U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

CORRESPONDENCE MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manual is to set forth the general guidelines that the USAID Executive Secretariat follows in editing documents. All USAID staff tasked with drafting executive correspondence are requested to follow these guidelines.

In the event of a discrepancy between the guidelines set forth in this manual and document-specific guidelines found on the ES website, the document-specific guidelines prevail.

For State documents, State ES correspondence guidelines will apply. Please refer to the State Infolink.

I. FORMATTING

Formatting guidelines may change in accordance with a new Administrator's preferences. Executive correspondence drafters are requested to please check this section periodically to ensure that the correct formatting guidelines are being followed.

N.B.: When preparing documents for State, State guidelines will apply.

Standard Fonts: Times New Roman 12 for all executive correspondence.
Times New Roman 12 for meeting talking points.
Times New Roman 14 for State Department documents, including funding memos.
Times New Roman 16 for remarks.

Standard Margins: One-inch left and right non-justified; one-inch top and bottom.

Indents: Paragraphs are indented five spaces.

Spacing: Leave two spaces after periods, colons, and before zip codes.
Example: See Jane run. See Dick fall.
Example: Items will include: (1) x; (2) y.
Example: Arlington, VA 22201

Leave one space between FY or CY and the year.
Example: FY 2009; CY 2009

Leave two spaces after a period when it follows a number or letter indicating enumeration (agenda items, numbered paragraphs, etc.)
Example: I. Agenda Item 1
Example: A. Funding Source

N.B.: It is recommended that drafters and correspondence analysts click on the "Show/Hide" icon in the tool bar so that spacing is indicated. This will highlight whether the correct number of spaces have been left throughout a document.

Pagination: Paginate documents of more than one page.
Place page numbers at the top center of a page as follows: -2-

Suppress the number on the first page of the main document and of each attachment.

The clearance page should be numbered consecutively, as part of the main document.

Paginate each attachment individually.

N.B.: For USAID documents, paginate the clearance page as part of the main document. For State documents, the clearance page is <u>not</u> paginated.

Line Wrapping: Do not split proper names, titles and names, numbers, and "Fiscal or Calendar Year" or "FY and CY" and the year in question between lines. What is listed in quotation marks in the following examples should always appear on <u>one</u> line in the text.

Examples: "Mary Jane Doe"; "Ambassador John Doe"
"one million dollars"; "$10 million"
"Fiscal Year 2009"; "CY 2009"

Symbols: Always spell out "percent" (never use the "%" sign).
Example: one percent; 15 percent

Always spell out "and" (never use "&").

Numbers: Numbers 10 and above are expressed in numerals, not words.
Example: At least 12 people have registered.

Numbers less than 10 are written as words.
Example: Four adults and five children attended.

Exception: When a sentence contains more than one number, one of which is 10 or higher, all numbers in the sentence should be expressed in numerals.
Example: She brought **three** documents for editing. Last week she brought **10**. The **3** she just brought, plus the **10** from last week, total **13**.

Always spell out a number that begins a sentence.
Example: Three thousand people were in attendance.

Exception: For measurements, use numerals for the amount. No periods are used with the abbreviations.
Examples: 8 inches long; 5 lbs of sugar; 12 cm of rain

Exception: Always use figures for percentages and decimal fractions.
Examples: 9 percent; 2.5 inches of rain

Dates: When a month-day-year sequence is used at the end of a sentence, insert a comma between the day and year.
Example: She was born on May 6, 2000.

When a month-day-year sequence is used in the middle of a sentence, insert commas between the day and year, and after the year.
Example: On May 31, 2010, I plan to retire.

When only a partial date is used (month and day, month and year), no comma is needed.
Examples: June 11 is her birthday.
November 1945 is a historic month.

Do not write dates using all numerals.
Do not place the day in front of the month.
Incorrect: 03/06/2000
Incorrect: 6 March 2000

Fractions: Spell out standalone fractions.
Example: Over two-thirds of the staff were absent.

Use numerals for mixed numbers.
Example: 4 ½ inches

Phone Numbers: Put area code in parentheses. Leave one space before the prefix.
Example: (202) 712-0700

Proportions/Ratios: Use numerals.
Example: a 5:1 ratio; a proportion of 1 to 4

Thousand, Million, Billion, Trillion Write out the words. Combine numerals and words for amounts above 999.
Examples: 100 thousand people
$13.045 billion

Exception: Always use numerals in tables and spreadsheets.

Time: Use numerals. Use periods with a.m. and p.m.
Example: 4 p.m.; 8:45 a.m.

II. STYLE

Active/Passive Voice:

Use the active voice whenever possible, rather than the passive. Active verbs eliminate ambiguity about responsibilities.

The passive voice is signaled by the use of some form of the verb "to be" (am, is, are, was, were, being, or been) plus the past participle of the main verb.
Examples:
Passive: The form must be completed.
Active: You must complete the form.

Passive: The Office was notified by OMB.
Active: OMB notified the office.

By eliminating the helping verb, the active voice sentence generally uses fewer words to communicate the same information.
Examples:
Passive: Mr. Doe was told by the bank official that he would need to provide additional documentation. (16 words)
Active: The bank official told Mr. Doe he would need to provide additional information. (13 words)

Active voice more closely resembles spoken language. When we speak, we generally use the active voice without thinking.
Examples:
Passive: Breakfast was eaten by me this morning.
Active: I ate breakfast this morning.

