies UK English spelling, where an organisation name uses alternative English spelling in their official name, this should be used. For instance, the "**United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization"**.

Natural phenomena

Generic terms for natural phenomena, such as "**climate change"**, "**global warming"** and "**greenhouse gasses"**, are written in lowercase.

Storms and hurricanes are usually given names. As it is a specific natural phenomenon, it is capitalised, such as "**Hurricane Irma"** or "**Storm Daniel"**.

Floods, earthquakes and tsunamis use a 'year location event' naming convention, such as the "**2004 Indian Ocean tsunami"**.

Do write	Don't write
Hurricane Irma has been devastating since it made landfall. It is thought the intensity of this hurricane season is linked to **climate change**.	**Hurricane 23rma** has been devastating since it made landfall. It is thought the intensity of this hurricane season is linked to **Climate Change**.

Grammar and style

Acronyms and initialisms

Acronyms and initialisms are shortened forms of words, replacing full names with their first letters or sometimes their first syllables.

Acronyms are pronounced as a word, such as "***Defra"***, whereas initialisms are pronounced as letters, such as "***SHG"*** or "***ENRP"***.

Where the name contains an "and", this is not reflected in the abbreviation. For the "*Environment, Natural Resources and Planning Portfolio"*, this means writing "***ENRP"*** rather than "*ENR&P"*. Note that ampersands (the *&* symbol) are not to be used in most of our written communications.

Not everyone will be familiar with acronyms and initialisms, so these should be spelled out in full the first time they are used in content. For instance, "***The Health and Social Care Portfolio (HSC) is one of six St Helena Government (SHG) portfolios"***.

Depending on the type of document and your target audience, some may be so familiar to the reader that they do not need spelling out in full. It's unlikely you would need to spell out the UK, and you may only need to spell out SHG if the document is aimed at an international audience, or the document is an official report of publication, such as the annual Budget Book.

Do not use full stops in between letters when shortening words into acronyms or initialisms.

If you have lots of these in a document and they are used regularly throughout, you should include a glossary that spells all of them out so that the reader can readily refer to this.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations can take two form:

- shortened version of the full word; or
- just the first few letters of the full word.

Abbreviations that are shortened versions of the full word and are pronounced the same, such as Dr (doctor) or St (street, or saint) can be used. As the last letter is the same as the full word, a full stop is not needed at the end. This means using "***Dr"*** and not "*Dr."* when writing.

Abbreviations that contain the first few letters of a word, such as "*vol"* (for volume), "*para"* (for paragraph) or "*p"* (for page), are not generally helpful for readability so should be avoided in public content.

Singular and plural verbs

It will often be obvious when to use a singular or plural verb, but where either can be used, SHG has certain rules in place to ensure consistency.

Use the singular verb with organisation names

Whilst either a plural or singular verb can be used with the names of organisations, the SHG style if that only the singular verb is used. This applies even if the organisation's name ends in an 's' and looks plural.

Do write	Don't write
The Executive Council **has** decided.	The Executive Council **have** decided.
Sure **has** been granted a new operating licence.	Sure **have** been granted a new operating licence.
The EMD **turns** 20 this year.	The EMD **turn** 20 this year.
SHG **has** implemented reduced customs duties.	SHG **have** implemented reduced customs duties.
The United Nations **has** met in New York.	The United Nations **have** met in New York.
SHG **thanks** you for your understanding.	SHG **thank** you for your understanding.
HM Customs **apologises** for the inconvenience.	HM Customs **apologise** for the inconvenience.

Use the plural verb when referring to the public

Whilst we use the singular verb for organisations, we use the plural verb when referring to the public. This means that the public are referred to as a collective.

Do write	Don't write
The public **are** thanked for their understanding.	The public **is** thanked for their understanding.
The public **need** to be informed on this matter.	The public **needs** to be informed on this matter.

When to capitalise words

Words should only be capitalised if they are the first word in a sentence, are in a title, are specialist legal terminology defined in legislation, or are a proper noun.

