ABC News & Current Affairs
Style Guide

A guide for radio, television and online journalists on writing, producing and presenting ABC News and Current Affairs

Introduction

This guide will help you achieve the fundamental aims of ABC News and Current Affairs writing: accuracy, precision and clarity. In producing clean, concise and elegant copy you will also avoid many of the mistakes that breach Editorial Policies.

The Style Guide is not a rulebook. The ABC has a rulebook – it's called *ABC Editorial Policies*, and it sets out the fundamental editorial and ethical principles all ABC staff are expected to follow.

Of course, no guide can cover all situations. News and Current Affairs has such a diverse range of programs, what works in one area may not work in another. Reporters and producers are expected to use common sense in applying these guidelines, and to refer up to their editorial line managers for guidance if in doubt.

Where there may be a number of acceptable spellings, usages or grammatical constructions, this guide will tell you which one the ABC has chosen as its standard. Read it carefully and consult it often. *The Macquarie Dictionary* is the preferred dictionary for News and Current Affairs.

Journalists should also consult the online SCOSE guide for information on pronunciation, and there are three ABC legal guides available on the intranet (ABC All Media Law Handbook, Court Reporting Handbook and Copyright Handbook).

What is news? What is current affairs?

All material produced by the News and Current Affairs Division must adhere to the ABC's four key values – **honesty, fairness, independence** and **respect** – enshrined in *Editorial Policies*. They must also conform to our principles of editorial responsibility, which require **accuracy, impartiality** and **balance.**

However, there are often significant differences between current affairs and news.

Both can provide information, context and analysis. But while news is primarily involved in informing our audience at the earliest opportunity of a

current event or issue (and will generally only provide sufficient context and analysis to perform that primary function), current affairs has a broader brief. Current affairs stories and programs will explore issues in greater depth, provoke and promote public debate by putting issues on the agenda for discussion, and investigate matters of public importance.

Because of its broader brief to explore, provoke and stimulate, current affairs reports will often employ a wider range of styles in their language and construction. Interviews and debates may be more conversational, stories more discursive, and programs more adventurous by using music, humour, and other story-telling devices.

In both current affairs and news (and some programs will be a combination of both) there will often be "live" unscripted reports and interviews. These are, by their nature, unpredictable, particularly when dealing with breaking news.

While the fundamental principles of this Style Guide remain relevant for both news and current affairs, there is room at the ABC for a range of different styles to suit the aims of our programs and the needs of our audiences.

Using this Style Guide

The Style Guide is separated into several sections. The first part of the text (Section A) is relevant to all staff, and everyone who works in News and Current Affairs programs needs to have a good understanding of it. As well as being the key section of the text, it also gives advice about words to avoid and explains the fundamentals of good writing for broadcast.

Style notes relating to particular areas of output, such as Radio News and TV News, have been moved to Section B, and those working in specific areas need to be familiar with the relevant section.

Section A

Writing for broadcast

Accuracy, brevity and clarity.

These basic aims of writing for broadcast can be applied to all our programming from TV documentaries to Radio News stories, from one-minute TV news updates to online stories. By following the guidelines in these pages, you will help build on the quality of our work and contribute to our reputation as a leader in the Australian media.

Our work should be characterised by simple writing and expression. The more complex the subject, the greater the need for simplicity of expression.

We should write the way we speak. That does not mean we use slang, but we don't use formal, official words and phrases that often obscure meaning or sound inflated. Newspaper style has little relevance or application in the broadcasting business.

Don't surrender to the language of the police bulletin, the political rally, the computer blurb and the myriad other sources of stodgy officialese. We don't converse with people in long, convoluted sentences, which have several qualifying phrases, and commas, such as this one. So don't write this way.

Our audience usually gets only one chance to catch the message of what we're saying. If we present them with convoluted phrasing, confusing syntax, too many ideas in a sentence, jargon or what some call "weasel words", we will lose the audience.

There are few stories that can get away without some context. Our audience is well-informed and some people will know more than we do about the subject of a story, but the majority will need to be reminded of why the story is important, what led to it and how the latest development has taken it further. Context should be succinct. Say what is necessary so the audience is not asking questions about who, what, where, why, when and how.

The way you introduce a story will often determine whether it succeeds. Write the link or intro first. This forces you to pinpoint the main interest of your story. Adopt crisp, direct speech that appeals to the imagination. Emphasise key information, build a context, and tease other facts that will come later in the body of the story.

Use the continuous present tense wherever possible. Write "company executives say", rather than "said". But be consistent. Switching back and

forth between present and past tense within a sentence is wrong. Stay in the same tense right through a story if possible.

Our job does not end with the accurate setting down of essential facts. From that beginning, we should aim to give the news a meaning and an interest that are essential to capture the attention of the audience and enable the story to be properly understood.

Our objective is to give warmth, colour and life to all our stories where this is possible.

Words that are clear and plain are not in themselves dull. Short words usually do the job better than long ones. Stick to words and phrases that are simple and well understood.

Poor grammar signifies that an idea has not been properly thought through. Cliches are the first refuge of the thoughtless. Be creative, clear and specific. Always keep an eye on SCOSE.

Always write for meaning. Break your prose into separate sentences if that's the safest way of ensuring clarity and avoiding ambiguity.

A first draft is the form of a story you read through and check for factual errors, awkward phrasing or literals, before offering it for use in a bulletin. Don't submit copy expecting producers to do your writing for you.

Always re-read your scripts before you file them. And if you have time, read them again. Check your scripts for factual errors, awkward phrasing or literals, before offering them for use.

No matter how experienced we are in our work, it's likely that our writing can be improved. Rarely should a story be broadcast or published online without first being checked by someone else. A sharp editor or producer can make good writing even better.

Use a better word

There are alternatives for many words that obscure our meaning, rely on bureaucratic jargon, are archaic, easily misunderstood, or are gender biased. On the left below are words you should avoid altogether or which are overused or used inappropriately. On the right are words that will help the audience better understand your meaning.

Avoid	**Use**
abated	eased

accessed	got
acquired	got
admits	says
airlifted	flown
all-time high	record/new high
ambulance men	ambulance officers
amongst	among
an horrific	a horrific
anticipate	expect
appeal (a decision)	appeal against (a decision)
apprehended	caught
armed gunmen	gunmen
ascertain	find out/discover
at large	free
back-to-back victories	consecutive victories
bailed	granted bail
biggest ever	biggest
bundled out	eliminated/beaten
centre around	centre on
chairperson	chairman/chairwoman
choppered	taken (by helicopter)
cleaning lady	cleaner
claims	says
commenced	started/began
concedes	says
currently	now (if necessary at all)
cutbacks	cuts
daylight savings	daylight saving
(the) deceased	the dead man/woman
defiant	See: Editorialising
determined (yet to be)	decided
due to the fact that	because
embankment	bank
embattled	in trouble/troubled
fatally injured	killed
filled/packed to capacity	full/packed
finally	See: Editorialising
first ever	first
fixed-wing aircraft	plane
firemen	firefighters
following	after
foreman	supervisor
freak accident	accident
gaol	jail
gets under way	starts/begins
going forward	(usually unnecessary)

gone missing	is missing
gunned down	shot
hit-run	hit and run
hopefully	See: Editorialising
hospitalised	taken to hospital
housewives	women
however	(over-used)
icon	(as in sporting icon – unnecessary)
is able to	can
impact on	have an effect on/affect
imprisonment	jail
incident	attack/robbery/murder – be specific
interface	work together or meet
January 15	January the 15th/mid-January
lady	woman
living memory	(usually meaningless)
local residents	residents/neighbours
located	found
loved ones	family and friends
manning	staffing
meanwhile	(over-used)
meet with	meet
militant group	group
miracle	remarkable/extraordinary
molotov cocktail	petrol bomb
mother of three	woman
negative territory	down (as in stock price movement)
occupants	people
occurred	happened
one-point-five	one-and-a-half
ongoing	continuing
our	Australia's/Queensland's (be specific)
over the weekend	at the weekend
over 300	more than 300
passed away/passed on	died
pending	until
per (hour)	an (hour)
policemen	police officers
positive territory	up (as in stock price movement)
prior to	before
protest (a decision)	protest against (a decision)
refuses to say	won't say
(on a) regular basis	regularly
relocate	move
rushed (to hospital)	taken
sedan	car

situated near	near
spokesperson	spokesman/spokeswoman
sportsmanlike	sporting
stretchered (off)	carried (off)
subsequent to	after
suicided	committed suicide
take decisions	make decisions
therefore	so
tragedy	accident/deaths (be specific)
transpire	happen
transported	taken
try and	try to
unaccounted for	missing
upcoming	coming/tomorrow's/next month's
utilise	use
vessel	ship/yacht/boat (be specific)
vowed	promised/threatened/said
whilst	while
will reappear in court	will be back in court
worst-ever	worst
would of	would have
wounded	injured (usually)

The list above is a small sample, but it makes clear the way you should think about the language you use. It's also accepted that not all examples and guidelines can be hard and fast rules. Use your common sense, keep it simple and if you are in any doubt, err on the side of editorial and style safety.

abbreviations and acronyms

Well-known abbreviations and acronyms (for example, AIDS and RSPCA) are fine, but others can be too obscure. There's a tendency to use acronyms for brevity, but ask yourself whether the acronym, when spoken, will be easily understood. If listeners are left guessing they may miss the nub of the story.

Also consider regional usage. Most listeners would recognise "ACTU", but few outside Queensland, for example, would know the QTC as the Queensland Turf Club. In copy, don't abbreviate words such as doctor, senator and professor. The abbreviation "e.g." may be suitable for online, but say "for example" on radio and television. The RAAF is written and read as "R-double-A-F".

Aborigines

Aborigine is the noun, although some Aborigines prefer the usage "Aboriginal people". Aboriginal is an adjective, so "a group of Aboriginals" is

not correct. There are many regional names – take care not to misapply the better-known ones (for example, Koori). Torres Strait Islanders are a distinct group and should not be described as "Aboriginal" or "TSIs".

"Indigenous Australians" is the preferred collective term for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Avoid using "blacks" for Indigenous people. It may be considered offensive when used by non-Indigenous Australians.

There are protocols that should be observed when naming or showing images of Indigenous people who have died. These vary from community to community and can relate to the use of names, images, footage or audio of the person who has died. For more information, look at the section called "Cultural Protocol" at the ABC 's *Message Stick* website: http://www.abc.net.au/message/proper/

[See: **Indigenous**]

abortion

When referring to pro- or anti-abortion campaigners or protests, avoid the terms "pro-life" and "pro-choice". These labels are emotive. Instead of phrases like "pro-life supporter", use "anti-abortion campaigner" and instead of "pro-choice", use "pro-abortion".

according to

Beginning a sentence with "according to" may give some listeners the impression we don't believe what follows. But beginning with a sensational statement, then qualifying it with "according to" is mischievous.

Wrong: "Most Sydney Harbour ferries will probably sink within a month, according to a transport company".

Better: "A company seeking to replace Sydney's harbour ferries says most are in such disrepair they will probably sink within a month".

[See: **claims**, **attribution**]

active voice

Sentences written in the active voice are crisper and force the writer to source every piece of information: "Mrs Brown chose the team" is more emphatic than "the team was chosen by Mrs Brown".

"It's estimated", "it's reported" and "it's believed" are soggy, passive forms. Active voice requires the writer to specify who estimated, who reported, who believed. The listener is better informed.

[See: **tense**]

actuality

Actuality adds impact and depth to both radio and television reports. It's a valuable tool, well used, but should never become tokenistic.

Very short bursts of actuality can confuse. Listeners need time to grasp a new speech pattern. Speakers who can't be easily understood should not be put to air, except in special cases (for example, where the content of the actuality is explained, illustrates a historic event or is crucial to the authority and impact of a story).

[See separate sections: **Radio News Style Notes**, **TV News Style Notes**]

address

Politicians, particularly, like to "address" problems, issues and questions. We should say "examine" problems, "discuss" issues, "resolve" questions.

adjectives and adverbs

These should generally be avoided, particularly in news stories. Don't use them to give colour to your stories. Rely on strong nouns and verbs.

admit(s)

There is a hint of guilt implied in this word. For example, if you write, "the school admitted the curriculum would be changed", you're suggesting that either the curriculum was flawed or the school had resisted the change. Is that the case? When reporting a simple statement of intention, usually "say(s)" is better.

[See: **claims**]

advertising

Distinguish between what is news and what is advertising. It's obvious that in reporting commercial activities we must use company names and, where a story would be meaningless without it, the name of a product. But we need to be vigilant. Ask yourself whether the news value outweighs the advertising value and whether the advertising value can be further minimised by a more general reference. In any case, we must not extol the advantages of a particular product or compare it with another product.

[See: **commercial names**, **sponsors' names**]

affect/effect

"Affect" (verb) means "to influence something or someone". For example, "a person under the influence of liquor is affected by alcohol".

"Effect" (noun) means "something produced by a cause or agent". For example, "alcohol can have a surprising effect".

"Effect" (verb) means "to bring about". For example, "alcohol effected a change in his behaviour". (For reasons of clarity, this usage is unsuitable for radio or television writing.)

after

"After" and "following" are used with too little consideration.

Where one event leads to another, use "because", rather than "after" or "following", as in "the price of bread is to rise because of the drought".

A sentence like "at least ten people were killed after a bus hit a wall" raises questions because it obscures the sense. Why were they killed after the bus hit the wall? Who or what killed them? Say "at least ten people were killed when a bus hit a wall".

[See: **following**]

age

When giving someone's age, the spoken form is "22-year-old John Smith". The form "John Smith, 22" is for newspapers, not broadcasters.

In Australia, anyone 18 or older is regarded as an adult, by law. It is the voting age and the age at which a person can be bound by a legal contract.

Generally, only people under 13 should be described as "children"; then they become "teenagers". For those under 18, say "boy" or "girl" or "teenager". Avoid referring to someone as a "youth"; its usage is now mostly limited to bureaucratic speech. A person 18 or older (in court or police reporting, and elsewhere) should be called a "man" or "woman".

Be aware that the generic descriptions "middle-aged" and "old" can cause offence; so leave those words to be said by the people concerned. "Elderly" can be acceptable if it is used with care. But you would not describe people in their 60s as "elderly" and "a 70-year-old elderly woman" is a tautology. Unless the word is used with thought and sensitivity, avoid it.

"Two young teenagers died (in the police chase)." In this example, one of them was 19, the other 17. Not young, in teenage terms. We still hear, "the young 19-year-old" or the like, often in sports stories. It amounts to a judgement on the subject's maturity.

AIDS

The acronym for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Syndrome means "a group of symptoms". People whose blood carries the virus that can cause AIDS are "HIV-positive", but they do not necessarily have AIDS. They can be described as "carrying the AIDS virus". Don't say "HIV virus", because the "V" stands for virus.

aircraft

Aircraft land – usually at airports. When an aircraft is forced to land we say that it (or the pilot) made an "emergency landing". When an aircraft crashes do not try to soften the impact by saying it "crash-landed".

Aircraft can normally be referred to as "planes", and certainly not in the official jargon of "fixed-wing aircraft". "Plane" is short for "aeroplane". Don't say "airplane".

air incidents

It is our practice to refrain from reporting aircraft "in trouble" stories until after the plane has landed or a crash has been confirmed. This is to avoid causing unnecessary anxiety among the public, including a rush of people to the airport.

If a plane is reported missing or overdue, the information must be checked with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority, the police, or the airline.

[See: **bomb hoaxes**, **hostages and sieges**]

alibi

"Alibi" means "being in another place at the time". It does not mean "excuse".

all-time high and all-time low

These terms are popular, especially in finance reporting. Some say the phrase should never be used, because it is inevitably wrong, when the figure involved rises or falls the next day. That may be debatable but the phrases are overused.

[See: **superlatives and records**]

American

Inhabitants of both North and South America can be referred to as "Americans", although the term is most often used in reference to citizens of the United States. Canadians should be referred to as Canadians. If you are referring just to the United States of America make sure, in your first reference, you specify that. Say, "in the United States" or "the US Government" – not "in America" or "the American Government".

among/between

Usage depends on the number of people or things you are referring to. For example, an argument is "between" two people, but "among" three or more; a competition is "between" two teams, but "among" three or more. But it is appropriate to "choose between six kinds of jam".

[See: **alternate/alternative**]

amount/number

Be aware of the difference between "amount" and "number". "Number" should be used with nouns, like "people". "Amount" should be used for quantities referring to the volume of something. "Number" should be used when referring to the number of things.

[See: **fewer**]

analyst

The audience is much better off knowing who is saying something rather than being fobbed off with anonymous "analysts". If you're reporting what you have established is a generally held view, then "some financial market economists" or "some political analysts" is acceptable.