Tips to convert passive sentences to active sentences:

(1) Turn the clause or sentence around, putting the subject first.
Passive: The proposed rule was published by General Counsel in the Federal Register.
Active: General Counsel published the proposed rule in the Federal Register.

(2) Change the verb to eliminate the helping verb "to be."
Passive: We must consider how our resources will be used to deliver quality services.
Active: We must consider how to use our resources to deliver quality services.

(3) Rethink the sentence.
Passive: Although Mr. Doe was found to be eligible for this position, all of the positions had already been filled by our personnel office prior to receiving his application.
Active: Though we found Mr. Doe eligible for the position, our personnel office had filled all positions before we received his application.

Cut Passive: A form of the passive voice that never identifies the doer of the action.
Example:
Cut Passive:
New requirements were introduced to strengthen the banking system.
Active: The Banks Act of 1985 introduced new requirements to strengthen the banking system.

N.B.: The cut passive form is appropriate in two situations:
1) When it is not known who performed the action; and
2) When the doer of the action is unimportant.
If adding the name of the person or organization performing the action would make the document stronger, the doer should be identified if possible.

Address the Reader: When appropriate, address the reader directly, using the pronoun "you."
Example: "You will note" instead of "Please note."

Conjunctions: Do not begin a sentence or a talking point with the conjunctions "And" or "Because."

Excess Words: Omit needless words. Excess or elaborate words make a document weaker.

Excess Words	Plain Language Alternatives
as a means of	To
at a later date	Later
at the present time	Now
for the purpose of	to, for
in accordance with	Under
in order to	To
in the event that	If
notwithstanding the fact that	Although
on a monthly basis; on an ongoing basis	monthly; continually
pertaining to; related to; with regard to	of, about
so as to	To
until such time as; up to now; when and if	until; formerly; if

Foreign Words: Use English equivalents of foreign words or phrases whenever possible.
When foreign words have no English equivalent, italicize them.
Example: "That's life" instead of "c'est la vie."
Example: Ethiopia's short rainy season is called *belg*.

Exceptions to this rule include the following:
bona fide, e.g., and etc.

Headings: Use as many informative headings as possible.

Jargon: The specialized language of a trade, profession, or similar group. Avoid jargon as it can be a barrier to communication with non-specialists.

Multiple Negatives: The use of multiple negatives muddles the meaning of a sentence. Convert negative statements to positive ones whenever possible.
Negative: No changes will be made unless the supervisor reviews the regulations and concludes that they are not lacking important information.
Positive: Changes will be made only if the supervisor reviews the regulations and concludes that they are lacking important information.

Phonetic Spelling: In BCLs**,** always include the phonetic spelling of any biographical or geographical name that may be unfamiliar to the Administrator or Deputy Administrator but which they will need to pronounce correctly during meetings, remarks, receptions, etc.

Phonetic spellings are set off in brackets after each section of a name (one section per bracket).

Any syllable to be stressed should be capitalized so that the speaker knows where to place the emphasis. When a name has only one syllable, there is no need to capitalize.

Place hyphens between each syllable of one word.
Examples: Ambassador Urs {Oohrs} Ziswiler {ZEES-vee-ler}
Pristina {PRISH-tuh-naa}, Kosovo {KO-suh-vo}

N.B.: For BCLs with remarks or talking points: The phonetic pronunciation should only be included in the remarks section of a BCL. It should NOT be included in the BCL title, objectives section, participant list, or biography.

For BCLs without remarks or talking points: The phonetic pronunciation should be included the first time the name appears.

Sentence and Paragraph Structure: Documents should be written at a sixth grade level (referring to readability, with simple sentence <u>structure</u>, not simple <u>concepts</u>).

The more complicated the information, the simpler the sentence structure must be.

Write with analytical logic, not emotional appeal.

Put key information first – the first <u>seven</u> words count the most.

The following three factors affect reading comprehension:
1) The number of words in each sentence.
2) The number of sentences in each paragraph.
3) The number of big words (three or more syllables) in a paragraph.

N.B.: ES receives many documents that have sentences 10 – 15 lines long. Divide them into two or three shorter sentences of no more than five lines each. Delete any extraneous words. Sentences should contain a maximum of 15 – 17 words.

Shall vs. Must: Do not use "shall." Use "must" to signify mandatory action, or write the sentence in a directive manner using phrases such as "requires" or "is required."
Example: Contractor will provide training services.
(NOT Contractor shall provide training services).

Shall vs. Will: Do not use "shall." "Will" signifies future action. It can also be used to indicate mandatory future action.
Example: We will decide. You will finish tomorrow.
(NOT We shall decide. You shall finish tomorrow.)

Will vs. Would: Use "will" to signify future tense. Do not use "would" unless it is conditional.
Example: Additional funding will expedite the process.
Example: Additional funds would expedite the process if they are received before the start of the rainy season.

Must vs. Should: Must indicates that something is mandatory; should indicates that it is NOT mandatory.
Example: You must be on time.
You should be on time if at all possible.