A proper noun is the name of a particular person, place, organisation or thing. These are different from common nouns which are generic. Examples of these are listed below:

Type	Capitalised	Not capitalised	Rationale	Example of use
Places	*St Helena Island*	*island*	St Helena Island is the name of a place and a legally defined entity. When its full name is used it should be capitalised, but if only "island" is used to refer to it (such as "Saints call the island their home") then it is not capitalised, as in this use the term "island" refers to a generic type of place.	St Helena Island is an island in the South Atlantic. The island is home to around 4,000 people.
	Sandy Bay	*district*	Only the formal district name itself is capitalised.	Sandy Bay is an administrative district of St Helena.
	South Atlantic	*south*	Only formal regions, cultures or names are capitalised. When referring to cardinal directions (i.e. compass points), they are not.	The South Atlantic island of Ascension lies seven degrees south of the equator. It has always had good connections to South Africa and North America.
	Jamestown Wharf	*wharfs*	Capitals are used for names of buildings, structures, public places or legally defined areas. However, when generic or multiple of these are referred to at once, in plural terms, lowercase is used.	Jamestown Wharf is adjacent to James Bay and Rupert's Wharf is adjacent to Rupert's Bay. Both the Jamestown and Ruperts wharfs are open to the public.
	Overseas Territory / Overseas Territories	*territory / territories*		The UK Overseas Territories have constitutional and historical links with the United Kingdom, but do not form part of the United Kingdom itself. St Helena is an Overseas Territory.
SHG, portfolios, departments,	*St Helena Government*	*government*	Only the full formal name is capitalised. Generic references to the government are not capitalised.	Officials from the St Helena Government have been liaising with their counterparts in the UK Government on this issue. Both

Type	Capitalised	Not capitalised	Rationale	Example of use
programmes and initiatives, and institutions				governments have previously indicated a common goal to address this.
	Health and Social Care Portfolio	*portfolio*	Only the full formal name of the portfolio is capitalised, not the generic reference to a portfolio. Note that "*the Treasury*" is the formal name of the Treasury and should always be used and capitalised when reference is made to it.	The Health and Social Care Portfolio deliver a range of services. The portfolio works with the Treasury to accurately forecast its financial needs for the coming year.
	St Helena Tourism	*the tourism function*	Only the full name of the section, function or department, as listed in a portfolio's organisational structure, are capitalised.	St Helena Tourism is a section of the Economic Development Portfolio. It has spent the year coordinating a number of tourism promotion activities across SHG.
	Economic Development Investment Programme (EDIP)	*the programme*	Only the full formal name of a programme, project or initiative is capitalised, not the generic reference to it.	The Economic Development Investment Programme (EDIP) is a programme funded to identify and deliver key strategic island infrastructure needs.
	Supreme Court	*the court*	Only the full formal name of an institution is capitalised.	The Supreme Court verdict followed weeks of evidence being presented to the court.
	HM Customs	*customs*	Only the full formal name of an institution is capitalised.	HM Customs staff will greet you at the airport. When going through customs checks it is important you declare everything as needed.

Type	Capitalised	Not capitalised	Rationale	Example of use
Titles and offices	*Chief Secretary*	*public servant*	The Chief Secretary is a specific office and job position within the wider public service. A public servant is a generic term for anyone that works for SHG or other state institutions. The correct preposition for someone working in an appointed SHG office is 'of', not 'for'.	The Chief Secretary of the St Helena Government is the head of the public service, which employs around 800 public servants.
	Prime Minister / Chief Minister	*former prime minister / former chief minister*	Capitals are used for formal titles of office holders. Capitals are only used when referring to the current heads of state, and not previous incumbents of the role.	The Chief Minister Julie Thomas met with former prime minister David Cameron.
	Minister for Health and Social Care	*the minister*	Capitals are used for the official titles of ministers, but not for generic references. The correct preposition for ministerial positions is 'for', not 'of'.	The Minister for Health and Social Care met with other ministers to discuss the new policy proposal.
	Elected Member	*elected members / members*	Capitals are used for the official title of individual elected members of the Legislative Council, but not for generic references or plural use.	The Legislative Council elected members were invited to speak at the Chamber of Commerce last week, alongside the Minister for Health and Social Care. Several members attended and Elected Member