[See: **experts**]

ancestors/descendants

Your ancestors are dead people – the people who came before you. Your descendants will come after you. And the Style Police will come after you if you think they're interchangeable, as these writers did: "Ancient human bones should not be held in museums without the consent of the ancestors of the deceased" and "two ancestors of the rebel miners" attended the Eureka Stockade commemoration.

animals

Animals are not people. They are generally referred to as "it" (for example, "the dog caused the accident when it ran across the road"). There are occasions, however, when context or circumstances allow variations. Common usage dictates that racehorses can be referred to as "he" or "she".

anniversary

Here's a word that's in danger of losing its meaning because it's being used carelessly and inaccurately. The Macquarie Dictionary says an anniversary is the "the yearly occurrence of the date of a past event". Anniversaries usually have an element of celebration or solemnity about them. They're special. Intervals of less than a year do not attract the same kind of commemoration so, not surprisingly, there's no word to describe the monthly or weekly return of a noteworthy date.

anonymous sources

There will be occasions when stories rely on material obtained from anonymous sources.

Before an anonymous source is used as the basis of a story, it *must* be upwardly referred. While the ABC's general rules on the protection of sources will apply, your immediate editorial manager is entitled to know the identity of the anonymous source.

All reasonable efforts will be made to verify the information obtained from an anonymous source before its use, and an editorial decision will then be made through upward referral about the way in which the information will be used and presented.

anticipate

There is a useful distinction between "expect" and "anticipate". We "expect" many things, but we don't necessarily take a specific action, or "anticipate", an event. For example: "Many mothers expect (think likely) they will be able to anticipate (take action in advance of) their babies' needs"; "He anticipated the punch by moving out of reach"; "They expected the horse would win (but didn't bet on it)".

apostrophe

The apostrophe is used to indicate possession (for example, "David's computer") or abbreviation ("there's new evidence").

Take note of the following rules for placing the possessive apostrophe.

When the subject to take the possessive apostrophe is singular, add the apostrophe and then an "s" (for example, "the company's profit"; "the Minister's promise").

When a name ends in "s" the easiest guide to follow is to add an apostrophe then an "s", so "James's child", "Jesus's life".

When the subject is plural, simply add an apostrophe to the end without an extra "s" ("babies' nanny; "workers' uniforms"). A word with a plural form that doesn't end in "s" is an exception ("women's club"; "oxen's harness").

For other situations, follow these examples: "Tim and Mary's house" (shared ownership); "Tim's and Mary's noses" (separate ownership). "His", "hers", "its", "ours", "yours" and "theirs" do not have an apostrophe.

Place names such as "Kings Cross" and "St Marys" don't retain an apostrophe.

"It's" is a contraction of "it is". "There's" means "there is". Therefore, "there's new claims" is wrong. Say "there are new claims".

"Who's" is a contraction of "who is". The possessive form of "who" is "whose": "the man whose house burnt down" (not "who's house").

[See: **punctuation**]

appeal

Usage such as "he appealed the decision" is American. We say "appealed against", "protested against". Also: "was granted bail", not "bailed".

appraise or **apprise**

These words are often misused. "Appraise" means to assess or estimate (the quality, amount, size, value of something): "They appraised the damage done by the storm."

"Apprise" is a more flowery way of saying "inform" or "advise". Like "inform" and "advise", it should take the preposition "of": "A listener apprised us of the error." But we'd probably avoid its usage anyway.

as regards

Forms such as "as regards" should be avoided.

Asian names

- **Chinese:** In Chinese names, the family name (surname) comes first. For example, "Chiang Chi-kwang", in a second reference, becomes "Mr Chiang". (For guidance, hyphens never appear in surnames.) Some Chinese adopt the Western style of family name last, though to avoid confusion they often use initials, for example, "C.K. Chiang".

- **Indonesian:** Some Indonesians have only one name, some two or more by which they wish to be known, for example, "Suharto", "Deddy Iskandar Muda".

- **Japanese:** Among themselves, Japanese use the family name first, then the given name (only ever one), for example, "Sato Ichiro". In English you would refer to him as "Mr Sato". When speaking with foreigners Japanese may adopt the Western order, "Ichiro Sato".

- **Korean:** Similar to Chinese, for example, "Yi Yoon-kyung"; then "Ms Yi".

- **Vietnamese:** Vietnamese have two-part or three-part names. Though the family name is placed first, the last name is the key to identification. Therefore, in a first reference say, "Vo Van Kiet", then "Mr Kiet" (not "Mr Vo").

[See: **foreign names**]

assassin

An assassin is someone who kills a political or religious leader, or a similarly prominent person. Mere mortals are "murdered".

[See: **execute**]

asylum seekers

We use the term "asylum seekers" for people who arrive in Australia (or Australian waters) without travel documents, claiming (or apparently claiming) refugee status. If the Australian authorities decide they have a valid claim for protection, they would become "refugees". Don't use inappropriate modifiers with the term "asylum seeker", such as "unlawful asylum seeker". There's no such thing as an "unlawful" asylum seeker because under international law anyone can apply for asylum.

We use the term "illegal immigrant" for anyone arriving in Australia without proper papers who is not claiming refugee status or whose claim for

protection has been rejected; or anyone whose visa has expired and who is therefore not legally entitled to stay in Australia.

We do not use the term "boat people" and we do not refer to "illegal refugees".

at

If you don't know the exact time something happened, don't use "at about". Say "they'll arrive about two o'clock" or "the accident happened about midday".

attain

"Attain" is not a fancy synonym for "obtain". "Attain" means to reach or achieve something by continued effort. The object is normally something immaterial, such as goals, ambitions or a position (of trust or authority). "Obtain" means to get or acquire something (often as a result of effort or a request). Usually it's something tangible.

attribution

We use information from reliable sources – people who are in a position to know what they're talking about. Reliability may be assured by the person's official position, or it may not. These are judgements for each journalist to make, in consultation with his or her editor.

When reporting domestic news, the onus is on us to confirm information independently. If we can quote a source, especially for important breaking news, we should. For example, "the Prime Minister's office has announced the death of the Governor-General". If we cannot name our source in a piece of original reportage, we rely on our journalist – "the ABC's Finance Reporter says the Reserve Bank has a plan to support the dollar".

Official announcements by governments, police forces, corporations, institutions and interest groups are a staple of information that can make news. There are no prizes for being first and wrong – so check and attribute. However, we do seek to be a pace-setter in getting accurate breaking news to our audience.

When reporting foreign news, if the only source is the BBC or AFP, we quote the BBC or AFP, and if they are quoting someone else, we should say who that source is: "The news agency AFP is quoting aid workers in Afghanistan as saying hundreds of people have been killed in an earthquake." Once similar information is flowing from multiple sources, we can drop the specific attribution.

Our overseas correspondents carry the authority of the ABC. If a conflict of information should arise, advise the correspondent and be guided by his or her judgement.

[See: **breaking stories**, **credits**, **editorialising**, **experts**, **rumours**]

audience

Never forget we are broadcasting for people, not radio; television sets or computers. Failure to keep in mind people – all people – is one of the great dangers of our profession. Get news about people in the bulletins.

average

Take care of inappropriately substituting the word "normal" for "average". For example, say "the average (or median) height of a four-year-old is 106 centimetres", rather than "the normal height".

backburning or **burning-off**
There is a difference. "Burning-off" is the clearing of land before the fire season by the use of fire. (It is sometimes referred to as "controlled burning**".)** "Backburning**"** is a special method of fire control. It involves burning off an area in advance of an approaching fire by lighting a small fire and allowing it to burn into or against the wind, that is, back into the approaching fire.

basically

This is basically a superfluous word in news writing.

behead

We have seen frequent use of this word in recent years. It is an acceptable word for cutting off the head and in some contexts **"**behead**"** would be more appropriate than "decapitate**",** because it refers to a deliberate action, whereas "decapitate" can be accidental.

better/best

"Better" is the comparative of "good", and "best" is the superlative. So, it's "the better" of two choices; "the best" of three or more.

Other examples are young/younger/youngest; old/elder/eldest; nice/nicer/nicest; bad/worse/worst.

Never "double" the comparative when straining for emphasis; for example, "even more healthier". And nothing can be "more perfect", since perfection is

the highest quality.

[See: **alternate/alternative, among/between**]

billion

This means "one thousand million", not "one million million". When reading, emphasise the "b" to distinguish "billion" from "million".

blame

People or organisations may be "blamed" for things, but we should not "blame" the weather for a poor crop or "blame" bad roads for accidents. They "cause" or "contribute to" these outcomes.

boat or s**hip**

The words are not easily defined, but generally ships are large and ocean-going, and anything that is not ocean-going and has an outboard motor or oars is a boat. It's commonly explained that you can put a boat on a ship but not a ship on a boat. Never use "vessel" in broadcast language.

bomb hoaxes

In general, we do not report hoaxes, in case we encourage imitators. However, when a bomb threat causes serious disruption – a story in itself – that would be reported.

[See: **air incidents**, **hostages and sieges**]

breaking stories

Our reputation rests on our reporters' and producers' vigilance in chasing original material and in pushing the boundaries exploring fresh angles on stories.

Your curiosity and persistence will not come from a management edict.

[See: **disasters and emergencies**]

breakthrough

Use sparingly – and never pair with its cliché-partner, "dramatic".

[See: **clichés**]

bring and **buy**

Take care to distinguish between the past tense of "bring" ("brought"), and the past tense of "buy" ("bought"): "The astronauts were brought back from space"; "I bought some apples at the shop".

bug

There are eavesdropping "bugs" and computer system "bugs", but if you want to be taken seriously when reporting medical ailments don't refer to viruses, bacteria and parasites as "bugs". The term is imprecise and implies a low-level risk, which may be inappropriate.

Don't use "bug" when you mean "insect".

Burma

It's our policy to call the country "Burma", not "Myanmar". Myanmar is the name that was given to Burma in 1989 by the ruling military government.

but

This is one of the most effective words in broadcast English, but can also be a lazy and clumsy scripting tool when used too often, or inappropriately.

bushfire

The Australian usage is "bushfire" (Americans call them "brushfires"). Vegetation is "burnt out" – rarely "destroyed". And don't refer to things as "partially" or "completely" destroyed; they're either "destroyed" or "damaged".

business reporting

> **bankruptcy**
> Bankruptcy happens when a court orders an individual or enterprise to liquidate assets and distribute them to creditors. The petition may be voluntary (initiated by those seeking to enter into bankruptcy) or involuntary (initiated by unpaid creditors). A bankrupt person is constrained by law from borrowing money or starting a new business until discharged from bankruptcy. Bankruptcy is not a synonym for insolvency or those sloppy words "broke" and "bust".
>
> [See: **receiver**]
>
> **crash**
> In finance stories, "collapsed", "crashed", "plummeted", "slumped"

and their kind should be reserved for truly out-of-the-ordinary events. A share price has not "slumped", for instance, when it's given up what amounts to one or two per cent of its value. "Fell" and "rose" convey the essential meaning, even in a volatile market.

currency
We should provide the Australian dollar equivalent when quoting other currencies (for example, "10 million yen, or about 115-thousand dollars"). Any story referring just to "dollars" will be understood to mean Australian dollars, unless the context makes clear that the dollars are, for instance, US or New Zealand or Canadian.

Spoken style is "one-point-six million dollars"; "one-dollar-sixty" (not "one-point-six dollars"); "69-point-two US cents". Figures can be rounded, where commonsense permits, so the decimal point is not overused. "One-point-five million dollars" should, more conversationally, become "one and a half million dollars".

Avoid the diminutive, "Aussie dollar" or "the Aussie". It's currency-trading jargon. We don't refer to the "Aussie Prime Minister".

For graphics, our style is "US$10" (denomination, followed by dollar sign). Figures without national denomination (for example, $3 million) will be assumed to be Australian dollars.

[See: **decimals**]

Gross National Product
The value of all the goods and services a country produces during a given period. The growth in GNP, adjusted for inflation and annualised, is commonly used as a measure of economic growth.

Avoid the usage "negative growth". Say "economic decline" or "contraction".

receiver
A receiver is called in when a business fails, usually by a secured creditor(s). The receiver will try to help the company trade out of its difficulties, but he or she is responsible first to the secured creditor(s). A "liquidator" takes over – and sells the assets – if the receiver cannot keep the company going. A company may appoint an "administrator" to stave off receivership.

[See: **bankruptcy**]

bust

"Police bust" and "drug bust" have no specialist cachet, they're just slang. The same goes for "the company went bust".

[See: **bankruptcy**, **jargon**]

cache [KASH]

A "cache" of weapons is a hidden store of them. This word is sometimes mistakenly pronounced the same as "cachet" [KASH-ay], which means (among other things) "prestige" or "kudos".

In computer terminology, the pronunciation [KAYSH] is used for the verb "to cache" and in "cache memory".

Canberra

When we use "Canberra", do we mean the Federal Government, Parliament or the bureaucracy? Or do we really mean the city? Because of the potential for confusion, we should be precise.

A possible exception is in the diplomatic context (for example, "Washington has appealed to Canberra").

capitals

Proper names (such as people, places) take capitals. So do specific titles, for example, "the Royal Commission into Prostitution" – but then, "the commission".

Use the lower case for things such as "brussels sprouts", "caesarean operation". Likewise, for animals or animal breeds (for example, "german shepherd").

Nationalities and languages take the upper case ("Arab", "French").

After the first use of capitals in a proper name or organisation name, revert to the lower case ("the Murray River", then "the river"; "the University of Queensland", then "the university").

"Government" takes the upper case when referring to a particular and incumbent administration (for example, "the Curtin Government", "the Tasmanian Government"; but, "the former federal government").

Write "Federal Budget", "Act of Parliament" and "Health Bill" (the generic "parliamentary bill" takes the lower case).

[See: **abbreviations**]

carry out

We carry out the garbage; we don't carry out investigations or searches. For example, "He searched the undergrowth", rather than "He carried out a search".

Celsius

"Celsius" is the official name for the temperature scale used in Australia, and preferred over "Centigrade". To convert to Celsius, subtract 32 from the Fahrenheit figure, multiply by five and divide by nine.

censor/censure

Documents may be "censored", but people who are criticised severely are "censured".

centre

It is possible to "centre on" an issue, but it is not possible to "centre around". Distinguish this from "revolve around".

chronic

It means "lingering" or "continuing", not "acute" or "bad". "Mr James suffers from chronic heart disease" means he's had it for a long time. Do not use it to mean "very bad" or "deplorable", as in "the chronic state of the roads".

claims

"Claims" carries a hint of incredulity (as do "reputedly" and "so-called"). If there is no reason to doubt the veracity of a statement, "says" is better. For example, "the party says it will field candidates in all electorates", rather than "the party claims it will".

The authority of the person or organisation making a claim (that is, something not previously accepted, known or understood), and the nature of the claim, will decide whether we would report it without corroboration. A claim, therefore, must be attributed. "Claims" implies the ABC is seeking further confirmation or reaction.

[See: **according to**, **admits**, **attribution**, **corroboration**, **experts**]

clichés

Listen to the way you speak and recognise the worn-out, stock phrases you'll

be prone to use in a story – and guard against them.

Using a metaphorical phrase is not creative if it's over-familiar or loosely applied. We constantly hear stories in which actions are "given the green light" or people "bite the bullet", and so on. Mixed metaphors abound, such as "the committee did a u-turn and weathered the storm" or "Australian swimmers have raised the bar to a new level". Keep on the alert for clichés and clumsy phrasing.

"Back-to-back victories" (instead of "consecutive victories") and "bundled out" (instead of "eliminated") are just some of the many clichés that find their way into sports reporting.

[See: **conversational language**, **violence**]

closure

There is a touch of pop psychology about references to people "finding closure" or "obtaining closure". It's become a cliché, so avoid using the word.

collateral damage

Avoid this term as a euphemism for "civilian casualties".

collective nouns

There are no iron-clad rules about whether collective nouns should be matched with singular or plural verbs. Both constructions are acceptable, if they are part of common usage and conversational. But they must never be mixed in the same sentence or story such as this: "The team is playing this afternoon. They say the game will be their best test yet."

Generally, it's better to use singular verbs with collective nouns that express the sense of a single entity: "the Government is planning to increase defence spending"; "the family is going back to Germany"; "Brisbane is unbeaten this season". We would never use "are" in any of those examples.

When the singular verb does sound awkward, there are ways to write around the problem without compromising your grammar. For example, it is correct, but awkward, to say: "The couple was taken to hospital." It's better to say: "The two were taken".

[See: **numbers**]

collide

Only moving objects can "collide", so a moving object cannot collide with a

stationary one. Therefore, two moving cars can collide, but it's not possible for a car to collide with a parked car or a tree.

commercial names

The proliferation of commercial naming of sporting teams, events, venues and cultural festivals requires us to exercise fine judgment. The rule is: Would the audience understand our reference if the commercial tag were omitted or another name substituted? If we can omit the commercial name, we should.