Talking Points/ Remarks: Words should be written as they are spoken.
Example: one million dollars (**not** $1,000,000 or $1 million)

Talking points should be written in the first person.
Example: I support your decision.

Unnecessary Qualifiers: Avoid using as they add no additional meaning to a sentence.

Unnecessary	Sufficient
Their claim was totally unrealistic.	Their claim was unrealistic.
We are completely convinced.	We are convinced.
Work in partnership with…	Work with…
Additional requirements needed to…	Requirements needed to…
Maintain successful bilateral agreements.	Maintain bilateral agreements.

III. GRAMMAR

Common Errors: The following words and phrases are frequently written incorrectly.

Correct	Reason
decision maker	two words, not hyphenated
hands-on	Hyphenated
Ongoing	one word
round table	two words
state of the art	no hyphens
Toward	no "s" at the end
work force	two words (It has become common usage to write these two words as one. Per Webster's Dictionary, they are two words.)

Compound Words: Compound <u>nouns</u> ending in "up" are one word or hyphenated:

checkup	close-up
roundup	sign-up
pileup	follow-up

N.B.: If the same words are used as <u>verb phrases</u>, each word stands alone.

Example: I will follow up {verb phrase} on your suggestion.
I will give you a detailed follow-up {noun} afterwards.

Compounds nouns ending in "down" are usually one word.

showdown	meltdown
breakdown	slowdown
sundown	countdown

N.B.: If you give someone a "put-down," you need to hyphenate.

Compound nouns ending with "in" are usually hyphenated.
Compound nouns ending in "out" are usually one word.

break-in	dropout
trade-in	standout
sit-in	sellout
drive-in	buyout

N.B.: You must give your children a "time-out." When you eat dinner, it may become a "pig-out."

Compound nouns ending in "on" are usually hyphenated, while compound nouns ending in "off" are either one word or hyphenated.

add-on	layoff
carry-on	takeoff
run-on	show-off
follow-on	send-off

N.B. You "login" and "logoff" your computer.

Compound nouns with a prepositional phrase are usually hyphenated but not always.

attorney-at-law	power of attorney
brother-in-law	line of credit
right-of-way	rule of thumb
standard of living	state of the art

When in doubt, check a dictionary!

Correlative Conjunctions:

A pair of conjunctions that connect two parts of a sentence and are not used adjacent to each other. The most common pairs are:
both…and
either…or
neither…nor
not only…but also

Sentences containing correlative conjunctions are internally <u>un</u>punctuated.
Example: He has changed neither his style nor his ethics nor his attitude.

Idiomatic Expressions:

Agree with/agree to
Agree with: concur with a person or idea
Agree to: show acceptance to another person's plan
Examples: I agree with John. We agree to the terms.

Angry with/angry at
Angry with: used when the object of anger is a person
Angry at: used when the object of anger is not a person
Examples: I am angry with Jean. I am angry at the idea of it.

Part from/part with
Part from: when referring to a person or people
Part with: when referring to an object
Examples: I parted from Joe. I parted with my favorite sweater.

Different from/identical with
Different from: (not different than)
Identical with: (not identical to)
Examples: Your idea is no different from mine.
Your situation is identical with mine.

Between/among
Between: referring to two people, places, or things
Among: referring to three or more people, places or things
Examples: There is agreement between the two of them.
The memo was circulated among five people.

All/all of
All: when "all" refers to a noun.
All of: when "all" refers to a pronoun.
Examples: All the developers went on vacation.
All of them are gone.

Modifiers: Place adjectives and adverbs next to the noun or verb they modify to avoid confusion.
Example: He spoke in the strongest possible terms of a new trade agreement with the Europeans.
Avoid: He spoke of a new trade agreement with the Europeans in the strongest possible terms.

New Words:

e-mail	All in lower case separated by a hyphen
home page	Two words, lower case
online	One word, lower case, no hyphen
Webmaster	One word, capitalized
Web page	Two words with "W" capitalized
Web site	Two words with "W" capitalized

Nonrestrictive Clause: One that will not affect the meaning of a sentence if eliminated.
Example: The burglar, who had entered through the patio, went straight to the silver chest.

Restrictive Clause: One that is essential to the meaning of the sentence.
Example: The burglar who had entered through the patio went straight to the silver chest; the other burglar searched for the wall safe.

which/that "Which" is used to introduce a nonrestrictive or nonessential clause.
Example: The report, which I sent you last week, should be useful.

"That" is used to introduce a restrictive or essential clause.
Example: This chapter outlines the basic policies that underlie the Agency's security program.

N.B.: "Which" is preferable to "that" in the following circumstances:

(1) When there are two or more parallel essential clauses in the same sentence.
Example: She is taking courses which will earn her a high salary and which will qualify her for higher-level jobs.

(2) When "that" has already been used in the sentence.
Example: That is a movie which you must not miss.

(3) When the essential clause is introduced by "this," "that," or "those."
Example: We need to enforce those rules which we presented in earlier chapters.

Troublesome Nouns:

principal/principle
principal: First, highest, or foremost.
principle: Basic truth, law, or assumption; moral or ethical standard

Prepositional Phrases:

Avoid multiple prepositional phrases.
Avoid: You must begin hiring within a period of 18 months after the date of receipt of the grant.
Better: You must begin hiring within 18 months of receiving the grant.