Type	Capitalised	Not capitalised	Rationale	Example of use
				John Thomas gave a presentation on the proposals, as did the minister.
Legislation	*Road Traffic Ordinance*	*ordinances*	Capitals are only used when referring to specific legislation, not generic legislative apparatus or instruments. However (unlike like normal convention), where subsequent reference is made to that specific instrument, even if not using its full name, it should be capitalised.	The Road Traffic Ordinance is one of several ordinances that contributes to road safety. The Ordinance also provides for criminal penalties.
	The Constitution	*the constitutions of the OTs*		The Constitution provides for the election of a Chief Minister. Some other OT constitutions instead provide for a Premier or First Minister.
	Road Traffic Bill			The Road Traffic Bill is being debated tomorrow. The Bill will update a number of matters relating to road safety.
	Budget 2023/24	*the budget process / the budget provisions / the last four budgets*	The Budget 2023/24 is specific to that year so is capitalised. When it is used as an adjective or a plural it is not capitalised.	The Legislative Council approved the Budget 2023/24 on Wednesday. The budget process for the Budget 2023/24 followed the same process as previous budgets.
Dates	*New Year's Day*	*public holiday*	Capitals are used for all institutional, legal and religious holidays, and public events.	New Year's Day will be on a Monday this year, one week after Christmas Day. Both are public holidays.
	Monday	*weekday*	The name of days are always capitalised, but if referring to generic weekdays or weekends then it is not.	Ministers met at 09:00 on Monday, as they do every weekday. They did not meet on Saturday or Sunday as they do not ordinarily work on weekends.

Type	Capitalised	Not capitalised	Rationale	Example of use
Certain groups	*Christians*	*religious*	Capitals should be used when referring to certain groups, such as geographical regions (continents), religions, etc.	Just like African or European people, Asian people follow many religions. This means you're likely to meet Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim Jewish and Christian people, amongst others, when traveling in Asia.
Animals	*Galapagos shark*	*tiger shark*	Capitals are only used for animals that are named after places or people. If the Latin name is included, then the Latin wording should be italicised and the first word capitalised.	Sightings of several Galapagos sharks (*Carcharhinus galapagensis*) and tiger sharks (*Galeocerdo cuvier*) have been reported around Egg Island in the last week.
Acronyms	*ICU*	*intensive care unit*	Capitals are usually only used for the abbreviated form, and not the whole name when spelled out. The exception would be if the term being shortened included a proper name or genus.	The intensive care unit (ICU) underwent a refurbishment last year, funded in part by a rise in VAT.

Where capitals are used for certain words, it is important to remember that subsequent generic references do not need to be capitalised. An example of this would be, *The Minister for Health and Social Care is part of the Executive Council. Other ministers are also members of the council*.

Contractions

A grammatical contraction is when two words are combined by leaving out one or more letters, replacing them instead with an apostrophe. This is usually done to better align the written from of the words with how the words are typically spoken. For example:

- "don't", which is short for "do not"; and
- "they're", which is short for "they are".

Generally, contractions should be used where you are trying to create a friendly and conversational tone with the reader. This can include things like guidance, posters, websites, emails or newsletters. Where the general tone or approach is closer to spoken English, such as for users of a service, this is fine.

You should usually try to avoid using contractions in formal writing or correspondence. Sometimes, however, it may be clearer to your reader to use contractions, such as in the lists of "Dos and Don'ts" in this guide. Generally though, if you're drafting correspondence, providing briefing or responding to an official enquiry, avoid using contractions.

Use of Latin

Some Latin words, and abbreviations of these, are still used in English. This includes phrases such as "*e.g.*" (meaning "for example"), "*i.e.*" (meaning "in other words") and "*et cetera*" or "*etc.*" (meaning "and so forth"). Scientific names also often include Latin wording alongside their English names.

Latin words and abbreviations can be used in SHG communications.

Do not use "*etc.*" at the end of a list which begins with "*e.g.*", "*for example*", "*such as*" or "*including*". You have already said (by using one of these prefixes) that you are only providing examples, so you don't need to infer (by using etc.) that it is not a complete list.

Whilst these are generally widely known and used, some programs that read text for those with visual impairments can struggle to pronounce these. This can make it difficult for those people to access materials where the phrases are used. These can also be confusing for those who did not grow up with English as a first language, or for readers with lower levels of literacy.

Whilst Latin abbreviations can be used, it is therefore better to try and use alternative wording where possible.

That being said, it is acceptable to use either in SHG communications materials.

- "e.g." can sometimes be read aloud as "egg" by screen reading software. Instead try to use "for example" or "such as" or "like" or "including", whichever works best in the specific context.
- "etc." can usually be avoided. Try using "for example" or "such as" or "including". Never use "etc." at the end of a list starting with "for example" or "such as" or " "including".
- "i.e." is used to clarify a sentence but isn't always well understood. Try (re)writing sentences to avoid the need to use it. If that isn't possible, use an alternative such as "meaning" or "that is".