The issue for us is not satisfying the commercial interest, but choosing our usage to fit the situation, the demands of good sense and any editorial values. We need to ensure the listener understands what we are talking about when we mention an event or competitor, while minimising the use of commercial names. There is rarely, if ever, a need to refer to a stadium or venue by a commercial name unless, of course, the story is about the actual sponsorship deal itself.

[See: **advertising**, **sponsors' names**]

Commonwealth

It is no longer the British Commonwealth. "Commonwealth Government" and "Federal Government" are usually interchangeable. "The Commonwealth of Australia" is the nation of Australia.

[See: **Canberra**, **royalty**]

community

A favourite among politicians and bureaucrats who speak of "the wider community", when "people" would do. Some journalists are inclined to use it to refer to any group of people who share an interest or occupation – as in "medical community", "aviation community", "business community", and "chess community". In most references, "doctors", "pilots", "business people" and "chess players" are better.

compared

Say "compared with" if you want to draw attention to the difference: "He compared radio with television."

Say "compared to" when drawing attention to the similarity: "Life has been compared to a pilgrimage."

concedes

"Concedes" can be seen as an admission or even a confession. Make sure you use it correctly. It means to admit as true. "Says" is usually sufficient.

[See: **claims**]

congenial or **congenital**

Can heart disease be a pleasing thing? It can, according to one report, which said a sportsman who died had "congenial heart disease". What was meant was "congenital" (meaning existing from birth), not congenial (agreeable).

contemptible/contemptuous

A "contemptible" person is "a despicable being who is worthy of contempt". A "contemptuous" person shows by attitude or action that he or she holds someone else in contempt.

context

Meaning often depends on context. Never assume the audience knows all the background or context of a story.

Bring back essential information. For instance, if reporting the progress of an inquiry into an accident, remind the audience of the number of fatalities and possibly the date of the accident.

continually/continuously

Parliament sits "continually" (regularly, with breaks) while some politicians drone on "continuously" (without stopping) for hours.

contractions

In your script, if you reduce "will not" to "won't" or "does not" to "doesn't", think how it will sound when read. Often the fuller form is clearer. A commonly abused contraction is "there's" ("there is"), as in "there's new claims". It should be "there are new claims".

Some reporters tend to start sentences with "it is (or it's)" and then get to the subject. For example: "It's the wind and the rain that are causing the damage". Choose more direct speech, for example, "Wind and rain are causing the damage".

[See: **apostrophe**]

controversial

Usually an unnecessary word in our stories. It means "disputation on a matter of opinion". Current affairs and news stories are full of opposing opinions on all sorts of things, so consider how meaningful it is to attach the word "controversial" to your subject. If you do use it, make clear what the point of controversy is.

conversational language

The way we speak is the way we should write. It does not run to slang, but it shuns formal, official words and phrases that often obscure the meaning or just try to sound important.

[See: **gender**, **jargon**, **language**, **meaning**, **spokesman**]

corrections

With the vast amount of material we gather and disseminate each day, there will be occasional errors. If a story needs to be corrected there are processes that need to be followed carefully. Refer to the separate sections of Radio News Style Notes, TV News Style Notes and Online News Style Notes.

corroboration

Where we have a single source of information that's in dispute or that we may have to defend in court (for example, in defence of defamation) we have a responsibility to seek corroboration. This is a basic tenet of investigative journalism.

Corroboration involves testing and weighing up the veracity of information, not just selectively applying means of arguing its plausibility. Corroboration may come from independent witnesses, documents and other substantiating or supporting evidence.

[See: **claims**, **defamation**]

credibility

The quality of being believable. A "credulous" person will believe anything. "Credence" means belief or trust.

credits

ABC programs with exclusive stories/interviews should be credited. Programs broadcasting actuality of a news conference need not be credited.

If a story or actuality is used before the source program goes to air, the program should be credited together with a reference to when it can be

heard/viewed (for example, "the Prime Minister has told tonight's ABC *Four Corners* program").

The ABC credits other media organisations that provide actuality, such as "The Prime Minister told Channel Ten". For TV, this can be in a super. (We should not, of course, overdo the use of non-ABC material.)

When actuality includes a question from the interviewer, the credit should identify this, so "Jane Doe told ABC Radio's Joan Smith" (plus a program credit if the interview is a genuine exclusive).

When used at all in back announcements or credit rolls, personnel credits should be kept to a minimum and should only credit staff who worked on the specific program.

[See: **Radio News Style Notes**, **TV News Style Notes**]

crescendo/climax

A crescendo is a gradual increase, usually in the volume of music, and is not a climax. Often it's incorrectly stated that something has "reached a crescendo". Things reach a peak or climax.

crisis

Heavily overused. Let other people (for example, in actuality) say if the moment is truly "decisive or vitally important".

criterion

This word is singular and its plural is "criteria". So, "the criteria for the job is good health" does not make sense.

crucial

This is something that involves "a final and supremely important decision". Do not substitute it for what is merely important. "Crucial" can be overdone or misused in sports stories, in particular. "Climax" is also sometimes misused to describe one of several interesting episodes along the way.

[See: **crescendo/climax**]

cruelty

Stories of cruel or inhuman behaviour (for example, war atrocities, child abuse and torture) should avoid details that are not essential and would be likely to cause listeners unnecessary distress. We should inform in general

terms, choosing our language and actuality carefully. Special consideration should be given to the likely composition of the audience at the time of broadcast.

When, for sound editorial reasons, it's considered necessary to broadcast potentially distressing reports or images, a warning must precede the item.

[See: **violence**, **warnings**]

cyclones

Whatever the name, they are neither male nor female, so "Cyclone Brenda is causing havoc. It is centred 20 kilometres off Townsville". The same non-gender rule applies to ships.

[See: **weather**]

damage

Damage is "worth" nothing. So don't say "damage worth one million dollars", say "a million dollars damage". When you get an estimate, attribute it, so "the company estimates damage at one million dollars".

dates

The spoken style is "January the 30th" or "the 30th of January". Don't say "January 30" (though this is the style for TV supers).

If the precise date is not critical to the meaning, say "at the end of January" or "in mid-March" or "early last month".

The term "9/11" has become a phrase in itself and can be acceptable (in a question, for example). However, avoid "September 11" and stay with the preferred style, as above.

death

Don't resort to euphemisms such as "demise", "deceased" or "passed away".

[See: **euphemisms**]

death toll

There is something morbidly hopeful about the way this term is sometimes used, as in "the death toll so far" or "the death toll is expected to rise". It's better to say "the number of people killed [or dead]". The numbers of dead and injured in a disaster are best kept in a link, where they can be easily kept

up to date.

Don't overdo road toll stories during holiday periods.

decimals

Generally, we round to the nearest full number. When precise decimal figures must be given, use this form:

- For .05, say "point-oh-five".
- For 2.32, say "two-point-three-two" (not "two-point-thirty-two").
- When writing graphics using decimal points, "0.4" is the correct form, not ".4".

[See: **currency**, **numbers**]

decorations

Use only if relevant to the story. For example, "the 90-year-old Victoria Cross winner returned to the battlefield"; "John Smith refused an Order of Australia medal three years ago, and is now in jail for treason".

demonstrations

Be wary of reporting plans for public demonstrations. They might not happen and we have no business trying to rally sympathisers or boost numbers. There is usually no need to detail the time or place.

If there's any possible contention about crowd sizes, especially at protest or political rallies, seek estimates from the police or the organisers and credit them.

Be cautious about the risk in saying "at least a thousand" turned up, or "more than a thousand", or "only a thousand". It may sound like we're impressed, or otherwise, with the numbers. Best to say "about a thousand", and let others do the boasting or sneering, if necessary. We shouldn't be offering a subjective judgement. Play it straight.

[See: **violence**]

departments

It's the Department "of" Defence, the Department "of" Foreign Affairs and Trade, but it's the Minister "for" Defence.

[See: **government portfolios**]

descendants

[See: **ancestors/descendants**]

desperate

Usages such as "desperate appeal" and "desperate escape bid" are desperately tired forms. Avoid the word.

details

Avoid the hackneyed phrase "details are sketchy". But where details are conflicting we should say so, rather than plumping for one figure or fact over another. Better to stick to generalities until details are confirmed, or say "few details are available".

determine

This is a word we often use clumsily. Instead of writing "facing a committal hearing to determine whether he'll stand trial" or "the cause of his death/the fire/the accident is yet to be determined", it's better to write "a committal hearing will decide if he stands trial" and "the cause of the death/fire/accident is not yet known".

diagnosis or prognosis

A report about an AFL player's injury said that "the prognosis is a jarred knee". The right word for what the doctor found was wrong is "diagnosis". A "prognosis" is a forecast about the likely outcome of an illness. So, "the prognosis is he will make a full recovery".

dilemma

A choice between two courses of action, both of which are likely to be unpleasant. Not a synonym for "trouble", "predicament" or "quandary".

diplomats and consuls

Ambassadors are accredited "to" a country. Say "the Australian ambassador to the United States". Countries of the Commonwealth have "High Commissioners". "Consuls" look after the interests of their own nationals in foreign countries and deal with immigration matters.

disabilities

Take care not to make gratuitous references to disabilities. A disability is not necessarily a "handicap". People who use wheelchairs are not necessarily "confined" to them. However, if a disability is relevant to a story, be specific. For example, "a man in a wheelchair has been swept off a bridge by floodwater".

[See: **discrimination**]

disasters and emergencies

There is a Disaster queue in iNews for both Radio and Television. It explains how to respond to breaking news. Make yourself familiar with the procedures, including how to get news flashes/crawls to air.

It's essential News and Current Affairs executives are alerted immediately.

Remember, first reports are often exaggerated. Don't accept blindly. We should avoid giving remote disasters, of minor general interest, too much prominence in bulletins and programs.

discrimination

We need to be careful in our choice of language not to contribute to discrimination. Equally important is the need to extend our coverage of people, events, issues and opinions to include the whole society and not to discriminate, by omission, against those who have less "visibility" for mainstream media.

[See: **disabilities**, **ethnicity**]

disinterested

It means "objective, unbiased". It does not mean "uninterested", which is the last thing a reporter should be.

Down Under

This may be a way others, especially inhabitants of the Northern Hemisphere, see Australia, but it is not a way we should refer to ourselves.

In the same vein, don't indulge in over-familiar terms such as "Aussie", "Tassie", "Kiwi", "Vics", or "Windies", including in sports stories.

[See: **Far East**]

drug charges

This is the correct term to use, not "drugs charges".

editorialising

All News and Current Affairs reports are expected to be grounded in fact and free of bias.

We should concentrate on giving the public the news: what happened, where, when, and who was involved. Reporters have a legitimate role analysing events to explain what they mean, but it's essential to give the audience the facts.

We should be careful not to resort, unthinkingly, to stock phrases that characterise events, impute motives, declare winners and losers, or in various other ways gratuitously editorialise. It may be as subtle as the use of "safe" in the phrase "safe injecting room", or "finally", as in "the council finally changes its parking policy".

"Finally" is a loaded term and should be avoided. It suggests the reporter has been impatient for something to happen. Let someone else say if it's been "a long time coming".

People want the opportunity to make up their own minds without us forcing a view upon them.

If, for example, we start a story with "The Government is playing down the dispute", we're elevating opinion to the status of fact. It may be apparent to most people what the Government hopes to do, but any analysis is better delivered by our reporter, argued from the facts.

If we report "Universities are lifting fees, cashing in on demand for student places", we are suggesting these are opportunistic increases, not principally motivated by concerns about financial viability and service. Can that be demonstrated?

In another example, if we begin "In good news for the Government, unemployment has fallen to five-point-six percent", we're adopting one perspective over all others, and possibly an unreasonable one for those still unemployed.

Be specific, rather than revert to lazy formulas which characterise (by belittling or aggrandising) something even before we've reported it.

"Hopefully" is another word that raises a question. Who hopes?

"Defiant", as in "the president remains defiant", carries a similar taint, when

the president may be simply sticking to a policy, in the face of pressure.

And if you say "in a surprise move", be sure you aren't the only one surprised.

[See: **attribution**, **claims**, **quotes**, **reaction**]

election campaigns

All the usual requirements for balance, accuracy and impartiality apply during election campaigns, but there are special requirements as well.

Detailed line counts are maintained to ensure a strict balance on major party political coverage, and it becomes particularly important to seek balancing comment from Government and/or Opposition as soon as possible.

In the heightened environment of a campaign, we need to be alert to possible attempts by interest groups to manipulate our news coverage by making false or inflated claims. All stories should be subjected to rigorous scrutiny, and checked for accuracy.

Our specialist political reporters and our archives are important resources for cross-checking political and policy information.

electrocute

This means "kill by electricity", so you would not say "electrocuted to death". Nor would you say someone is in hospital recovering after being electrocuted. They'd be dead.

embargoes

We should respect genuine embargoes on the release of stories. Many are applied for good reason, others not so. Every effort should be made to have an embargo lifted if no good reason is apparent. However, if the effort is unsuccessful, the embargo must be observed, or your Editor consulted. Embargoed stories should be marked clearly. For example:

EMBARGOED UNTIL 1115 (WA Time) TUES. 25 NOV.

enquiry

Our style is to say and spell "inquiry".

epidemic and **pandemic**

The Macquarie Dictionary defines "epidemic" as "a temporary prevalence of a disease". The adjectival form is defined as "affecting at the same time a large number of people in a locality, and spreading from person to person, as a disease not permanently prevalent there". In other words, an epidemic is serious but not particularly widespread and not everyone seems to get the disease. The word epidemic is also used in non-health contexts: "There is an epidemic of crime in the city".

"Pandemic" was originally an adjective meaning "occurring everywhere". "Pandemic" is used to mean "a disease or plague which affects a whole country or continent, or the whole world". For example, the Spanish flu of 1918 was a pandemic and a global disaster.

ethnicity

Refer to ethnic origins only when you're certain they're relevant. It's not appropriate to "tag" whole ethnic groups in reporting crime or other anti-social behaviour. However, if a specific and relevant connection exists between an event and the person's ethnicity, such a reference may be appropriate.

[See: **discrimination**]

euphemisms

Plain words are best every time. Do not talk of "disadvantaged people" when you mean "the poor". Or a woman who is "expecting" when you mean "pregnant". Do not have people "pass away" or speak of their "demise" in bulletins; say that they "die". Also avoid "collateral damage" when referring to "civilian casualties".

[See: **conversational language**, **death**]

evoke or **invoke**

These two words are sometimes used interchangeably, but they have different meanings, just as "inhale" and "exhale" are different. "Evoke" involves giving out or producing something (evoke a memory, a scene, a smile). "Invoke" involves trying to get help or support from an outside source: "He invoked God's blessing upon his followers." (In other words, he asked God to bless his followers.)

exact/extract

To "exact" (revenge, money, respect) means to demand or require, or to force to give or pay. "Extract", on the other hand, has a more concrete meaning. It

generally refers to the action of getting or taking one object or substance out of another (for example, extracting a tooth or extracting juice from a vegetable). So it is wrong to say "extract revenge".

excessive

It does not mean "great" or "increased", as in "the rain is expected to result in an excessive wheat crop". Excessive means "more than is necessary" or "exceeding the proper limit".

execute

Judges order executions. Gangsters, gunmen, and terrorists "kill" or "murder" people. For example, hostages in Iraq should be described as having been killed or murdered, or beheaded if that has been the method of killing the hostage.

[See: **assassin**]

experts

Experts should be quoted as experts in their own field only.

[See: **analyst**, **attribution**, **claims**]

explicit/implicit

"Explicit" is often mistaken for "implicit", which means "something assumed or implied". "Explicit" means "something that has been expressed clearly". For example, "Mr Brown said tax changes were implicit in the agreement, but he declined to be explicit".

facility

Instead of "medical facility", say "hospital" or "doctor's surgery", or whatever it is. "Retail outlets" and "facilities" can safely be called "shops". Most "manufacturing facilities" can be described as "factories". Recognise jargon for what it is.

[See: **jargon**]

failed

A word often involved in clumsy editorialising. If you say, for example, that a political party "failed to stand a candidate", are you sure it previously declared an intention to do so? Too often events that "fail" to occur have been gratuitously predicted. Don't justify wayward previews or predictions, after

the event, by resorting to this device.

"Failing" to do something also implies an effort made but not achieved, whereas people often choose deliberately not to take an action. An example: "The mayor failed to respond to the allegations". It might be more accurate and impartial to say: "The mayor did not respond to the allegations".

[See: **editorialising**, **finally**]

Far East

"Far" and "east" if you're in London, maybe, but not from Australia's point of view. Refer to the countries of eastern and south-eastern Asia, or name the country you are referring to.