Pronouns:

Address the reader directly using the personal pronoun "you" whenever possible.
Example: As a voucher examiner, you must review and process vouchers.

Singular: Use "his" or "her" if the subject is singular.
Example: The Director, or her designee, will sign.

Plural: Use "their" if the subject is plural.
Example: Employees must submit their forms for clearance.

N.B.: Try to reword sentences to avoid the awkward "his or her" by using plurals or other forms.

Example: An assistant tries to anticipate the needs of the boss.
(<u>Not</u> "…the needs of his or her boss.")

The following pronouns are always singular:

anyone	everyone	someone	no one
anything	everything	something	nothing
each	every	either	one
each one	many a	much	neither
anybody	everybody	somebody	nobody

Example: Everyone is going to the concert.

The following are indefinite pronouns and are always plural:

many	few	several	others	both

Example: Few people have received training in PowerPoint.

The following may be singular or plural, depending on the subject.

all	none	any	some	more	most

Example: Is any money left in the contract? Are there any bills to be paid?

Split Infinitives: An infinitive verb form with an adverbial element interposed between "to" and the verb form. Avoid split infinitives.
Correct: The aim is **to examine** the evidence carefully.
Avoid: The aim is **to carefully examine** the evidence.

Verbs: A verb is the life of a sentence. Strong verbs (e.g., recommend) are often turned into nouns (e.g., recommendation) and a weak verb that supplies little information (e.g., make) is substituted.
Weak example: We're asking everyone to make a recommendation for a solution.
Strong example: We're asking everyone to recommend a solution.

Weak Verbs	**Smothered Verbs**	**Strong Verbs**
get	Get the room reservations.	Reserve the room.
come	Come to a conclusion by noon.	Conclude by noon.
hold	Hold the meeting in your office.	Meet in your office.
conduct	Conduct an examination of the data.	Examine the data.
make	Make an effective suggestion.	Suggest something effective.
give	Give them an answer to their question.	Answer their questions.
do	Do the work assigned to you.	Work on your assignment.
is	She is knowledgeable about careers.	She knows about careers.
feel	I feel appreciation for your hard work.	I appreciate your hard work.
perform	Perform the research on these subjects.	Research these subjects.
has/have	He has hope that he will win.	He hopes he will win.

Troublesome Verbs:

affect/effect

affect: (v) to influence, change, or assume
effect: (n) a result or an impression

assure/ensure/insure

assure: Applies only to people.
I assure you, it will be fixed.
ensure: To make certain. It applies only to inanimate objects.
I will ensure that it gets fixed.
insure: What insurance companies do.
Geico insures homeowners.

lay/lie

Substitute the verb "place" for the word in question. If it fits, use lay, if it doesn't, use lie.
lay: Lay it on the sofa.
lie: I'm going to lie on the sofa.

imply/infer

imply: to suggest
infer: to assume or reach a conclusion

who/whom; whoever/whomever: Use the following steps to decide whether "who" or "whom" is correct.

1) Isolate the who/whom clause from the rest of the sentence.
2) Delete the word "who" or "whom."
3) Fill the gap with "he/she" or "him/her."

If "he/she" completes the thought, then <u>who</u> is correct.
If "him/her" completes the thought, then <u>whom</u> is correct.

Examples:
The person (who/whom) does the best work will be promoted.

1) who/whom does the best work
2) ____ does the best work
3) she does the best work
4) <u>She</u> completes the thought, so <u>who</u> is correct.

This candidate is the one (who/whom) I will promote.

1) who/whom I will promote
2) I will promote _____
3) I will promote him
4) <u>Him</u> completes the thought, so <u>whom</u> is correct.

Report incidents to (whoever/whomever) is the responsible official.

1) whoever/whomever is the responsible official
2) _____ is the responsible official
3) She is the responsible official
4) She completes the thought, so whoever is correct.

Give the information to (whoever/whomever) you want to write the report.

1) whoever/whomever you want to write the report
2) you want ____ to write the report
3) you want him to write the report
4) Him completes the thought, so whomever is correct.

Words/Phrases to Avoid:

and/or; **either/or**: These devices make the meaning of a sentence unclear. Usually, the drafter means one or the other, but not both. Decide which conveys the correct meaning and delete the other.

thru Always spell out "through."

IV. PUNCTUATION

Apostrophe: Always use curled apostrophes rather than straight ones.
Example: Secretary’s (NOT Secretary's);

Individual Possession/Authorship: An apostrophe is used after each name.
Example: Mary’s and Peter’s reports are both due.

Joint Possession: One apostrophe is used in the last of two or more nouns in a series.
Example: Mary and Peter’s report.

Comma: Use a comma before the word “and” and “or” in a series of three or more.
Examples: apples, bananas**,** and oranges; men, women, or children

Use a comma before the title of a publication named in a sentence.
Example: More information is available in the report, *Information Technology in the Twenty-First Century*.

Use a comma in a compound sentence connected by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet).
Example: There is a difference between the novels of Hemingway and Fitzgerald, and it is a difference worth noting.