Try to write	Try to avoid
You can submit your application in person any weekday (*that being* Monday to Friday).	You can submit your application in person any weekday (*i.e* Monday to Friday).
If *you're* over 21 then complete all the sections of Form B that apply to you (*for example*, Section A, B and C).	If *you are* aged over 21 years old then complete all the sections of Form B that apply to you (*e.g.* Section A, B and C).

Punctuation

Use minimal punctuation to make content more readable.

This doesn't mean removing all the punctuation marks from your content, just removing unnecessary punctuation so that you are using the minimal amount. Too much punctuation makes text crowded and difficult to read. Remember that sentences should ideally be 25 words or less, and should always be written in plain English so that it is simple and clear to read.

To ensure you're using minimal punctuation:

- Don't add full stops to the ends of headings, page headers, footers or captions.

- Follow the guidance for using punctuation in bullet lists.

- Don't use full stops between letters in an acronym or initialism.

- Don't use a full stop at the end of most abbreviations. The exceptions for this are "*e.g.*", "*i.e.*" and "*etc.*".

Do use punctuation marks to:

- End sentences (full stops, exclamation marks and question marks).

- Break up sentences and show the relationship between words and phrases (commas, colons, semicolons, dashes, forward slashes and ellipses).

- Show possession and contractions (apostrophes).

- Connect related words (hyphens and dashes).

Semicolons, dashes and hyphens

If your sentence has several semicolons or dashes (em dashes), then it is probably too long and should be broken down. Semicolons and dashes are used in this way between phrases or clauses. In plain English it is better to break the sentence down so it is easier to understand for the reader. Therefore you should avoid using semicolons or dashes.

Hyphens should be used for one of two reasons:

- Between an adjective or participle and a noun when they are used together as an adjective. For example "***user-focused services", "high-achieving media officer", "top-quality writing".***

- When using numbers as adjectives. For example, "***30-year rule".***

Commas

Commas in particular tend to be used excessively. These should only be used to clarify or avoid ambiguity. A useful test of whether one is needed or not is to read the sentence aloud, and where the natural pauses in the sentence are, add a comma.

For more information on how to use various types of punctuation marks, visit [here](#).

Italics

Italics can be used for a variety of reasons, but in SHG content they should only be used for:

- names of large vehicles such as ships, aircraft, spacecraft and trains;

- legal cases;

- scientific names; or

- quotes.

Do write	Don't write
The *MV Helena* is scheduled to arrive at St Helena on Tuesday.	The **MV Helena** is scheduled to arrive at St Helena on Tuesday.
The case of *Johnson vs Johnson* provides an example of this.	The case of **Johnson vs Johnson** provides an example of this.
A green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) nest has been found at Rupert's Beach.	A green turtle (**Chelonia mydas**) nest has been found at Rupert's Beach.
The Chief Minster said "*it was a pleasure meeting with colleagues earlier today*".	The Chief Minster said "**it was a pleasure meeting with colleagues earlier today***".

The exception to this is where a template calls for italics to be used in certain instances, and specialist publications. If you are writing a specialist publication and the style is to italicise certain words, such as in scientific or academic papers, then you should follow those conventions.

Quotations

Quotations are important for two main reasons:

- Sometimes the exact language used by the original author cannot be expressed any better.
- Sometimes it is important to use the original language because is it forceful or controversial, and it should be made clear to the reader that it is the original author's words, not yours.

Double quotation marks are used for direct quotations. For example, "**the Chief Minister said this was "welcome news" when told".** If a quote is longer than a single paragraph, opening and closing quotation marks should be used for each paragraph.

Use the ellipsis symbol (…) in quoted material to indicate where text has been left out, with a space before and after the symbol (except at the beginning and end of a quote).

Sometimes the text being quoted will itself contain an error, or require additional words to make sense. Rather than correcting the quote or paraphrasing the original words, you should identify those parts of the original text that contained the error and the new words added to assist with comprehension.

"Sic" means "as written," and can be used to identify that an error was included in the original. It should be included in square brackets, "**[sic]"**, and placed immediately after where the error appears in the text.

Any additional words should be in square brackets.

Do write	Don't write
The journalist described St Helena Island as **"…a majestic yet brutalist natural wonder rising confidently from the Atlantic Ocean"**.	The newspaper article said St Helena Island **was spectacular**.
In their correspondence to you, the constituent stated "**this is the most CORRUPT ExCo this Island's EVER HAD!"**	The constituent stated the Executive Council **was corrupt**.
The constituent advised that **"their [sic] living on IRB and cant [sic] pay anything for the [inspection] fee**".	The constituent advised that "**their living on IRB and cant pay anything for the fee**".