[See: **Down Under**]

fatal

Fatal means "causing death". It is clumsy to say "a Rural Lands Protection Board ranger is in intensive care in Dubbo hospital after surviving a fatal helicopter crash yesterday afternoon." Better to say "the ranger survived a helicopter crash which killed another man".

female/male

They have a formal, biological ring to them. "Man" or "woman" sounds more human, if you're talking about people.

fewer

In general, "fewer" refers to numbers (for example, "we need fewer bottles"). "Less" refers to quantities (for example, "cattle are drinking less water"). "Fewer" is followed by a plural noun ("fewer apples are grown") and "less" is followed by a singular noun ("less trouble is expected").

But common sense should prevent us from describing someone as "fewer than 30 years old".

[See: **amount/number**, **collective nouns**, **numbers**]

fires and floods

Stories on fires and floods are of general interest to a large section of our audience, but they can have life or death importance for a particular section. Whatever else we do, we must serve that particular audience. With news reports, this audience is not interested in the drama, it wants the facts – about

river heights, wind directions, road closures and so on. Make sure it gets the facts from official sources and that generalisations do not lead us into errors. Remember our aim: to give the public the information it needs.

first names

As a general rule we avoid referring to people by their first names alone. It can sound patronising, or evoke a sense of ABC sympathy for the person or issue. Avoid using different approaches with program guests and story subjects. Don't address the politician or the businessman as "Mr" or "Senator" or "Prime Minister", and then take a more familiar approach with those who may be the underdog, the complainant, the perceived "victim", the environmentalist and so on. The safest rule, even with "softer" subject matters, is to be openly even-handed at all times. That means using honorifics, or last names alone (where appropriate), or first name and surname together but (almost) never the first name alone.

An obvious exception is if the surname is being suppressed for reasons of anonymity or confidentiality (which we would usually mention in the script).

Refer up if in any doubt.

flaunt

Flaunt means "to show off" or "display proudly". It is not the same as "flout", which means to "disregard or deride openly".

FOI

Freedom of Information laws vary among the states and the Commonwealth but, broadly, they enable access to information held as records by government agencies, a government minister, local government and other public bodies.

All reporters should make themselves familiar with procedures for lodging FOI requests and techniques for maximising results.

following

In normal conversation you don't use "following" when you mean "after". "Farmers are hoping for better times, following some good rain"; "a man is dead, following an accident"; "the government is confident unemployment will fall, following the release of new figures". The word "after" can often work instead when you are emphasising the chronological order of events, but there are other conversational ways to write such sentences. "Because", "when", "in reaction to" are just some of the connecting words and phrases which, applied correctly, are more precise and informative either "after" or "following".

[See: **after**]

foreign names

It's important to bear in mind that foreign names are usually pronounced differently in their country or language of origin, and when they're borrowed by another language the pronunciation is adjusted to suit the sound system of the borrowing language.

It's often necessary to anglicise foreign names to some extent. Anglicisation should follow established patterns. All languages have their own patterns of adjusting borrowed words. The adjustments are necessary to make it easier for speakers to pronounce a borrowed word and for listeners to recognise the connection between the sound of the word and its written form. The resulting adjusted pronunciation may not make sense to the speakers of the original language but that's not our main concern. The important thing is that the word makes sense to those it's addressed to. In the case of the ABC, the target is the Australian public in general.

The ABC's Language Research Specialist maintains the SCOSE database and provides advice and issues daily word lists of foreign names and words that feature in the news.

former

A "former prime minister" means that the person is no longer Prime Minister. But be careful about putting "former" in front of a title or description that still applies to a person. A "former Olympic gold medallist" implies that the person has been stripped of a medal.

founder, capsize

Founder means "fill with water and sink to the bottom (of the sea)". It's also used with reference to projects that fail. Capsize means "overturn".

fulsome

Avoid using the word, as it can mean "generous" to some people and "insincere" to others. It does not mean "wholehearted" or "comprehensive".

gale

A gale sounds worse than a storm, but isn't. The Beaufort scale of wind speeds goes, in ascending order: breeze, gale, storm, hurricane.

[See: **cyclones**, **temperature**, **weather**]

gaol

If you spell it "jail", no newsreader will mistake it for "goal".

gender

Avoid words and phrases that can offend by appearing to suggest women are excluded from consideration, for example, "man" (meaning "people"), "man-in-the street", "sportsmanlike".

Koalas, dogs, horses and other animals are not human, no matter how cute they are or how long they were stuck up a tree. It's rarely appropriate to refer to an animal as a "he" or "she", and we certainly do not say "the cat who". And boats and yachts are not "shes" either.

[See: **animals**, **conversational language**]

geriatric

Don't use it as a term for an older person to imply senility or irresponsibility. But a hospital can have a "geriatric ward".

[See: **age**]

government

News bulletins and programs are constantly reporting items about governments. We need to make clear which government we're referring to. Repeat, if necessary, the "Federal Government" or "New South Wales Government" or "Italian Government", as the case may be. There is a need to be more specific with state governments, and a useful differentiation can be to include a premier's name to avoid repetition of a state's name. We hear far too much state copy in network radio and television programs referring simply to "the government" and "the health minister". Greater care is needed to identify states and territories in stories that may travel across borders. Even non-network stories referring to your own (state or territory) governments need to have more appropriate identification than many do at present. Online News requirements are just one good reason for this.

Usage such as "The Howard Government" is acceptable occasionally, but is overused. "The Government" or "the Federal Government" is preferred.

government portfolios

If a minister holds more than one portfolio, refer only to the one(s) relevant to the story. But use common sense. If referring to a Minister's obscure

additional portfolio, cite his or her familiar title and then say, "who is also responsible for Country Roads".

[See: **departments**]

Governor-General

We often and wrongly refer to the Governor-General as Australia's "Head of State". The Governor-General is not the Head of State, but the Queen's representative in Australia. Since Australia is a constitutional monarchy, the monarch is considered the Head of State. The plural of governor-general is governors-general.

grief

Sometimes grief will be part of a story. But be sensitive, and do not exploit distressed survivors or bereaved friends and family. Children in such circumstances normally should not be featured.

[See: **cruelty**, **death**, **next-of-kin**, **violence**]

guns/rifles

You do not "shoot" a gun or rifle. They are "fired". And don't confuse a gun with a rifle, or vice versa. They are different.

h [AYCH]

ABC style is to use the indefinite article "a", not "an" before words beginning with "h". Although some people continue to say "an historic", it is no longer common usage. It's a remnant of a time when the "h" in "historic" was not pronounced. In current Australian English the "h" is pronounced, so it's better to say "a historic" (after all, we say "a history book", "a house guest", "a ham sandwich"). It is correct to say "an honest" or "an honourable" because the "h" is silent.

Don't pronounce it HAYCH, in abbreviations such as BHP, HSC and HIV.

[See: **historic**]

hanged

Criminals may be "hanged". Pictures are "hung". Don't mix up the two.

headlines

There is scope for creativity, but headlines must always accurately reflect the

substance of a story. Mistakes can occur when the headline writer did not read the whole story, but framed the headline based on just the first couple of paragraphs.

hectare

The unit of surface measurement we use, not acres. One hectare is 10,000 square metres or 2.47 acres.

hero/heroic

Genuine heroism is devalued by overuse of these terms.

[See: **historic**, **miracle**]

historic

Overused. The word means "important, memorable or famous in history". Historical means "pertaining to history or based on fact, as distinct from legend". ABC style is "a historic event", not "an historic event".

[See: **h**]

HMAS

HMAS stands for Her Majesty's Australian Ship, so don't say "the HMAS Manoora". It is acceptable to say "the Manoora" in the second reference.

hoi polloi

This expression means "the masses" or "the common people". But some people use it incorrectly to refer to the rich and famous. A news item referred to Princess Mary of Denmark dining with the "hoi polloi". In fact, she did not dine with the humble masses but with the rich and fashionable.

honorifics

In the first reference, use both the first name and surname, without the honorific. Use the honorific and surname in subsequent mentions. Examples:

- One of Australia's leading merchant bankers, Henry Morgan, has arrived in Spain at the head of an investment mission. Mr Morgan...

- The Prime Minister, Jane White, is appealing to voters to avoid a hung parliament. Ms White...

Unless a woman asks to be called "Miss" or "Mrs", or is well known to adopt

either honorific, our style is “Ms”.

Don’t strip people of their titles. “Sir”, “Lady” or “Lord” must be retained, except when the person is charged with a crime. The wife of a knight takes his surname only, for example, “Lady Dawson”, not “Lady Felicity Dawson”.

Use the full name of sports players and entertainers in the first mention, and only the surname in subsequent references, for example, “Cathy Swift”, then “Swift”.

With police, in the first reference say “Assistant Commissioner John Smith”, then “Mr Smith”; “Detective Sergeant” in the first reference, then “Sergeant”.

“The President of the Industrial Relations Commission, Mr Justice Biggs”, then, “Mr Justice Biggs”.

[See: **Asian names**, **foreign names**, **judges and magistrates**, **military**, **reporting religion**, **royalty**]

honorifics in court cases

Once a person is charged with a criminal offence, the honorific may be dropped.

There may be occasional exceptions to this. If in doubt, refer up. If there are exceptions, they should be followed across the network.

hostages and sieges

We must report accurately and quickly, but with great care. We do not deliberately endanger the lives of hostages or compound the distress of anyone involved. There may be rare circumstances where interviews with hostage-takers or hostages are appropriate. These cases should be referred up.

[See: **air incidents**, **bomb hoaxes**, **disasters and emergencies**, **grief**]

hyper/hypo

“Hypo-” means “under” or “below” and is used in such words as “hypodermic”, “hypoglycaemia”, “hypotension”, “hypothermia” and “hypoventilation”.

“Hyper-” means “over” or “too much”. It implies excess or exaggeration, as in “hyperactive”, “hyperbole” and “hypersensitive”. The colloquial term “hype” is based on it.

hyphens

Watch out for examples like "Courier-Mail" or "General Motors-Holden", and note the absence of the hyphen from cases such as "Kingsford Smith". Use hyphens in compound adjectives, for example, "red-haired woman"; "limited-overs cricket".

imply/infer

They are not interchangeable. "Imply" means "to suggest or hint by something you say"; "infer" means "to conclude or deduce from something another has said". You can infer something from what someone else says, but they may not have implied it. The word "indicate" is sometimes used to exploit a semantic middle ground. For example: "The Minister indicated the Government would adopt the measure." But did he intend this meaning, or has the reporter merely inferred it?

important

If you report something is "important", remember to say why and to whom.

indescribable

It sounds lame, especially for a reporter, to say something is "indescribable". Describing is our job, so find a way.

Indigenous

Use capital letters for the words "Indigenous", "Aborigine" and "Aboriginal" when referring to the original habitants of Australia and their descendants. The words "Aborigine" and "Aboriginal" should never be abbreviated, even in story slugs. "Torres Strait Islander" should be used in full and not shortened to TSI in story slugs.

"Indigenous Australians" is the preferred collective term for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

Note: In its generic sense, "indigenous" needs no capital. For example, "the kookaburra is an indigenous bird".

industrial action

A catch-all term that can confuse. If you mean "strike", "sit-in", "lock-out", "go-slow", then say so. Be specific. Avoid the expression "strike action".

ingenious/ingenuous

Ingenious means "showing inventiveness". Ingenuous means "being open and frank", but is acquiring a pejorative sense of "artless" or "naive". "Disingenuous" means "insincere".

interviewing

Have a plan. Beware of asking more than one question at a time, it gives the interviewee the chance to answer only one part.

Listen to answers and be prepared to abandon your plan. Remain calm and impartial. Don't hector or lead the interviewee. Keep questions brief and relevant.

Get into the habit of doing all interviews as though for broadcast (recording the questions and answers). This trains you to ask succinct questions and keep the interview moving forward. It also allows a news interview to be used in longer-form outlets, such as Radio Current Affairs and Local Radio.

It is unlawful in Australia to record telephone conversations without the consent of the person who is to be recorded. Make your intention clear before beginning the interview.

[See: **legal reporting**, **Q&A**]

Ireland

The name "Ireland" should not be used to refer to "Northern Ireland". The two names are not interchangeable. Northern Ireland is part of Britain. Ireland is not.

ironic

A word that is overused, or used incorrectly. Try to avoid it. It does not mean "strange", "coincidental" or "curious". "Irony" is an expression in which the literal meaning is the opposite or a contradiction of what is intended.

jargon

From governments, doctors, police, scientists, economists, the military and many other groups comes an avalanche of circumlocutions called "jargon". They're all to be avoided, or at least treated with great caution. Plain words make a report clearer.

[See: **clichés**, **conversational language**]

judgmental language

Be aware of words and expressions that impute motives or states of mind to people, or appear to be passing judgement on their actions.

An example:

"As protesters demonstrated in front of the building, the Prime Minister fled through a side door." Did he flee? Unless the action is unambiguous it is better to simply say he "left" through a side door.

justify

A word that is too often misused as a synonym for "defended" or "explained". Justify means "to show something was right or warranted".

[See: **refute**]

Knights, Dames and Ladies

If John Smith has been knighted, the convention is to call him Sir John Smith or Sir John, but not Sir Smith. The same applies to dames: Dame Kiri Te Kanawa (Dame Kiri), Dame Mary Gilmore (Dame Mary). But the wife of Sir John Smith, Jane Smith, should be referred to as Lady Smith, not Lady Jane.

labelling of groups and individuals

The ABC takes no editorial stand in its programming, and its journalism is accurate, impartial and objective.

We should take care with labelling groups or individuals, and when we do label them, it is in a factual, relevant and consistent way. This applies whether we are talking about the use of words such as terrorist, extremist, hardline, and militant, or labels such as right-wing, left-wing, conservative and radical. In most cases, it is far better to report factually on the group or individuals and what they have done, rather than apply a label which (more often than not) requires some sort of value judgement and comparison to be made.

In reviewing your copy, the key test is whether you can report on events in a clear and concise way, giving the audience all the information it needs to understand what is happening, without the use of labels. On most occasions, this will be the case.

Inevitably, there will be times when labels are needed to provide valuable information or context. In such circumstances, it is important that we rely on descriptions that are factual and accurate, and that do not involve subjective judgements. In cases where a third party has used a label to describe a group or individual, this should be made clear within the broadcast.

Apply the editorial principles on labelling consistently to all groups and individuals in a story.

[See: **AIDS**, **asylum seekers**, **assassin**, **disabilities**, **ethnicity**, **notorious**, and **terrorism**].

lay/lie

Hens "lay" eggs. People "lay" things such as carpets and tablecloths. "Lay" needs a direct object and its past form is "laid".

"Lie" (meaning "to be in a horizontal position") does not take a direct object. Its irregular forms can cause confusion. Adopt the following usage:

"Why don't you lie [not "lay"] down and have a rest". (Present tense)
"We found it lying under the bed". (Present participle)
"As he lay dying" (Past tense)
"He lied about his involvement in the war." (Past tense of the verb meaning to make a false statement.)

lead

Someone who has an "unassailable" lead cannot be overtaken. They might just have a "commanding" lead.

led

This is the spelling of the past tense of the verb "lead". The spellings are not interchangeable.

Legal Services

Seek advice on any story that may have legal implications. ABC Legal Services is there to help. If a story has been "legalled", you must always add a production note giving the name and contact of the solicitor.

News and Current Affairs management will usually decide whether to run a story when it's a matter of weighing news value against legal risk.

legal reporting

The following section sets out guidelines for some legal terminology used in legal contexts. It was put together with the assistance of ABC Legal Services.

accused
A person charged with a criminal offence.

adjourned
Where a hearing is temporarily stopped. It is not the end of the proceedings and the adjournment may be for a matter of minutes or months.

affidavit
A written statement setting out facts that may be used as a substitute for oral evidence in court.

age
In most jurisdictions, a person is treated as a child for criminal responsibility up to and including the age of 17. In Victoria and Queensland, the maximum age is 16 years.

In all jurisdictions, the law considers that a child cannot be held culpable for a crime if under 10 years of age, and a child (at least until the age of 14) cannot be convicted of a criminal offence unless it can be proven the child knew the act was seriously wrong.

The age of consent for sexual intercourse varies considerably around the country, and differs for boys and girls, and for same sex and opposite sex intercourse.

allege (allegedly, allegation)
"Allege" (and words based on it) is often over-used or used inappropriately but it can be an important word to use when covering court proceedings. The word makes clear to our audience that the matters you are reporting have yet to be proven. It's also important to remember that using "allege" does not automatically protect us for defamation.

You don't have to limit yourself to using "allege". There are other words that can be used in the context of court proceedings to make it clear what you are reporting is yet to be proven, such as "police say".

The law of defamation includes a defence for a "fair and accurate report of court proceedings (qualified privilege)" and the use of words such as allege when reporting those proceedings may assist in establishing this defence.