Omit the comma in short compound sentences.
Example: I understand your argument but I do not agree.

Use a comma between two or more adjectives modifying the same noun if “and” could be used between them without altering the meaning.
Omit the comma if an “and” cannot be used.
Examples: a solid, heavy gas
a polished mahogany dresser

Use a comma after Washington, D.C., when used in a sentence.
Example: The conference will be in Washington, D.C., in May.

Use a comma in numbers of four or more digits.
Example: 4,000

Dash Use the “em” dash to separate clauses or parenthetical comments in a sentence. It is longer than the “en” and regular dashes. No space should be left before or after the dash.
Correct: He tried once—at age nine. (“em” dash)
Incorrect: He tried once–at age nine. (“en” dash)
Incorrect: He tried once--at age nine. (regular dash)

Ellipsis Mark: Leave one space before and after the ellipsis when used within a sentence to signify missing information.
Example: "During the past forty years … we have been witnessing a change in buying habits."

Leave no space before or after the ellipsis when an opening or closing quotation mark precedes or follows the ellipsis mark.
Example: "…we have been witnessing a change in habits…"

If one or more words are omitted at the end of a quoted sentence, use the ellipsis followed by the necessary terminal punctuation for the sentence as a whole.
Example: "Are we witnessing a change in buying habits…?"

Hyphen: As a general rule, do not use a hyphen to set off prefixes, including co, de, pre, pro, and re.
Examples: copilot; demilitarize; prepay; prorevolutionary; redo
Exception: anti-inflammatory

The prefixes "ex" and "self" always require a hyphen.
Examples: ex-president; self-control

Words beginning with "non" are not hyphenated, unless the word is capitalized or already hyphenated.
Examples: nongovernmental; non-American; non-direct-hire employees

Do not use a hyphen when the first word is an adverb ending in "ly."
Example: economically disadvantaged countries

Others: G-77 (rather than G77); G-8 (rather than (G8)
Direct Hire: Do not hyphenate when used as a noun.
Example: John Doe is a U.S. Direct Hire.
Direct-hire: Hyphenate when used as a modifier.
Example: It is for direct-hire employees.

i.e., e.g. A comma must always follow each within the context of a sentence, except when a clause is enclosed in parentheses.
Example 1: This applies to regional bureaus, i.e., AFR and E&E.
(Note the <u>two</u> commas: after bureaus and after i.e.)
Example 2: This applies to regional bureaus (i.e., AFR and E&E).
(Note the <u>one</u> comma: after i.e.)

N.B.: An entire phrase can be set off by parentheses (as in Example 2 above) but keep in mind that parentheses de-emphasize importance.

Parentheses: **To set off words or phrases**. Place punctuation outside parentheses, even if the parenthetical phrase is at the end of a sentence.
Example: USAID must build core teams within a size range of 5 to 10 members (the generally accepted size range for effective teams).

To set off complete sentences. Place punctuation inside the parentheses.
Example: (More details are contained in the full report.)

Double parentheses: When a parenthetical phrase falls within another parenthetical phrase, enclose each phrase in parentheses, even if they adjoin each other.
Example: (See ADS 565, Physical Security Programs (Domestic))

Period: Use with a.m. and p.m.
Use with U.S.

Washington, D.C.	Use periods when mentioned in a sentence.
Washington, DC	No periods when used in an address.

Quotation Marks: Periods and commas always go <u>inside</u> the closing quotation mark.
Example: John said, "The proof is in the pudding."

Periods and commas always go <u>inside</u> the single closing quotation mark.
Example: Please let me see all orders marked 'Rush.'

Semicolons and colons always go <u>outside</u> the closing quotation mark.
Example: You said, "I will mail it Monday"; it has not arrived.

A question mark or exclamation point goes <u>inside</u> the closing quotation mark when it applies only to quoted material; they go <u>outside</u> when they apply to the entire sentence.
Example: The question John posed was, "When will it be ready?"
Example: John's statement is true for everyone: "I want it now"!

Semicolon: Use to separate clauses containing commas, and to separate statements that are too closely related in meaning to be written as separate sentences.

Example: The project aims to develop, distribute, and translate training materials; provide technical assistance; and build classrooms, training centers, and libraries.

Example: The project will end March 31, 2009; all activities must be completed by that date.

N.B.: Do not use a semi-colon when a comma will suffice.

V. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Abbreviation: A shortened form of a word or phrase used to represent the full form.
Examples: "approx." for approximately; est. for estimated

Abbreviations should not be used in executive correspondence.
Exception: U.S. when used as an adjective. Write out United States when used as a noun.
Exception: USG when used in correspondence with other federal departments and agencies. Use U.S. Government in all other correspondence.
Examples: U.S. partner countries.
The United States will partner with India.

Acronym: An abbreviation that can be pronounced as a word.
Example: NATO.

As a general rule, any acronym appearing more than once in a document should be spelled out when it first appears.
The acronym should immediately follow in parentheses.
(See chart on following page for allowable exceptions in USAID internal correspondence only.)
Example: International Labor Organization (ILO)

If an acronym occurs infrequently in a document, it may be necessary to spell it out again.