Ampersands

An ampersand (*&*) is a Latin typography symbol, or punctuation mark, that can be used to represent the word *and*. This should not be used in formal SHG writing or communications. This includes in the name of any of the SHG portfolios. This means writing "***Health and Social Care (HSC)"*** and not "*Health & Social Care (H&SC)".*

The exception to this rule is where an ampersand is part of an official name of businesses and products, such as "*Tiffany & Co", "Ben & Jerry's"* or "*R&B".*

Ampersands can be used in informal writing, or where you might want to limit your word count (such as on social media posts).

Editing and proofreading

Editing and proofreading are quality assurance processes.

As well as following your portfolio or section protocols for signing-off content, you should edit and proofread content yourself first and then ask someone else to look over content for you afterwards.

Try to allow plenty of time for this and follow these tips:

- When editing, read your work out loud. Does it sound natural? Can you read whole sentences without running out of breath? This is a good way of checking whether sentences are too long, repetitive or full of jargon.

- Cut out any words you don't need. For maximum impact, use the minimum amount of words you can.

- Proofread from paper copies. On average you'll find 15 per cent more mistakes than when reading from a screen.

- Find quiet time and space to proofread properly. Don't treat it as an add-on.

- Tell yourself you want to find mistakes. You'll be more likely to find them.

- Ask someone who hasn't been involved in drafting to check for mistakes.

Writing for different channels

Web

People don't read from the screen in the same way as they read printed documents. Your web writing should reflect this.

When reading on screen, we:

- Read about 25 per cent more slowly

- Scan the page instead of reading the whole document

- Want specific information quickly

- Dip in and out of pages and sections of pages, a bit like reading a magazine

- Don't read left to right or top to bottom, instead reading more like the letter Z overlaid on the screen

With this in mind, think about what your web user needs.

- Summarise content in plenty of clear headlines and subheadings to help users find what they're looking for

- Put your most important point first and least important last. Web users probably won't read to the end

- Keep sentences and paragraphs really short, with no more than one point in each paragraph

- Use links sparingly or separate them from the text

- Use images to help convey your message

Social media

Social media is informal. We use a simpler, more informal language style on our social media channels (Facebook, Twitter etc.) than in other departmental communications.

It is important to remember that you are still representing the government to our audiences and that they will see your content as reflective of the whole of SHG. You therefore need to follow the SHG social media guidelines.

Emails

You should take the same care with emails as you would for any other public communication. Emails aren't necessarily secure, and you should always remember that they may become public knowledge through an access request under the Code of Practice for Public Access to SHG Information or through a judicial review.

Be friendly, be short and learn to summarise. Be professional, and follow normal rules for spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Be polite. It's more difficult to judge someone's tone from an email. Don't forget your manners in your hurry to send.

Make it clear who you are sending it to (put them in the 'To' box and only CC in people who need to know). Don't copy people in unnecessarily. This can clog up people's inboxes and uses up limited IT server capacity.

Tools to assist you

Whilst this guide sets out the standards to be applied in SHG communications materials, there will be areas which might remain unclear to you or which are not covered by the guide (such as grammar).

A number of tools exist which can assist with, and add value to, your written communications.

Microsoft Word	Make sure you have your automatic spell check turned on, and your proof reading language set to English (United Kingdom). You can check these under the *Review* tab.
Grammarly	Grammarly (www.www.grammarly.com) is a website with a number of free tools that assist with improving grammar and clarity in your written communications. It can be used on their website, as a plug-in for your browser or as a plug-in for Microsoft Office. It can check documents for you or you can [copy and paste wording into it](#) to check grammar. If you make an account, you will need to [change your language](#) to British English.
ChatGPT	ChatGPT (https://chat.openai.com/) is a prompt-based AI tool which can assist you in a number of ways. You can use it to draft, review or summarise text, provide assistance or even make presentations.
UK Government Style Guide	The UK Government Style Guide is available online (www.gov.uk/guidance/style-guide/a-to-z-of-gov-uk-style) and contains further details on specific styles and conventions to apply to certain words or topics. However, where a particular topic is already covered in this guide, the SHG Writing and Style Guide takes precedence.

If using any of the above tools, you should ensure that you still adhere to the principles outlined in this guide first, which takes priority.