Allege is often used in the wrong part of a sentence. On occasions it is unnecessarily attached to facts that are not in question: "A woman has been charged following an alleged armed hold-up this afternoon at the ABC Shop in Perth."

There is no doubt about any of the reported details. An armed hold-up did occur, a woman did get charged.

amicus curiae [uh-MEE-koos KYOOH-ree-igh]
A Latin phrase which means "friend of the court". In some cases a person who is not a plaintiff or a defendant will ask permission to speak or be involved. In most circumstances this will be to present their point of view if the case has the potential to set a precedent in an area of law relevant to them.

Apprehended Domestic Violence Order ("ADVO")
An order sought when one party wants protection from someone with whom he or she has a domestic relationship, such as a relative or de facto partner.

Apprehended Violence Order ("AVO")
An order sought when one party wants protection from another person and the two parties do not have a "domestic" relationship.

arraignment
The formal appearance of an accused person in court to hear the charge (indictment) against them and plead guilty or not guilty.

burden of proof
The obligation on a party to prove a matter asserted by providing supporting evidence – for example, the burden of proving that a publication is defamatory lies with the plaintiff.

cause of action
The circumstances giving rise to a right to bring a legal action.

committal proceedings
Proceedings to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to put a person on trial for an indictable offence. While it may be OK to publish details of a committal at the time of the committal proceedings (as part of a fair and accurate report, if there are no suppression orders), leading up to and during a trial it may be a contempt to republish details discussed or reported during the earlier committal hearing.

common law
The body of legal rules and principles that have evolved through decisions made in courts based on precedent.

contempt
Generally, courts and other tribunals are open to the public, and the media can report proceedings with relative freedom. But there are limits. The law of contempt imposes restrictions to protect the right to a

fair and impartial hearing and to maintain the authority of the court. Publishing material likely to prejudice the conduct or outcome of a matter before the courts, attacking the impartiality or integrity of a judge and disobeying a court order are all clear cases of "contempt of court".

The penalties for contempt of court of court can be severe, including harsh fines and imprisonment.

Publishing photographs or drawings of an accused in crimes such as murder, assault and robbery may be in contempt of court because the identity of the accused is likely to be important in such cases. Any editorial decision to do so should only be made after consulting ABC Legal.

copyright
Copyright is a bundle of exclusive rights in relation to a work, an adaptation of a work, or other subject matter such as television and sound broadcasts.

Under Federal copyright law, exceptions are made for (among other things) uses of material for the purpose of reporting the news and for criticism and review, as long as that use is "fair". It can be difficult to assess how much copyright material can be used and still be considered fair. There is no magic number and what is considered *fair* will differ from case to case, but 10% of the whole of the copyright material may be used as a guide for what is *fair*. If in doubt, consult ABC Legal Services.

court etiquette
When entering and leaving a courtroom at least nod respectfully to the judge. Avoid any contact with an accused person. Do not speak to the judge or the jurors.

Some judges and magistrates will permit reporters to use electronic recorders for note-taking and, in rarer cases, will allow recording or filming in court for broadcast, but neither practice is generally accepted. Always check with the judge's associate, the court or the court's information officer before using a tape recorder (even for note-taking) or a camera.

courts and benches
"A" Full Bench of the High Court is two or more judges. If all seven judges of the High Court (rare cases) are sitting, it is "the Full Bench". "A/the Full *Court*" of the High Court is not correct.

"A" Full Bench of the Federal Court is normally three or five judges. Never "the Full Bench" (there are dozens of judges). "A/the Full *Court*" of the Federal Court is not correct.

"The" Full Court of the Family Court is at least four judges (never fewer than three Full Court judges, plus another Family Court judge). Never "a Full Court or Bench".

"A" Full Bench of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission is more than three and up to seven (normally at least two of the Deputy/Senior Deputy Presidents, Vice-Presidents or President and one Commissioner).

crime and punishment
Subject to the laws of defamation, there are no legal limits imposed on reporting a crime, until a person is arrested. Our rule is strict accuracy, no sensationalism and no dwelling on distressing details.

Once a person is charged, we're permitted to use the person's full name, age, address, the nature of the charge and the bare facts that would have been apparent to any observer, unless any of these matters have been suppressed or are otherwise the subject of a reporting restriction, e.g. where the accused is a child or it is a sexual offence. Anything else that may prejudice the conduct or outcome of the proceedings (for example "the man was arrested while trying to leave the country") must be omitted.

The police may be the source of the charged person's name, and the name may be used before the charged person's appearance before a bail court. In such cases, special care must be taken to ensure accuracy because, until the court appearance, such information is not privileged.

If you break the rules of reporting contempt of court is not avoided simply by omitting a charged person's name and referring to the person as "the accused" because at some stage that person will have been named or may be identifiable from other details. Also don't refer to "the accused" as "the offender", as this implies guilt.

Once a person appears in court, we may only use his or her name, age, address, occupation, the charge and what is said and admitted in evidence in open court. We should identify the accused by their full and correct name, together with any other identifying details, to avoid a possible mistaken identity (and hence risk of defamation). Once we start reporting a case, make certain we cover it fairly and accurately, and report the result.

It is always safest for a journalist to be present for the whole proceedings that are being reported, as another person or publisher's account may be wrong, unfair or lack balance. Reliance on third party accounts would be no protection against a contempt of court charge. You must always ensure any commentary on court proceedings is cleared by ABC Legal Services and is presented clearly separate to the report of those proceedings.

Problems occur when reporters try to dress up a court report with a sensational introduction that goes beyond a fair and accurate report of proceedings; leave out formal but essential detail about the proceedings; or include material that has not been given in evidence or said in open court and before the jury, if there is one. Don't do it.

defamation
Defamation occurs when published material, identifying someone, conveys a meaning that tends to lower that person's reputation in the eyes of reasonable members of the community. A court may decide a person has been defamed but that a defence has been successfully argued by the publisher. So, in reporting the outcome, you'll probably find both sides will claim victory.

defendant
A person against whom a civil proceeding is brought.

de novo
Latin term meaning "anew" and refers to hearings which are to be started over again, with the new hearing not taking into account any aspect of the first hearing.

evidence
Data tending to support a fact at issue in proceedings – for example, the testimony of a witness or an original document.

examination in chief
When legal counsel calls their own witness to the stand and then asks them questions. If counsel for the other party wishes to ask questions of the other party's witnesses, this is called "cross examination".

ex parte [eks PAH-tay]
This refers to a person or party who is not present in the court while the case continues. For example, one party may go to the Supreme Court looking for an injunction without the other party knowing or being present in the courtroom.

for mention only
A term used in all courts referring to sittings where a date is set or other administrative matters are set. No evidence is presented at "mention hearings".

indictment
An "indictment" is a formal written accusation charging a person with an offence to be tried by jury. (In Victoria it is called a "presentment".) An "indictable offence" is a serious crime that can be tried by jury. This is contrasted with a "summary offence", which is a minor criminal offence heard before a magistrate without a jury.

"I'll withdraw that"
Where a barrister or solicitor has asked a question or begun to ask a question but then decides not to put the question forward. When the barrister or solicitor says, "I'll withdraw that" the court considers that the question was never asked. Because it was "never asked", it should be reported with great care, fairly and accurately (which, if you do report the question, would mean indicating in the report that the question was withdrawn).

injunction
A court order requiring a person either to do a thing or to refrain from doing something.

interim injunction
A temporary order issued by a judge or magistrate stopping something from happening.

interlocutory [in-tuh-LOK-yuh-tree]
Essentially means "along the way". Covers procedural steps or temporary orders.

interrogatories [in-tuh-ROG-uh-treez]
Questions posed by both sides in a civil case before a hearing starts. The questions reduce the amount of time that will need to be spent in court and a party must answer the questions or seek permission from a judge not to answer the questions.

judgement, sentence and verdict
A "judgement" is a judge's decision on matters that are normally left up to a judge (for example, appeals and civil cases).
A "sentence" is a judge's determination of the penalty to be imposed on a convicted person.
A "verdict" is made by a jury or a coroner. In the case of a jury verdict, it is a decision on whether or not a case has been proven against an

accused person (in a criminal proceeding), or a decision on whether or not a civil case has been made out (in a civil proceeding).

judges and magistrates

Magistrates

First reference: "Magistrate Michael Jones", then "Mr Jones said"; "the Magistrate said".

District and County Court Judges

First reference: "Judge Jane West", then "Judge West said"; "the Judge said".

Senior Judges (State and Territory Supreme Courts, the Federal Court, the High Court)

First reference: "Justice Rex Chong", then "Justice Chong said", "the Judge said".

Chief Judges/Chief Justices (High Court, Supreme Court, Federal Court, Family Court, District and County Courts)

First reference: "Chief Justice Mary Wilson", then "the Chief Justice said".

In a story, employ the definite article, for example, "the Chief Justice of the Federal Court".

plaintiff
A person bringing a civil action.

plea
In legal reporting, the word "plea" should not be used as a synonym for "appeal" or "request". And don't refer to people in court "entering a plea". Strictly, it's the court that "enters a plea". However, "the accused did not plead" is correct.

precedent
The basis of common law or judge-made law in which cases are determined according to what has been decided in similar cases in the past.

privilege and protected reports
A witness in a court case or a politician speaking in parliament has the right or "privilege" to make defamatory statements even if they are false and malicious.

However, the media's privilege to report such proceedings is "qualified". That is, this defence to defamation permits only a "fair and accurate report" of proceedings of parliament, open courts, Royal Commissions and in some other circumstances. This protection extends to official reports and papers published in parliament and documents put into evidence in court, but **not** to media releases or other statements made outside courts or parliament.

The media's right must be exercised with care, particularly:

- to clearly identify that what is being reported took place in court or parliament;
- where possible, to report directly rather than relying on second-hand information (from other journalists, lawyers or police) about what happened in court or parliament;
- to ensure court documents being quoted have been put into evidence;
- not to confine a report to one part of proceedings if another part contains a denial, disproof or contrary position;
- not to add information, jump to conclusions, extrapolate or misquote any part of court or parliamentary proceedings.

Failure to do so may lead to the loss of privilege, which means you would not be able to rely on the defence of "protected report" if required to defend a defamation action.

We must also not allow the possibility of a mistaken identity to arise. To do so would be defamatory and indefensible as a protected report of court proceedings. That's why, in court cases, we give details in full, "27-year-old John James Smith of Bigtown".

procedural fairness
This refers to the minimum standard of fairness to be applied in the adjudication of a dispute. The term is used to encapsulate (a) the right of a person to a hearing and (b) the entitlement for a hearing to be conducted without bias.

rape
It is worth noting that in NSW the criminal offence previously known as rape is now called "aggravated sexual assault". In all other states, except Western Australia and the ACT, the statute books retain the offence of "rape" in some form.

remanded
"Remanded" means a person has court proceedings pending. It doesn't necessarily mean they are held in custody. If a person has been taken into custody, you can say that they have been "remanded in custody".

seek leave to appear
This is where counsel for an interested party asks to be allowed to address the judge or magistrate during the hearing.

statement of claim
One of the ways in which a civil action is started, consisting of the documents setting out the plaintiff's claim.

statement of facts
In relation to police involved in a criminal case, it is the police allegation of what happened at a crime scene. In other words, the police version. It should not be treated as the truth. It is only one side of the story.

strict liability
Refers to liability without the need to prove fault, negligence or intent.

sub judice [sub JOOH-duh-see]
In short, sub judice refers to a matter that is still under consideration by a court. It applies to both civil and criminal proceedings. Contempt of court is always relevant when a matter is "sub judice" and reports need to be checked to make sure they do not prejudice the conduct or outcome of the matter before the courts.

voir dire [vwah-DEER]
This refers to a case within a case and is heard in the absence of a jury. It involves an argument in court on an issue to decide which way a case or particular issue should be run. Anything said in voir dire cannot be reported. Proceedings in the Northern Territory concerning the disappearance of Peter Falconio involved a voir dire hearing.

licence/license

"Licence" is the noun and "license" is the verb.

live

We can overdo the use of the word "live", as in "so-and-so joins me now live from Baghdad". With live crosses now such a regular feature of our radio and TV programs, the "live" line is increasingly clichéd. And, of course, it is also redundant, if we have "now" and "live" in the same breath.

local government

Local government uses many titles that differ from city to municipality to shire. Check locally to ensure that "Mayor", "President", "Alderman", "Councillor" or "Commissioner" is used correctly.

major

One of the most over-worked adjectives in our bulletins and programs and usually unnecessary. If you must use a qualifier, a thesaurus will list dozens of other ways to say "important".

Maori

Indigenous New Zealanders are no longer referred to as "Maoris". The singular and plural form is "Maori".

meanwhile

It should not be used to link unrelated events. It is used by some as a way to move to another related point in a story and is unnecessary. When a transition device is required, there are usually more subtle ways. The same goes for "however" and "but" at the start of a sentence, especially the latter.

[See: **but**]

media releases

Nothing has done more to ruin good reporting than the "handout". It should be recognised that handouts are not necessarily designed to give information, but to disguise it. Find out all you can about what is **not** in the handout. When you have exhausted your curiosity, you will have finished the job.

The onus is on us to check the authenticity and accuracy of information we run in stories. That includes checking back with the source of a media release to ensure it's genuine. The title "media release" on a document dropping off a fax machine does not necessarily mean it is a story.

Some organisations have taken to issuing video and/or audio packages. Treat these with care, though they may be a source of pictures for a television story, suitably supered (for example, "Defence vision"; "Advertisement"). Audio sourced this way also should be identified as such. Normally we would not use "interviews" packaged in this way. We seek to ask our own questions. An exception may be if the interviewee is genuinely unavailable and the content is essentially factual. If in doubt, refer up.

[See: **attribution**]

meningococcal/pneumococcal

These words are adjectives. Therefore, although you can refer to "pneumococcal disease", it cannot be termed the "the deadly disease pneumococcal". The same applies to the word "meningococcal".

metric

Australia's standard for weights and measures.

For quick reference:

an inch = 2.54 centimetres
a mile = 1.61 kilometres
an ounce = 28.3 grams
a pound = 454 grams
a ton = 1.02 tonnes
an acre = 0.405 of a hectare
a bushel = 0.0364 of a cubic metre
a fluid ounce = 28.4 millilitres
a pint = 568 millilitres
a gallon = 4.55 litres.

But there are exceptions: sailors and aviators measure distance in "nautical miles" and calculate speed in "knots"; a knot is one nautical mile (6080ft) an hour (so don't write "16 knots an hour"); pilots measure altitude in "feet"; aircraft and ships specify engine output in "horsepower"; horses are measured in "hands"; and bullion dealers weigh gold by the "troy ounce". Do not convert these into metric equivalents.

military

The Australian Defence Force Command, based in Canberra, is headed by "the Chief of the Defence Force" who is also the principal military adviser to the Minister for Defence. Next in command is "the Vice Chief of the Defence Force".

Reporting to them are "the Chief of Army", "the Chief of Navy" and "the Chief of Air Force" (there is no definite article before the word for the branch of the military). Give the full title once, for example, "the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Peter Uniform"; "Lance Corporal Mary Jones". After that we say "General Uniform", or "the general"; "Corporal Jones". The Australian pronunciation of "lef-TEN-uhnt" (not "looh-TEN-uhnt") is adopted, **except** in the Navy ("luh-TEN-uhnt").

Usually it's not necessary to retain the "Royal" in "Royal Australian Navy" and "Royal Australian Air Force". The briefer forms, "Australian Navy" and "Australian Air Force" are acceptable.

Other points to note: a ship's captain does not necessarily hold the rank of "Captain", and sailors always serve "in", not "on", a ship. A "cruiser" is not a "frigate" and a "destroyer" is not a "battleship", but they're all "warships". Say "HMAS Melbourne" the first time (not "the HMAS Melbourne"), then shorten it to "Melbourne", as in "on board Melbourne".

The term "officer" correctly describes only commissioned officers. Most military personnel are not officers, but other ranks. Use the generic term "soldier" or "Defence Force member", unless the rank is known. In most cases, "soldier" or "sailor" is better than the stuffy "military personnel".

Ranks:

(The correct abbreviated form for TV supers is in brackets.)