The following acronyms do not need to be spelled out in internal USAID correspondence or in correspondence with the Department of State and Congress. It is unlikely that these acronyms will be used in correspondence from USAID to any other external recipient; if they are, they must be spelled out.

CATEGORY	**REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES**
Agency and Bureau/Independent Office Acronyms	AFR, CFBCI, EGAT, EOP, GC, GH, HR, IG, M, ODP, OSDBU, SEC, USAID
Funding Sources	DA, ESF, FMF, GHCS, INCLE, IMET, NADR, OE, TI
Procurement	BPA, GLASS, IQC, PO, RFA, RFQ
Regional Missions	RDMA, REDSO/ESA, USAID/CAR
Personnel Categories	AD, CASU, FSN, PSC, PAPA, PASA, RSSA, SMG, TCN, USDH
Congressional Documents	CBJ, CNs, NOA
Collaborating Agencies	MCA, MCC, NSC, OPIC
Committees/Boards	ACVFA, APCC, BIFAD, BTEC, Development IPC, DC, PC
USG Executive Departments and Agencies	DoD, DOS, GAO, GSA, HHS, OMB
Interagency Programs	PEPFAR, PMI
Bilateral Partners	DFID, JICA, NORAD
Multilateral Partners	EC, EU, FAO, IMF, OAS, OECD, UN, WB, WHO
Military Partners	AFRICOM, NATO, CENTCOM
Private Sector Partners	NGO, PVO, PPP
Long-term Projects/Programs	FEWS, FFP,
White House	POTUS, FLOTUS, WH
Laws/Acts	FOIA, PL 480
Other	ADS, ICASS, IDP, RRB, USAID, USG

N.B.: When in doubt, err on the side of spelling an acronym out.

The following acronyms are so common, they do not need to be spelled out in either internal or external correspondence.

ATM	BMW	CIA	FBI
IBM	IRS	PhD	

Articles with Acronyms: Use the indefinite article "a" or "an" according to how the acronym is pronounced.
Examples: an RFP; a SOAG; an MOU

Plural Acronyms: Add a lowercase "s" to acronyms in capital letters, even if the abbreviation ends in an "s." Do not use an apostrophe before the lowercase "s."
Examples: ERSs; SOAGs; CTOs

Exceptions:
Do not add an "s" for the plural of acronyms when the acronym contains a word that can be either singular or plural.
Example: Administrative Management Staff (AMS) – "staff" can be either singular or plural.

Citations

Abbreviate in line with the following conventions:

Code of Federal Regulations	22 CFR 114-116
Executive Order	EO 13157
Foreign Affairs Handbook	3 FAH-1
Foreign Affairs Manual	12 FAM 530
Federal Acquisition Regulations	FAR 32-2
Office of Management and Budget	OMB Circular A-34 **or** OMB A-34; OMB Bulletin 01-02
Public Law	Pub. L. 102-511
U.S. Code	32 U.S.C. 3726

VI. CAPITALIZATION

General Rules: Always capitalize official titles.
Examples: Administrator, Deputy Secretary; Prime Minister

Specific Rules:

Administration
- General Services Administration
- the Obama Administration
- the Administration (the executive branch of the U.S. government as headed by the President and in power during his or her term of office)

Agency
- Central Intelligence Agency
- the Agency (if referring to USAID or a specific federal or international unit)
- **but** an agency, agencies, interagency

Ambassador
- Ambassador John Smith
- Ambassador at Large
- the Ambassador (if referring to a specific ambassador)
- **but** an ambassador

Bureau
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Bureau for Africa
- the Bureau (if referring to a specific USAID or federal unit)
- **but** bureau contacts

Cabinet
- the Cabinet
- but cabinet-rank

Chargé d'Affaires ad interim
- Chargé John Smith
- the Chargé

Chief of Mission
- the Chief of Mission of Embassy XYZ

Congress

- Congress of the United States
- the Congress (if referring to the national legislative body of the United States)
- Member of Congress

Consul / Consul General

- Consul John Smith / Consul General John Smith
- the Consul / Consul General (if referring to a specific consul / consul general)
- **but** a consul / a consul general

Consulate / Consulate General

- Consulate XYZ / Consulate General XYZ
- the Consulate / the Consulate General (if referring to a specific consulate / consulate general)
- **but** a consulate / a consulate general

Embassy

- Embassy XYZ
- the Embassy (if referring to a specific embassy)
- **but** an embassy

Executive Branch

- The executive branch of the U.S. Government.

Federal

- Federal Reserve Board (capitalize when part of a proper noun)
- Federal Government (capitalize both words as an official title)
- federal employees (do not capitalize when used as an adjective)

Government

- the Government of the United States; the U.S. Government, the Government of Denmark (formal)
- **but** the Danish government (informal)

Internet (or **the Net)**

Mission

- the USAID Mission in Burkina Faso
- Mission Director John Doe;
- the Mission Director (if referring to a specific Director)
- but a mission director
- USAID missions around the world

Post (when used as a noun)

- Post (if referring to a specific overseas post)
- **but** at post

Parliament

- Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- Member of Parliament

President

- President John Smith
- the President (if referring to a specific president of a country)
- presidential elections; presidential candidates; presidential appointees

State

- She is from the State of Iowa.
- **but** federal, state, and local law

VII. FORMS OF ADDRESS

References: The USG *Yellow Book* identifies presidential appointees who have been confirmed by the Senate. In letters to persons meeting these criteria, "The Honorable" should be used in the inside address.

The names of foreign heads of state, capital cities, and the official names of countries are found on the "Heads of State" list on the State/ES Info Link.

Refer to the "Forms of Address" table on the following pages for guidance on how to correctly address envelopes, and salutations and complimentary closings in letters.

If guidance is needed for forms of address for people other than those listed below, please call the State ES Correspondence Unit at extension 7-5292.

General Guidelines

- Address all elected officials of the U.S. Government and presidential appointees as "The Honorable".
- Spell out all titles in the address, except "Dr.," "Mr.", "Ms.," or "Mrs." Be consistent in the use of titles within a letter.

Use: Dr. Timothy White" or "Timothy White, M.D."
Avoid: Dr. Timothy White, M.D."

- Use "Mr." if the gender of an addressee is unknown or ambiguous.
- Use "Ms." when addressing women, unless it is known that they prefer "Miss" or "Mrs."

The following list provides models for forms of address for officials of federal, state, and foreign governments, as well as other professions. Forms of address for female officials generally follow the model listed for males, except where differences are indicated.

Address	Address on Letters and Envelope	Salutation and Complimentary Closing
The President	The President The White House Washington, DC 20500	Dear Mr. President: Respectfully,
Former President	The Honorable (Full Name) (Address)	Dear Mr. (Surname): Sincerely,
Wife of the President	Mrs. (Full Name) The White House Washington, DC 20500	Dear Mrs. (Surname): Sincerely,
Assistant to the President	The Honorable (Full Name) Assistant to the President The White House Washington, DC 20500	Dear Mr. (Surname): Sincerely,
The Vice President	The Honorable (Full Name) The White House Washington, DC 20500 The Honorable (Full Name) President of the Senate United States Senate Washington, DC 20510	Dear Mr. Vice President: Respectfully, Dear Mr. President: Sincerely,
The Chief Justice	The Chief Justice of the United States The Supreme Court of the United States Washington, DC 20543	Dear Mr. Chief Justice: Sincerely,
Associate Justice	The Honorable (Full Name) The Supreme Court of the United States Washington, DC 20543	Dear Justice (Surname): Sincerely,

U.S. Senator	The Honorable (Full Name) U.S. Senate Washington, DC 20510	Dear Senator (Surname): Sincerely,
Former U.S. Senator	The Honorable (Full Name) Local Address City, State ZIP	Dear Senator (Surname): Sincerely,
U.S. Representative (Member of Congress)	The Honorable (Full Name) U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Mr. (Surname): Dear Ms. (Surname): Sincerely,
Former U.S. Representative (Member of Congress)	The Honorable (Full Name) Local Address City, State ZIP	Dear Mr. (Surname): Sincerely, Dear Ms. or Mrs. (Surname): Sincerely,
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives	The Honorable (Full Name) Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Mr. Speaker: Sincerely,
Former Speaker of the House of Representatives	The Honorable (Full Name) Local Address City, State ZIP	Dear Mr. (Surname): Sincerely,
Committee Chairman	The Honorable (Full Name) Chairman, Committee on (Name) U.S. Senate Washington, DC 20510 The Honorable (Full Name) Chairman, Committee on (Name) U.S. House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	Dear Mr. Chairman: Sincerely, Dear Madam Chairwoman: Sincerely,
Cabinet Members	The Honorable (Full Name) Secretary of (Name of Department) Washington, DC 00000 The Honorable (Full Name) Attorney General Washington, DC 20530	Dear Mr. Secretary: Dear Madam Secretary: Sincerely, Dear Madam Attorney General: Sincerely,
Secretary of State	The Honorable (Full Name) Secretary of State Washington, DC 20520	Dear Madam Secretary: Sincerely,
Deputy Secretaries, Under, or Assistant Secretaries	The Honorable (Full Name) Deputy Secretary of (Name of Department)	Dear Mr. (Surname):

	Washington, DC 20520 The Honorable (Full Name) Under Secretary of (Name of Department) Washington, DC 20520 The Honorable (Full Name) Assistant Secretary of (Name of Department) Washington, DC 20520	Sincerely,
Head of Independent Offices or Agencies	The Honorable (Full name) Comptroller General of the United States General Accounting Office Washington, DC 20548 The Honorable (Full Name) Chairman (Name of Commission) Washington, DC 20000 The Honorable (Full Name) Director, Office of Management and Budget Washington, DC 20503	Dear Mr. (Surname): Sincerely, Dear Mr. Chairman: Sincerely, Dear Mr. (Surname): Sincerely,
American Ambassador	The Honorable (Full Name) American Ambassador (City), (Country)	Dear Mr. Ambassador: Dear Madam Ambassador: Sincerely,
Former American Ambassador A former Ambassador retains "The Honorable" but not the title of "Ambassador." See Career Ambassador entry below.	The Honorable (Full Name) Local Address City, State ZIP	Dear Mr. (Surname): Dear Ms. or Mrs. (Surname): Sincerely,
Former American Ambassador (Career) A Career Ambassador retains both "The Honorable" and the title of "Mr./Madam Ambassador" for life.	The Honorable (Full Name) Local Address City, State ZIP	Dear Mr. Ambassador: Dear Madam Ambassador: Sincerely,
American Consul General or American Consul	(Full Name) American Consul General (or American Consul) (City), (Country)	Dear Mr. (Surname): Sincerely,
U.S. Representative to the United Nations or Organization of American States	The Honorable (Full Name) United States Representative to the United Nations (or Organization of American States) >(City), (State or Country) 00000	Dear Mr. Ambassador: Dear Madam Ambassador: Sincerely,
President (or leader) of a Foreign Country	His Excellency (Full Name) President of (Country) (Local Address) 00000	Dear Mr. President: Sincerely,