Navy Admiral
Vice Admiral
Rear Admiral
Commodore
Captain (Capt)
Commander (Cdr)
Lieutenant Commander (Lt Cdr)
Lieutenant (Lt)
Sub Lieutenant (Sub Lt)
Warrant Officer (WO)
Chief Petty Officer (CPO)
Petty Officer (PO)
Leading Seaman (LS)

Air Force Air Chief Marshal
Air Marshal
Air Vice Marshal
Air Commodore
Group Captain (Group Capt)
Wing Commander (Wing Cdr)
Squadron Leader (Sqd Leader)
Flight Lieutenant (Flight Lt)
Flying Officer (FO)
Pilot Officer (PO)
Warrant Officer (WO)
Flight Sergeant (Flight Sgt)

Sergeant (Sgt)
Corporal (Cpl)

Army General
Lieutenant General (Lt Gen)
Major General (Maj Gen)
Brigadier (Brig)
Colonel (Col)
Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col)
Major (Maj)
Captain (Capt)
Lieutenant (Lt)
2nd Lieutenant (Lt)
Warrant Officer Cl. 1 (WO)
Warrant Officer Cl. 2 (WO)
Staff Sergeant (Sgt)
Sergeant (Sgt)
Corporal/Bombardier (Cpl)

miracle

Don't use it to describe something that is "wonderful" or "amazing". It refers to something that can be attributed only to a supernatural cause.

missing verbs

Take care in how you structure sentences, and use verbs correctly. It's okay to use a phrase like "the home side proving too strong for the visitors", provided it's attached to a complete sentence. For example: "Australia won the match, the home side proving too strong for the visitors."

What's not acceptable is the following sort of thing: "Australia won the match. The home side proving too strong for the visitors. Joe Bloggs again showing his scoring ability. The team celebrating another big win."

mitigate/militate

"Mitigate" is sometimes used by mistake for "militate". "Mitigate" means "to make something less extreme". It's often used in reference to the severity of a punishment or the intensity of heat, anger or pain. "Mitigating circumstances" are those that reduce blame.

"Militate (against)" means "to be a force (against)" or "to work (against)".

names

It has always been necessary to spell names correctly, but errors hidden on

radio and television in a phonetic spelling damage our credibility when content is published online.

[See: **first names**, **spelling**]

narrow victory

A win by 100 to 99, in sport or politics, is self-evidently a narrow one. Avoid the obvious.

national versions

We are a national and an international service, as well as a local service, so your stories may be seen or heard anywhere. References to places, people and events need to take this into account. Producers are on the frontline in this matter. A story that says "the State is facing a week of industrial disruption" is misleading if written about Victoria, but heard in Queensland. Relevant background and clear references to locations must be provided.

Don't refer, in a story written about another place/state, to "their" law or "their minister". The story may be used interstate and will sound silly to the local audience.

next-of-kin

Before naming people killed or injured in any incident, be sure their relatives have been told. Only when someone well-known is involved would we consider whether public interest comes before the family's private grief.

[See: **Indigenous**, **grief**]

newspaper style

Print-style expressions are everywhere, still. As in: "Mr Collins, who spent most of the day undergoing pelvic surgery, is said to be in a critical but stable condition." Why the commas and pauses and official-speak? "Mr Collins had pelvic surgery during the day and is now critical but stable."

notorious

Use with care. Commercial networks might refer, for example, to Cabramatta as the "notorious drug area". We don't.

numbers

Consider whether you have to be precise with a number, or if the meaning requires only a round figure.

Few listeners are likely to grasp this: "A per capita cost of 874-thousand 463-dollars and 24-cents will be spread over the city's two million ratepayers."

In most cases, use round numbers (for example, "nearly half a million", rather than "489-thousand"). If a precise figure is essential to the meaning, it may be necessary to repeat it.

Say "about", rather than "approximately" or "some" (the latter is non-conversational, formal-speak). Say "more than 500", not "over 500".

The mathematical rule for rounding fractions is: round any half or more up to the nearest whole number; and round amounts less than half down to the nearest whole number. (For example, fractions between 1.5 and 1.9 become two; fractions between 1.1 and 1.4 become one.) But use judgement before rounding numbers. In a story, it would rarely be appropriate to say "two per cent of the population has AIDS", for example, if the precise figure were 1.6 per cent.

When writing whole numbers: one to nine should be in words; for 10 to 999, use figures; one thousand should also be in words; after that use a combination of the two, for example, 400-thousand.

There are still more ways to confuse listeners with numbers:

- **Overdoing them** : "After deliberating for 19 days, the jury of seven men and four women soon after three o'clock announced its verdict that 21-year-old Ernest John Stiletto was guilty of having stabbed his 37-year-old wife four-and-a-half years ago".

- **Putting them first in a sentence:** "Thirteen votes separated the candidates". The listener can easily miss the first words of a news item. In some cases, it is best to avoid starting a sentence with a number.

[See: **conversational language**, **sport**]

obituaries

Obituaries for prominent people are held in each state. Know where to find the list in iNews.

online

Many of the stories written for Radio and TV now appear online and reporters' scripts are used as the source material for the online service. This makes it more important than ever to take care with spelling and grammar.

The name of the talent should be spelt correctly and consistently in every story, as should place names. Transcripts are a vital part of the online service and every care should be taken when transcribing the comments of interviewees.

[See: **Section B - Online News Style Notes**]

off the record

Be aware of what you are agreeing to by accepting material off the record. In dealing with an informant you should confirm whether information is being offered on or off the record (and for attribution or not), and seek, whenever possible, to have it placed on the record (and for attribution).

[See: **attribution**, **corroboration**, **sources**]

offensive language

We don't use language in bulletins or programs simply for shock value or use language that could be reasonably expected to give offence. Just because such language occurs in actuality does not lessen our responsibility for its appearance in a story.

There are cases when we may broadcast offensive language, if it's integral to the story or of news consequence itself. Such cases must be referred to your EP for prior approval. A warning should be given to the audience.

[See: **violence**, **warnings**]

only

Misplacing "only" can greatly affect the meaning. Put it as close as you can to the phrase it modifies and take care that you don't turn the sentence into a comment. "He was sentenced to only three years jail" suggests we think he got off lightly. Note the following differences:

"Only David drives the family car". (No one else is allowed.)
"David only drives the family car". (He does nothing else.)
"David drives only the family car". (He doesn't drive any other.)
"David drives the family's only car". (There's just one car in the family.)

or/and

Not "a boat or a car is a mode of transport", but "a boat and a car are modes of transport". That is, items (whether singular or plural) joined with "and" require a plural verb, but when naming one or another singular subject the verb remains singular.

Order of Australia

There are four levels of appointment, in descending order: Companion (AC), Officer (AO), Member (AM) and Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM).

The Order of Australia is not an award. It recognises people for achievement or for meritorious service. People are not awarded an Order of Australia. A person is made a Companion (AC), an Officer (AO) or a Member (AM) of the Order of Australia, or receives a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM)."

our

As in "our cities", "our troops", "our swimmers", "our weather", "our dollar". The use of "our" can imply ABC ownership of whatever you're referring to, as well as sound overly familiar. We should remain unattached and dispassionate in the language we use.

Say "Australian cities", "Olympic swimmers", "the Adelaide weather", "the Australian dollar".

over

Do not use "over" (which means "on top of") when you mean "more than" (which means "greater than").

pair

When it refers to two people, "pair" is best treated as a plural. Otherwise it can sound silly or dehumanising. The same applies to terms that refer to two or more people. So: "the pair were arrested"; "the pair are among six players"; "the Bali nine have been charged".

passerby/passersby

The plural of "passerby" is "passersby" (not "passerbys").

pending

It means "awaiting an outcome of some process that has already begun". "Impending", on the other hand, means "something about to happen". For the sake of conversational English, avoid both.

per cent

Two words – although "percentage" is one. The symbol "%" is to be used only in graphics, not copy.

When a figure goes from 50 per cent to 60 per cent it rises "ten percentage points", not by 10 per cent.

[See: **numbers**]

phenomenon

This word and its plural often get misused. "Phenomena" is the plural but many use it when they mean phenomenon. "A phenomena" is incorrect. It should be two or more phenomena.

plurals and singulars

Take care your copy does not mix up singulars and plurals.

If the subject of a sentence is singular it takes a singular verb. A plural subject takes a plural verb. Two singular subjects linked by "and" require a plural verb.

So don't muddle them. For example, "the police say (plural) its (singular) numbers are down"; "the number (singular) of farming families have (plural) declined"; "a series (singular) of three matches are (plural) being played". This kind of mistake is common.

Groups, communities and governments are to be treated as single entities unless, of course, they have a plural name. Don't say, "the Brisbane Bullets is maintaining its lead"; "Victoria police is recruiting officers".

Other typical mistakes: "she's working with MBF as an advocate of their program"; "the International Cricket Council says the money raised has exceeded their expectations". These should read "its program" and "its expectations".

"The Australian swimming team has had their first training session." This should be "its first session", but sport often allows us more leeway to expand naturally: "the Australian swimmers have had their first", or a variation.

"The couple was killed when their plane crashed". This presents an awkward usage challenge. We must not mix up "was" and "their" in that sentence, but it is certainly not acceptable to say "its" plane crashed. It is better to find a different construction for these instances, such as "the two were killed when their plane crashed".

The same applies to the singular/plural treatment of the likes of "family". In the strict sense, it is singular. But we can't say "police are searching for clues

after a family of three was found dead in its home in Sydney's north". More comfortably, that sentence should read along the lines of "police are searching for clues after three members of a family were found dead in their home in Sydney's north".

In our style, "media" is plural (because the word is the plural form of "medium"), "public" is singular (there is no such word as "publics").

Be consistent and use common sense.

post-mortem

Literally, it means "after death", thus the common expression "post-mortem examination". However, "post-mortem" used alone has come to mean the same thing, and is acceptable. "Autopsy" may also be used.

potable POHT-uh-buhl], not [POT-uh-buhl]

"Potable" means "drinkable" or "suitable for drinking". It has nothing to do with pots or mean the same thing as "portable".

prescribe/proscribe

Doctors "prescribe" medicine. To "proscribe" is to "condemn or prohibit".

prevaricate/procrastinate

"Prevaricate" means to "speak or act evasively". It does not mean to "hesitate". "Procrastinate" means "to put off" or "delay unnecessarily).

pronunciation

When copy contains difficult or unfamiliar words, provide a precise pronunciation guide at the top of the page. Be guided by SCOSE and cut and paste the reference if necessary. If you don't know it, don't guess.

It's useful when doing an interview to ask the talent to pronounce his or her full name on tape, and keep it for reference.

[See: **SCOSE**]

protagonist/antagonist

A "protagonist" is the main character in a story, someone who supports or advocates an issue. An "antagonist" is an adversary.

punctuation

Most problems occur in the misuse of the comma. There are two guiding principles. Is a comma necessary to protect the meaning of the sentence? In normal conversation, would you pause where you've put a comma?

Read your copy aloud and think about the punctuation and emphasis.

[See: **apostrophe**]

puns

The occasional and judicious use of puns can brighten up our writing. But it is easy to overdo. Their overuse can be grating.

Q & As

A good Q & A needs preparation and wherever possible should be preceded by a discussion between the reporter and the presenter about the line of questioning before going to air. Reporters must ensure they keep control of the content of Q & As, whether conducted live into our own bulletins/programs or with Local Radio presenters.

When you get to a story location, don't do a Q & A before you know what's going on. The rule is: Get the story, and then report it. Often the best way to get an initial report to air is with a Q & A – and the first outlet may be a Local Radio program – but reporters must not allow a commitment to a Q & A to prevent them filing a story for the next scheduled Radio News bulletin.

Be especially careful when doing Q & As about court cases in progress.

[See: **interviewing**, **legal reporting**]

quotes

Take care not to run accusations or opinions as matters of fact. "North Korea has blamed the US for escalating tensions with its bullying tactics" contains an accusation that must be qualified along the lines of "what it [North Korea] says are American bullying tactics".

Similarly, make clear who the source is for language that is judgemental. Rather than "the Premier has apologised unreservedly for the blunder of allowing the tax change", to emphasise who used the terms "unreservedly" and "blunder" write: "the Premier says he apologises unreservedly for what he calls the blunder".

Sometimes it's appropriate for a reporter to provide interpretation or analysis

(always grounded in the facts). But we don't advance our personal views or opinions. We must always make the source of an opinion clear, so it cannot be perceived as coming from the ABC.

Any direct quote included in radio or television copy needs to include quotation marks, as this material often finds its way into online stories.

However, great care is needed when including direct quotes to ensure that it is obvious to the audience that they *are* quotes. In most cases, the use of actuality is the best way of including quotes, or in the case of television, the inclusion of the transcript of a direct quote in graphics.

Where this is not possible, it should be clear that the material is a direct quote by the way it is written, or through careful reading by the presenter.

There is usually a better way of presenting a direct quote than by using the words "quote" and "unquote".

[See: **attribution**, **editorialising**, **interviewing**, **punctuation**, **Q & As**]

rampage/spree

A "rampage" is a bout of violent, destructive behaviour. A "spree" is a lively frolic. So don't say "shooting spree".

reaction

Many of our stories deal with reactions to things. Public familiarity with the original event or decision will vary enormously. Give the necessary background.

[See: **editorialising**]

re-enactments

Re-enactments of events should be used sparingly. They will be clearly identified as such and presented in a way that will not mislead audiences.

recreational/party drugs

Avoid using the terms "recreational drugs" or "party drugs" unless they are attributed to someone. There are two types of drugs, legal and illegal. No drugs are officially labelled as "recreational" or "party drugs", so the terms can be seen as a social judgement. It makes it seem acceptable (if not glamorous) to use the drugs. Be specific and name the drug. Is it cocaine, amphetamines, ecstasy?

referendum

A Bill to alter the Constitution, once passed by Parliament, must go to a referendum. To become law, it must be approved by a majority of States and by a majority of all electors voting. In determining the result, the outcome in a Territory is not counted towards "a majority of States", but the vote is included in the "majority of electors" total.

reform

The word means to "improve by alteration". It is not a synonym for "change". What some people describe as "abortion law reform", for example, others regard as "a licence to kill"; what the Treasurer calls "tax reform" might be considered, in some quarters, quite the opposite. By choosing instead to say "change" or "alteration" we don't beg the question of whether or not it is for the better.

refute

It means "to prove something (a statement, theory, a charge) false or incorrect". It does not mean "denied", "rejected", "disagreed with", "dismissed", "ridiculed" or "repudiated".

If we use "refute", we are effectively accepting and endorsing one side of an argument.

[See: **justify**]

regularly

Use it to suggest that the interval between things or events is even (equal), not that something "happens often".

reporting religion

Religious affairs offer many pitfalls in terminology, concepts and doctrines. Here are some guidelines to help with clear and accurate reporting of religious issues.

> **Allah**
> The name for God in Islam. It is the preferred use if reporting Muslim beliefs or practices.
>
> **Anglican Communion**
> A worldwide grouping of churches that recognise the primacy of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is variously called:

- The Anglican Church (in Australia)
- The Church of England (in England)
- The Episcopal Church (in USA)
- The Church of the Province of South Africa (in South Africa).

Anglican Church in Australia
This is the proper name - not "of" Australia, but "in".

archbishop
The head of a metropolitan diocese of the Catholic, Anglican or Orthodox Churches, and the senior bishop of that state.
Refer to "The Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Reverend Peter Watson", or "Anglican Archbishop Peter Watson of Melbourne", then "Archbishop Watson".

archdiocese [ahch-DIGH-uh-suhs]
A term used mostly in the Catholic Church to refer to a regional unit of church government, headed by an archbishop. In Australia, the centres of Catholic archdioceses are Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, and the Canberra-Goulburn region. The Anglican Church does not have archdioceses, just dioceses.

ayatollah [igh-uh-TOL-uh]
An Iranian term for a Muslim teacher and lawyer who has great spiritual authority in a Shiite Muslim community. The Supreme Leader of Iran has the title Ayatollah.

baptism
A ritual of initiation, usually into the Christian Church, using water by sprinkling or immersion. It is usually open to infants and adults, although some groups baptise only adults.

Baptist Union
This refers to the Baptist churches; there are State and national unions (for example, the Baptist Union of Queensland, the Baptist Union of Australia). Baptist congregations are autonomous but form a state or national union to co-ordinate their work and collaborate on joint projects.

bar mitzvah/bat mitzvah [bah-MITS-vuh/bat-MITS-vuh]
The first is the ceremony in which Jewish boys, at 13, are initiated as adults, the second is the equivalent ceremony for Jewish girls at 13.

Bible
Only Christianity and Judaism use the term "Bible" for their sacred scripture. In Christianity, it includes the books of the Old and New

Testaments. In Judaism, the Hebrew or Jewish Bible is roughly equivalent to the Christian Old Testament. Some also call it the Torah, but the Torah specifically refers to the first five books of the Bible.

bishop
A senior ministry in Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox Churches. Some Protestant Churches also have bishops. Refer to: "the Catholic Bishop of Rockhampton, the Right Reverend Jim Smith", or "Catholic Bishop Jim Smith of Rockhampton", then "Bishop Smith".

Blasphemy
Speaking against God or expressing contempt for God in words or actions. In some legal jurisdictions it is defined as a crime specifically against the Christian religion. The law is being repealed in many places, superseded by provisions in anti-vilification legislation.

Buddhism
There are many sects of Buddhism, ranging from the evangelical to the meditative and sequestered. The main streams are Therevada or Hinayana, mainly practised in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos; Mahayana, mainly practised in Nepal, China, Korea, Japan and Tibet; and Zen, a Japanese Buddhist tradition.

"Monks", who have as their superior an "abbot" or chief monk, occupy Buddhist temples.

burka (also **burkha**)
A long, loose garment covering the whole body worn in public by some Muslim women.
[See: chador, hijab.]

canonisation
A process in which the Catholic or Orthodox Church formally declares a dead person a saint. The stage before this is known as beatification [bee-at-uh-fuh-KAY-shuhn].

cardinals
After the Pope, these are the highest officials of the Catholic Church, and are personally chosen by the Pope. The cardinals meet to elect the Pope (called a conclave), and can be called to a meeting to act as the Pope's advisers (called a consistory). Refer to: "the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell", then "Cardinal Pell" in the second reference.

Catholic
"Roman Catholic" is used only where the context requires a distinction

between Roman Catholics and members of other churches that call themselves "Catholic".

chador [CHAH-duh]
This is a dark-coloured cloth worn around the head and upper body by Muslim women, leaving only the face exposed.

[See: **burka**, **hijab**.]

Christian titles
A common mistake is the omission of "the" and a first name from the title "Reverend". It is correct to say "the Reverend John Jones". He may be called "Mr Jones" after the first mention. It is not correct to say "Reverend Jones" or "the Reverend Jones" any more than it is to say "Sir Jones", instead of "Sir John Jones".

It is not a requirement always to use the full titles that follow, but when they occur they must be applied correctly.

Anglican: Archbishop ("The Most Reverend"); Bishop ("The Right Reverend"); Dean ("The Very Reverend"); Priest or Minister ("The Reverend"). After the first reference, say "Archbishop Grange"; "Bishop Mitre".

Catholic: The Pope ("His Holiness, the Pope"); Cardinal ("His Eminence, Cardinal"); Archbishop ("His Grace, the Archbishop of Melbourne"); Bishop ("His Lordship, Bishop"). After the first reference, say "Pope Benedict"; "Cardinal O'Brien"; "Father Collins".

Conference of Churches/Council of Churches
A grouping of church denominations to work collaboratively on various projects, present a united voice on social issues, and work for unity among churches. The National Council of Churches in Australia is Australia's main national ecumenical (inter-church) grouping of 15 church denominations, based in Sydney. The World Council of Churches is a global fellowship of more than 300 church denominations, based in Geneva.

creationism/creation science
A movement that embraces a literal interpretation of the Bible's Genesis 1 (relating to the six-day creation) as an explanation for the origins of the universe.

cult
One of its meanings refers to a religious movement characterised by unorthodox teachings, separatism, authoritarian leadership, secrecy and a requirement for total commitment from its followers.

Be careful in using the word "cult". It is a loaded term and almost always regarded as pejorative. Do not presume to label any group a cult, unless it is widely held by experts to be one (such as Heaven's Gate or Aum Shinrikyo). If a reputable person or group uses that label to describe such a group, you could use the term, provided it is attributed.

[See: **sect**]

Dalai Lama
The spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists and the former religious and secular leader of Tibet, now in exile. Always use the full term (not "the Dalai" or "the Lama").

dean
The senior minister in charge of a cathedral. Because the cathedral is the "mother church" of a diocese, the dean is often referred to as the Dean of the city rather than the specific cathedral, such as "the Anglican Dean of Sydney". Because the same city will often have both a Catholic and an Anglican cathedral, be sure to identify which dean you're talking about (don't just say "the Dean of Sydney" – there are two of them). Refer to "the Anglican Dean of Brisbane, the Very Reverend John Smith", then "Dean Smith".

diocese/dioceses [DIGH-uh-suhs/DIGH-uh-seez]
A regional unit of church government, headed by a bishop. The plural is dioceses.

Eastern Orthodox Church
A family of self-governing churches united by their recognition of the primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Also called simply "Orthodox Churches".

ecumenical movement
A global movement among Christian denominations to heal historic divisions and work towards practical unity of the church. Its international focus is through the World Council of Churches and regional ecumenical councils (Australia is in the region covered by the Christian Conference of Asia).

evangelical
Refers to preaching of the Gospel with the aim of religious conversion. A label used to describe a style of Christianity which is theologically and (generally) socially conservative, often based on a literal interpretation of the Bible, salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, and the need for personal conversion.

fatwa
A religious ruling issued by a recognised Islamic institution or scholar in accordance with Islamic law. Because Muslims are a diverse global community, and Islam does not have a central authority like a Pope, fatwas do not necessarily bind those Muslims who do not accept the authority of the issuing agent. Fatwas may be issued for any number of reasons, ranging from a person's actions or behaviour to communal responses to outside threats.

fundamentalist
This term must be used with care. It has different meanings in different religions. In Christian circles, where it emerged, it denotes the belief that the Bible is literally inspired by God and therefore infallible on all matters of doctrine and history. In Islam, it is identified with calls for Sharia Law, conservative Muslim political and social teaching, and opposition to Christianity and the West. However, its use as shorthand for any religious group involved in anti-Western political agitation, particularly in India and in Muslim countries, is sloppy.

Religious people or groups who are seen to be fervent, fanatical, violent, reactionary, militant, political or anti-Western are not necessarily fundamentalist, and vice versa. Avoid using "fundamentalist" unless you can justify it in terms of its religious meaning for the relevant religion.

guru
A spiritual teacher or guide in Hinduism.

halal
In Islam, this refers to something that is religiously acceptable, especially food (equivalent to Jewish "kosher").

hijab [huh-JAHB]
A head covering, such as a scarf or veil, worn by some Muslim women in public. Hijab is also the word for the religious code governing the wearing of such clothing.

imam [i-MAHM]
This has two meanings in Islam. In Sunni communities (the majority of Muslims in Australia), it refers to a local religious leader and teacher who leads prayers and preaches at a mosque. In Shiite communities, it refers to an agent of divine illumination, one of whom will come in every age to make the truth of Mohammed contemporary.

intelligent design (ID)
The intelligent design movement holds that life forms are too complex to have been formed by natural processes and must have been fashioned by a higher intelligence. The higher intelligence is never officially identified but most adherents believe it is God. It is essentially a form of creationism and people who support it are opposed to Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. There have been moves in the United States to have intelligent design taught in schools.

[See: **creationism/creation science**]

Islam
The Muslim religion. Its deity is Allah. Mohammed is its founder and prophet. The main groups are Sunni and Shiite [see references to these elsewhere in this list].

jihad
In general, this refers to a Muslim struggle on behalf of a principle. It also means waging holy war in self-defence against non-Muslims. Most Muslim scholars reject the idea that recent Islamic terrorist actions against the West are a legitimate form of jihad.

Judaism
This is the Jewish religion, based on the Old Testament of the Bible and the teachings of rabbis from the Talmud. It may sometimes be necessary to distinguish between orthodox and non-orthodox (sometimes called "liberal") movements. The only formal titles of clergy are "rabbi", who leads the spiritual congregation, and "cantor", who leads the congregation in singing. Rabbis are not the equivalent of "priests" and the "Chief Rabbi" is not the equivalent of an Anglican primate or a Catholic cardinal. Refer to the "synagogue", not "the Jewish church".

karma
In Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism this refers to the moral law of cause and effect.

Koran/Qur'an
The holy book of Islam.

kosher
This is usually used in reference to food and refers to something that is ritually prepared according to Jewish law.

lay/laity
Unordained people involved in the church. The correct usages are "lay people" or "the laity".

liturgy
Any regular form of service, usually in the Christian church.

madrasa
A local Islamic school.

Mecca
A city in Saudi Arabia believed by Muslims to be the birthplace of Mohammed and the base for his empire. It is the destination for Muslims undertaking the hajj (pilgrimage).

mosque
A place of Muslim worship. Friday is the main prayer day, although Muslims are called to prayer five times every day.

mufti [MOOF-tee]
A Muslim legal adviser consulted in applying religious law.

mujtahid [mooj-TAH-hid]
A Muslim teacher who gives rulings and legal decisions. In Shiite communities, these men have great authority, with the most senior ones called ayatollahs.

mullah [MOOL-ah]
A Muslim teacher or scholar.

Muslim [MOOZ-luhm]
A follower of Islam; also refers to anything, such as religion or law, relating to Islam.

orthodox/Orthodox
This word has several meanings. It refers to doctrine that is accepted as true and right (the opposite of heresy). It also refers to Christianity as practised by the Eastern Churches after the split with the West in the 8th Century. Orthodox Churches (including Greek, Russian and Serbian) principally were based in Eastern Europe, the Balkan states and Russia. It also refers to a conservative branch of Judaism with strict traditional observances.

patriarch
The head of one of the Orthodox Churches. The Patriarch of Constantinople is called the Ecumenical Patriarch and is a figure of unity among the Orthodox Churches.

Pentecostalism
A movement with origins in the US in the early 1900s, it emphasises the power and abilities of God's Holy Spirit to be available to individual Christians and expressed through phenomena such as speaking in tongues, prophecy and healing.

pope
The head of the Roman Catholic Church, elected by cardinals who meet in conclave at St Peter's in Rome. It can also refer to the Greek Orthodox or Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria.

priest/pastor
In general terms, a priest is a person authorised to perform certain religious functions, including the offering of sacrifices, rituals and other acts. There are Hindu, Christian, shamanic and other priests. There are no priests in Islam and Judaism.

In Christianity, a priest, minister or pastor refers (in most cases) to an ordained person in one of the Christian churches. But note the following usage:

- A priest is an ordained minister of the Orthodox, Catholic and Anglican Churches. However, some Anglican ministers (particularly evangelical or low-church, as in the Sydney diocese) do not regard themselves as priests, but prefer "minister". It is best to check what people prefer to be called.
- Protestant Churches do not have priests, so don't refer to Uniting Church priests or Baptist priests or Lutheran priests. Call them ministers or clerics.
- Pastor is the preferred term for ministers in Pentecostal churches. It is also acceptable for Lutheran and Baptist ministers. In the Uniting Church, pastor refers to a lay person serving in a ministry position. The proper term for them is "lay pastor".
- The Salvation Army has officers, not priests, pastors or ministers.

Acceptable generic terms for ordained people include clergy, cleric and minister.

primate [PRIGH-muht]
In both the Catholic and the Anglican Churches, this is the title of the chief bishop of a province. The Primate of the Catholic Church in Australia is the Archbishop of Sydney. The Primate of the Anglican Church in Australia is elected by the bishops and holds office until retirement.

Protestant
A stream of Christianity that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church during the Reformation, giving rise to such churches as Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Presbyterian and the Church of England.

rabbi
A Jewish religious teacher and leader of worship at a local synagogue. Refer to "Rabbi John Levi", then "Rabbi Levi".

Ramadan
The Islamic month in which Muslims fast between sunrise and sunset to commemorate Mohammad receiving the Koran from Allah.

Sabbath
A day of rest in Judaism and Christianity. Jewish people and some strictly observant Christians (such as Seventh Day Adventists) observe Sabbath from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday.

Scientology
A movement founded in the 1950s by L. Ron Hubbard, which aims to maximise spiritual potential through studies and various techniques knows as Dianetics.

sect
An offshoot from a mainstream religion that claims independent beliefs, authority and practices. Most major religions have engendered a large number of sects, with varying degrees of alignment with the historic mainstream institution. Hence, the mainstream churches regard Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science and the Mormons as Christian sects, although they do not regard themselves as such. "Sect" is also used as a generic word for a new religious movement, usually established by a self-proclaimed leader. Be careful when using "sect". If a term is required at all, use "religious movement" or "religious group", or refer to a group as "an offshoot" of whatever the original religion was.

sectarian
Relating to the divisions that have arisen between churches or religious groups, driving them apart, where previously they shared a common structure.

Sharia
In Islam, the body of law derived from the Koran, the Sunna and other sources. Its interpretation, and its application to both Muslims and to others living under Muslim governance, is debated among Muslim scholars.

sheikh [SHAYK]
An Arab leader. This can also be the title of a Muslim leader.

Shia/Shiite Muslims [SHEE-uh/SHEE-ight]
The minority group of Muslims (approximately 10%), living mostly in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan and India. They disagree with the majority group, the Sunni, over who were the valid successors to Mohammad. They emphasise individual spiritual leaders, upholding the imams as the infallible messengers of God.

shrine
This refers to a place considered holy because of its association with a holy person or event, a casket containing sacred relics, or a niche or enclosure containing a religious statue or other object.

Sikh
The Sikh religion developed in northern India in the 15th century as a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam.

Sunni Muslims [SOO-nee]
The majority group in Islam (approximately 90%), who disagree with the Shiites about the valid succession to Mohammad. They emphasise consensus leadership and the creation of states and societies that uphold Muslim law.

synagogue
A Jewish place of worship. It is not a temple (which has a specific meaning for Jews, relating to the Temple in Jerusalem).

synod [SIN-uhd]
This is a governing church council used in different churches for different bodies.

- In the Catholic Church, a synod is convened by the bishop or archbishop of a diocese to bring a wide cross-section of church

members together (lay and ordained) to set directions for the church's activities. They are held rarely.

- In the Anglican Church, a synod is the governing body held each year in each diocese, involving bishops, clergy and laity representing the various churches and agencies in the diocese. The Anglican General Synod is the national co-ordinating and governing body, which meets every three years.
- In the Uniting Church in Australia, a synod is a unit of government. The church has six synods loosely based around state boundaries.

Talmud [TAL-mood]
The written interpretation and development of the Hebrew scriptures, and one of the most important authorities of the Jewish religion.

Taoism
A Chinese philosophy outlined in the Tao-Te-Ching, compiled about 4th century BC by Lao-Tzu. Its aim is to achieve perfection and harmony in everything by inaction and effortlessness.

temple
The Temple is the historic heart of worship for Jews in Jerusalem. Jewish tradition holds that the Messiah will come and restore the Temple in Jerusalem. For Mormons, their temples are the supreme places of worship, and marriages can be conducted only in a temple. In some other religions, it refers to a building designed for worship of God or the gods, usually containing a sanctuary and a place for offering sacrifices.

Torah
This can be used as a general term for the Jewish Bible. More specifically it refers to the five Jewish books of the Law (the first five books of the Bible), kept on scrolls in each synagogue, from which passages are read at worship each week.

Trinity
A Christian doctrine of God as three persons – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Uniting Church in Australia
Note that it is in Australia, not *of* Australia.

reticence/reluctance

If you are reticent, you are reserved or disinclined to speak freely. To say someone is "reticent" to do something or has "reticence" to do something is

wrong. The better word is "reluctant". If you are "reluctant" to do something, it means you're unwilling to do it.

roll over

As in "the accused rolled over and gave evidence for the Crown", the term implies a certain motivation for the witness's action, and may even suggest guilt. Be careful using it.

royalty

Refer to the Queen of Australia as "the Queen". Her husband is "the Duke of Edinburgh" in the first mention, then "Prince Philip".

Say "the Prince of Wales", then "Prince Charles" or "the Prince".

[See: **honorifics**]

rumours and speculation

Gossip is gossip and must be treated with the appropriate caution. A rumour may become significant where it shapes opinion, or is an explanation for an event or reaction worth noting. Analysis must never elevate rumour to fact. For example, a rumour that a prominent person has died may influence the share market. We may describe the share movement and its apparent cause but we don't give credence to the rumour and we always make clear whether our checks have substantiated it.

same/similar

The words "same" and "similar" are similar but not the same. They have been treated as if they are synonymous: "There were six people killed in Western Australia and a similar number in Queensland."

If six were killed in Queensland, then it's the "same" as the number killed in Western Australia.

schizophrenia/schizophrenic

Schizophrenia is a serious mental illness. It is not "split personality" or intellectual disability.

Although there is a definition in the Macquarie Dictionary giving the colloquial sense of "schizophrenia" as "unable to choose between two courses of action", avoid using the word colloquially because it can be distressing to sufferers of this illness and their families.

For more information about schizophrenia and other mental illnesses refer to: www.mindframe-media.info , is a website designed to assist the media in reporting on suicide and mental illness.

SCOSE

SCOSE is the ABC's Standing Committee on Spoken English. It issues daily pronunciation guides on the SCOSE website at:
http://nucdb04/scose/

This is our first point of reference for pronunciation and usage.

Standard dictionaries provide the pronunciation of each word using special phonetic symbols placed between brackets directly following the word. For the ABC's pronunciation recommendations a simple alphabetic code is used instead of the usual symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet.

In words of more than one syllable, the syllable with the most prominent stress is written in block letters.