Foreign Ambassador in the United States	His Excellency (Full Name) Ambassador of (Country) (Local Address) 00000	Excellency: *(formal)* Dear Mr. Ambassador: *(informal)* Sincerely,
Foreign Minister	His Excellency (Full Name) Minister of (Name of Ministry) (City), (Country) or Her Excellency (Full Name) Minister of (Name of Ministry) (City), (Country)	Dear Mr. Minister: Dear Madame Minister: Sincerely,
Governor of a State	The Honorable (Full Name) Governor of (Name of State) (City), (State) 00000	Dear Governor (Surname): Sincerely,
Professor	Professor (Full Name) (Full Address) or (must be Ph.D. or M.D.) Dr. (Full Name) (Full Address)	Dear Professor (Surname): or (must be Ph.D. or M.D.) Dear Dr. (Surname): Sincerely,
Head of Foreign Donor Agency Located Outside the United States	The Honorable (Full Name) Full Address	Dear Mr./Madam (Title): (Never say Dear Ms. (Title) or Dear Mr./Ms. (Last Name): (If you are certain the woman is married, it is appropriate to say: Dear Mrs. (Last Name) If the head has a PhD: Dear Dr. (Last Name) Sincerely,
Head of Donor Agency Located Within the United States	The Honorable (Full Name) Full Address	Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. (Last Name) If the head has a PhD: Dear Dr. (Last Name) Sincerely,

VIII. Official Cabinet Names and Acronyms and Principal Names

The Administration

President Barack Obama
Vice President Joe Biden
First Lady Michelle Obama
Dr. Jill Biden
The Cabinet
White House Staff
Executive Office of the President

The Cabinet

In order of succession to the Presidency:

Vice President of the United States
Joseph R. Biden

Department of State (DOS or State)
Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton
http://www.state.gov

Department of the Treasury (Treasury)
Secretary Timothy F. Geithner
http://www.treasury.gov

Department of Defense (DoD)
Secretary Robert M. Gates
http://www.defenselink.mil

Department of Justice (DOJ)
Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.
http://www.usdoj.gov

Department of the Interior (DOI)
Secretary Kenneth L. Salazar
http://www.doi.gov

Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack
http://www.usda.gov

Department of Commerce (DOC)
Secretary Gary F. Locke
http://www.commerce.gov

Department of Labor (DOL)
Secretary Hilda L. Solis
http://www.dol.gov

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
Secretary Kathleen Sebelius
http://www.hhs.gov

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
Secretary Shaun L.S. Donovan
http://www.hud.gov

Department of Transportation (DOT)
Secretary Raymond L. LaHood
http://www.dot.gov

Department of Energy (DOE)
Secretary Steven Chu
http://www.energy.gov

Department of Education (ED)
Secretary Arne Duncan
http://www.ed.gov

Department of Veterans Affair (VA)s
Secretary Eric K. Shinseki
http://www.va.gov

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
Secretary Janet A. Napolitano
http://www.dhs.gov

The following positions have Cabinet rank:

Council of Economic Advisers (The Council)
Chair Christina Romer
http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/cea/

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Administrator Lisa P. Jackson
http://www.epa.gov

Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
Director Peter R. Orszag
http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb

United States Trade Representative (USTR)
Ambassador Ronald Kirk
http://www.ustr.gov

United States Ambassador to the United Nations
Ambassador Susan Rice

United States Mission to the United Nations (USUN)

White House Chief of Staff
Rahm I. Emanuel

IX. OTHER

Education Degrees:

Associates Degree (AA)

Bachelor of Arts Degree (BA)
Bachelor of Science Degree (BSc)

Master of Arts Degree (MA)
Master of Science Degree (MSc)
Master of Business Administration (MBA)

Doctoral Degree (PhD)

Juris Doctor (JD) or Doctor of Jurisprudence (DJ or JD)
Doctor of Medicine (MD)
Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS)

Publishers:

Italicize names of newspaper and magazine publishers.
Example: *The Washington Post Company*

Titles:

Italicize titles of books, epic poems, magazines, movies, musical compositions, newspapers, paintings, pamphlets, plays, radio and television programs, reports, sculpture, etc.
Example: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

Use quotation marks around titles that represent only part of a published work.
Example: The chapter on "Foreign Assistance" was useful.

Use quotation marks around the titles of individual poems (versus epic poems cited above).
Example: A favorite poem is "A Red, Red Rose."