The SCOSE phonetics key is on the website. Just click "Key" on the top panel and it will come up (and you can print off a hard copy to keep handy). The key is reproduced below.

Symbol	**Sound**	**Symbol**	**Sound**
a	H**a**t	sh	**sh**op, s**u**re
ah	**Ar**t	ch	**ch**op
ay	P**ay**	zh	mea**s**ure
air	p**air**, d**are**	g	**g**et
aw	P**aw**, p**or**k	j	**j**et
e	B**e**st	y	**y**et
ee	s**ea**, m**e**	ng	so**ng**
eer	H**ere**, f**ear**	(ang)**.	v**in** (in 'vin blanc')
I	W**i**t	(ong)**.	bl**an**c (in 'vin blanc')
igh	t**ie**, m**y**	kh	lo**ch**, Ba**ch**
o	P**o**t	th	**th**in
oh	**oa**k, s**o**, l**ow**	dh	**th**en
oo	p**u**t, b**oo**k		
ooh	t**oo**, d**o**		
ow	N**ow**, b**ough**		
oy	b**oy**, f**oi**l		
u	N**u**t		
ur	f**ur**, b**ir**d, l**ear**n		
uh*..	oth**er**, **a**bout		
ooh(uh).	T**our**		

* the “indeterminate” vowel ** nasalised vowel

[See: **pronunciation**]

searches

If we start reporting a “search” story, we need to follow through and report when or whether the missing person or thing is found. So consider if the story is important enough to start with?

Don’t have authorities trying to “locate” people; use the conversational word “find”. Falling into official parlance can lead to nonsense like this: “The fire victims have been located and are now waiting to be relocated”.

see

Don’t say, “next month will see inflation falling”. Next month can see nothing.

shadow

Avoid terms like “Shadow Transport Minister”. “Opposition Transport Spokesman/Spokeswoman” says it all, without confusing the issue. Otherwise, we end up with a plethora of State/Federal would-be ministers – who aren’t.

If “Minister” does not appear in the title, an exception may be allowed (for example, “Shadow Treasurer”, “Shadow Cabinet”).

simplistic

This word is not a fancy synonym for “simple”. It means oversimplified. Be careful how you use it because it has negative connotations. There’s a big difference between a simple explanation and a simplistic explanation.

so-called

Take care when using the term “so-called”. It can carry negative connotations. In these examples, “so-called secondary cells” “these so-called experts are of no help”, the first is neutral, the second negative. In the second example, the use of the word can be taken to mean “alleged”, “questionable”, “supposed”, “doubtful”, “suspect”.

Examples of where the term has been inappropriately used include "so-called stolen generation" and "so-called totally and permanently incapacitated veterans".

If you simply wish to include an explanatory remark about a term you're mentioning, it may be better to use alternatives that are not likely to be interpreted in a negative way ("commonly referred to as the stolen generation"; "Mr X represents a group known as the totally and permanently incapacitated veterans").

sources

We should not lift any story or any assertion or "fact" from another media source – and report it as fact – without making our own checks. The ABC prides itself on original reporting and every source must be checked for accuracy.

Where a piece of information reported by another media outlet cannot be immediately confirmed, but is of such moment that it also cannot be ignored, we make careful attribution. Such cases will usually require upward referral.

Live interviews, broadcast elsewhere, may be reported without further confirmation. But if there is any doubt about the "live" nature of the material, it should be checked. It's also possible for live interviews to contain defamatory matter – if in doubt, check with ABC Legal Services.

Online journalism exposes us to a vast new range of sources, many of them offering information which is unconfirmed and often based on hearsay.

[See: **attribution**, **corroboration**, **off the record**]

spelling

Don't believe spelling doesn't matter when writing for radio or television. Precise meaning cannot be achieved with a misspelt word. Correct spelling is particularly important for online. If you use the wrong one of two similar sounding words, it can lead to confusion. Words that are sometimes confused include "sucker" and "succour", "prescribe" and "proscribe", "razed" and "raised", "principal" and "principle", "complement" and "compliment", "counsel" and "council", and so on. The accurate spelling of names is essential for archival retrieval. Is it "Brown" or "Browne"; "Shmith", "Smyth" or "Smith"?

spies

ASIS is the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, charged with intelligence

gathering overseas. ASIO is the domestic Australian Security Intelligence Organisation.

sponsors' names

Use them only when not to do so would mislead or confuse the audience.

[See: **advertising**, **commercial names**]

sport

All our journalists are expected to have a working familiarity with sport. The correct idiom is important; incorrect usage can make a story sound ridiculous. The sporting audience is highly discerning, so if in the slightest doubt about correct usage, check it.

Our sports stories should mirror our normal style and approach, which means we do not say "Gilly" for Gilchrist, or "Thorpedo" for Ian Thorpe, or "Warney" for Shane Warne, or "Windies" for West Indies. Keep it simple. Avoid phrases like "the Collingwood outfit", when you mean "team".

Following our normal style for writing numbers will often lead to long and unwieldy constructions when applied to sports scores. So, as a general rule, use numerals in scores (not for margins or other figures, such as "six-run lead", "best-of-five series", "after nine holes"). But even with scores, there'll be cases where it's necessary to mix numerals with words, for example, "9 point nine-nine seconds" (because "point 99 seconds" could mistakenly be read as "point ninety-nine seconds") or "nought-point-four" (because we spell out "point" for easier visibility, and that dictates the form for the rest of the phrase).

> ***AFL***
> Essendon 10-10 (70) defeated St Kilda 9-9 (63); Bill Brown kicked six goals in Carlton's 10-goal winning margin; grand final, semi-final, quarter-final, play-off, round robin (note which needs a hyphen and which doesn't).
>
> Avoid using "AFL" in reference to Australian football or Aussie Rules, the indigenous football game played in Australia. The AFL (Australian Football League) is the code's premier league. It is not the game itself. Many people reduce the name of the game to "AFL", but the ABC should not.
>
> ***Athletics***
> Mary Jones's time was 2-hours 18-minutes and 42-seconds; Mary Smith won in 25 point two-five seconds, which was nought-point-four of a second outside the record; the 400-metres event (note the plural); cross-

country, pole vault (note which needs a hyphen and which doesn't).

Cricket
Australia won by seven wickets;
Australia is 6 for 114;
Phillips is on 6;
He added 146 at six runs an over, scoring 10 fours and five sixes;
Hat-trick, no-ball, leg-side field, mid-on are all hyphenated, but leg bye, leg glance aren't.

Golf
Crosby was at 5-under-par;
He holds a four-shot lead;
After nine holes, Tim Woodsman is 3-under;
He shot a first-round 5-under-par 68 to lead the tournament by two strokes.

Rugby (Union and League)
New Zealand beat France 15-6;
John Brown scored two tries within three minutes in the second half, after the All Blacks led 3-nil at the break;
Ricky Quick converted one of the tries, and kicked one penalty from four attempts;
five-eighth (the "h" is not sounded), half-back, second-rower.

Soccer
Do not refer to "soccer" as "football" in the first reference, although some newspapers have started doing this. We are in the broadcast business, and our audiences don't have the luxury of absorbing the printed word which, for newspapers, allows a more obvious identification of the sport in question. Broadcast references can be fleeting, and we have a duty to be immediately obvious and clear.

There is no problem with soccer being referred to as football in second and subsequent uses in our scripting, after we've established we are actually talking about soccer.

When referring to scores:
Liverpool beat Arsenal 3-1;
Richmond won by two goals;
Avoid nil-all or 0-0: opt for "scoreless draw";
Barcelona and Madrid played a nil-all draw (acceptable for Radio/TV); penalty shoot-out.

Tennis
Jones won 6-4, 7-6 (9-7), 6-0 (Radio/TV: The tie-break score, if mentioned, would be given as an addition: "he took the second-set tie-

break 9 points to 7"; "he won the five-hour match in five sets".

These points of style assume the scores or other details are of genuine news value. Too often we overload sports stories with detailed information that is not meaningful to the wider audience.

suffer

Cars, buildings and other inanimate objects suffer no pain. They have been "damaged", they have not "suffered damage". People can be hurt or injured, but do not let them "sustain injuries". We say "he suffers from asthma/arthritis" not "he suffers asthma/arthritis". "Suffer from" implies continuity, so an asthma suffered today will still suffer from asthma tomorrow.

suicide

If reported at all, suicides will be reported in moderate terms and will usually avoid details of methods. Usually we'd report suicides in news bulletins only if a prominent citizen was involved or the suicide caused an incident in a public place that we couldn't ignore (for example, peak train services are disrupted).

Sensitive use of language is important. The language you use should not glamorise or sensationalise suicide or present suicide as a solution to problems. Avoid describing a suicide attempt as "unsuccessful", and say "increasing rates" rather than "suicide epidemic".

There are legal restrictions in NSW and Queensland on reporting coronial inquests of possible suicides.

Additional information on the reporting and portrayal of suicide can be found at the Commonwealth Government website: www.mindframe-media.info

summonsed/summoned

You can be "summonsed" to appear in court, but you would be "summoned" to the boss's office.

superlatives and records

Unique/first-ever/world first/for the first time/greatest. Be certain of your facts. Do not automatically accept someone's claim as fact. As soon as you report that something is the biggest or the worst, it's likely someone will come along to claim otherwise.

surpass

The statement "the death toll has surpassed one hundred" should read "the death toll is now more than one hundred". "Surpass" means to excel or to be superior in achievement or excellence.

temperature

The temperature is "high" or "low". But it's the weather or climate that is "hot" or "cold".

[See: **gale**, **weather**]

terrorism

Reporting terrorism and other contentious issues brings the need for fair and non-judgemental language into sharp focus. There will always be sectional groups in the community that disagree with the way an issue is reported and with the language used. Middle East reporting is a typical example.

Generally, clear, thorough reporting is better than labels.

Our reports should rely first on facts and clear descriptions of events, rather than labels that may seem too extreme or too soft, depending on your point of view.

When reporting a conflict, such as in the Middle East, we avoid partisanship, or the perception of it, by not adopting for ourselves the preferred labels of one side or the other. It is usually more appropriate to describe specific acts: "a car bomb has exploded in Baghdad, killing 20 people" rather than "a terrorist attack in Baghdad has left 20 people dead". If it is necessary to refer to an organisation in such a way, it is best to attribute that label to a particular person, group or government: "the US President described the group as a terrorist organisation".

The use of violence, including against civilians, in a political cause is not new. Terrorism – violence targeting civilians and not necessarily in a clear political cause – is not new. We won't resile from using the word "terrorism" or "terrorist" in appropriate cases. If something is clearly a terrorist act, the act and the group responsible for it can be labelled "terrorist". That does not mean that you have to describe the group as "terrorist" in every context in which you refer to that group.

Be judicious in the use of the expression "war on terror".

[See: **labelling of groups and individuals**]

that

Use "that" for animals or inanimate objects. The correct personal pronoun for people is "who". Countries, companies, governments, organisations and sports teams are not referred to as "who", but "which" or "that".

Always make sure the listener will know exactly what your "that" refers to in a sentence, and don't omit "that" if it sacrifices clarity for brevity.

For example, "Liberian Health Minister Carmen Jones says 300 civilians have been killed in intense fighting in the capital, warning the health services in Monrovia need urgent attention".

At first glance the phrase "the health services" appears to be the direct object of the verb "warn(ing)" (that is, Ms Jones issued a warning to the health services). In this case putting "that" after "warning" would have made the meaning immediately clear.

the

The form "Prime Minister Jones" or "Acting Treasurer Williams" is not the way people normally speak. People say "the Prime Minister, Frank Jones" (then, Mr Jones); "the Acting Treasurer, Mary Williams" (then, Ms Williams). So should we.

Similarly, it is awkward to say, "chairman of the local shire, John Smith" Better to say, "the chairman of the local shire" or, if it works comfortably, "Shire Chairman John Smith" (but "Shire Chairman Smith" is not acceptable, for the reason given above).

Don't say "Council has decided". Use the definite article "the Council".

Always say "the Pope" and "the Queen".

[See: **honorifics**]

time references

References such as "now", "in a few hours", "later tonight" can add impact to a story, but are soon out of date. Usually confine them to the link. Watch out for the unnecessary repetition of "today" in a bulletin or program. With foreign stories, make clear which "today" or "yesterday" you mean: theirs or ours?

Be sure to follow up a story if we've whetted the appetite for something "coming in a few hours".

Time references also should not be inserted within verb phrases. "A Brisbane man was last night shot dead" should read "A Brisbane man was shot dead last night".

Don't mix tenses with incorrect time references in a sentence: "A woman has been killed in an armed hold-up today". The use of "has been" precludes any other time reference, so the "today" is unnecessary. It should be: "A woman has been killed in an armed hold-up" or "A woman was killed in an armed hold-up today".

time zones

AEST, Eastern Standard Time, is an internationally accepted usage. During daylight saving time, you simply substitute Daylight for Standard. The only other variables are Central and Western. These terms are straightforward and should be easy to remember. The recommended abbreviations are:

AEST Australian Eastern Standard Time
AEDT Australian Eastern Daylight Time
ACST Australian Central Standard Time
ACDT Australian Central Daylight Time
AWST Australian Western Standard Time

top-level/high-level

Don't overdo them. Speaking in the same bulletin of "top-level Middle East talks" and "top-level talks over the future of Cottesloe Beach" will strike some listeners as silly.

trade names

The ABC does not carry advertising, so avoid trade names. Of course, common sense should be used, as when a product is in the news, for example, or when a food product is withdrawn from the market.

[See: **advertising**, **commercial names**, **sponsors' names**]

Uluru [ooh-luh-ROOH]

The Australian landmark formerly known as Ayers Rock has been known officially as Uluru since it was handed over to Indigenous people in the 1980s. Uluru is its Aboriginal name. Even though some people, such as tour operators and tourists, may still call it Ayers Rock, it's more appropriate for us to use the official name.

upward referral

Subject to normal management and editorial controls, program makers are responsible both for making a program and for exercising editorial judgement. If a problem arises, or there is any doubt, the program maker must consult the next higher level of management for guidance.

This is known as upward referral. Make yourself aware of the lines of upward referral.

verbs

Use them. There is a tendency to drop verbs or parts of them from copy: "Collingwood by four", "manufacturers struggling to meet demand"; "the Prime Minister happy to endorse the action". These are not sentences because they don't contain a finite verb. Finite verbs are the forms of verbs that have a definite tense (either past, present or future). Write and speak in sentences.

You must be able to recognise a verb and distinguish it from a word that's formed from a verb, but in fact functions as a noun or an adjective:

- "She scored at three runs an over" is a complete sentence containing the finite verb "scored".

- "Manufacturers struggling to meet demand" is an incomplete sentence. "Struggling" is only part of the required finite verb "are struggling" (or "were struggling").

Adding "–ing" to a verb can change its function. In the sentence "scoring was easy", the word "scoring" isn't a verb – it's a noun. Compare this with "scoring" in the phrase "a scoring shot" – here it's an adjective.

[See: **missing verbs**]

vice-regal representative

The word "vice-regal" means "of or relating to a governor or governor-general". It is an adjective, which means that it should be used to modify a noun (such as "representative"). In stories it shouldn't be used as a noun because it can sound too casual or even dismissive. Instead of "they've just appointed a new vice-regal", say "they've just appointed a new vice-regal representative."

[See: **Governor-General**]

violence

Reports depicting violence (in images particularly, but also in sound) may need to be preceded by a warning to the audience. Such reports should not run in news updates during children's programming times. Promotional clips containing violence may be inappropriate because of their repetitive use.

Reduce the frequency of "violent" metaphors in everyday stories: we hear too much about people or organisations "dropping bombshells" (that is, causing a surprise), "killing off" (ending) things, "going on the attack" (criticising or rebutting criticism).

When reporting violence, always remember the context. One violent episode in a public gathering, for example, does not constitute a "riot". Maintain balance and objectivity. Don't tag a demonstration as "violent" if it was mostly peaceful. Likewise, do not characterise demonstrators as "peaceful" simply because they state their motives as such – if so, quote them.

[See: **cruelty**, **warnings**]

wage war

You do not "wage battle" as some of our copy has suggested.

warnings

There may be occasions when, for valid editorial reasons, we will broadcast material – words, sounds or images – that will disturb, distress or offend some people. Warnings should be broadcast immediately before the relevant program or program segment.

The style is: "The following story contains disturbing/distressing images"; "The following story contains language/images which may offend some viewers/listeners" (acknowledges that matters of taste are more subjective).

[See: **cruelty**, **offensive language**]

weather

Don't underestimate the impact and interest of weather stories. Don't confine important weather events to the end of the bulletin.

[See: **cyclones**, **gale**, **temperature**]

Western Australia

This is the name of the state. A person from Western Australia can be called a

"West Australian" – it's easier to say than a "Western Australian".

who's/whose

[See: **apostrophe**]