

Write in a way your grandmother would understand! CLEARLY and CONSISTENTLY

Everything you write should be as clear and cohesive as possible. This increases the ability of readers to understand content and the credibility of your information.

In general, stick to the grammar, spelling, and punctuation rules cited in the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook. There are several stylebooks available for reference in LPA, including with the *FrontLines* team. They can also be purchased online at: <http://www.apstylebook.com/>. We also use the OMB General Style Guidelines for government-related general guidelines, which can be found at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/a11_current_year/s95.pdf

The OMB General Style Guidelines supersedes the AP Stylebook when a conflict occurs.

The following list provides additional guidance. What is listed below supersedes the AP Stylebook and OMB General Style Guidelines when a conflict occurs.

Don't Speak in Code: Abbreviations and Acronyms

- Avoid excessive use of abbreviations and acronyms in public documents. If you do have to use them, use official acronyms or abbreviations found [FY 2010 Agency Financial Report](#) on page 161.
- Use “USAID,” not “A.I.D” or “AID.”
- Use the abbreviation “U.S.” (with periods) when used as an adjective, e.g., U.S. assistance. Spell out “United States” when used as a noun, e.g., in the United States. U.S.’ or U.S.’s should not be used.
- Use “U.S. assistance” versus “USG assistance.”
- Do not use USG for U.S. Government.
- Put foreign words or phrases in italics, except ones that have become part of the English lexicon, e.g. déjà vu.
- There is no set rule on whether names of indigenous organizations should be translated to English or left in the original language. We strongly suggest using the original language when the group is well known by its original name. If you are using the indigenous name, put the English translation in parenthesis on first reference.
- Use the word “percent,” not the percent sign. Use the numeral in front of “percent,” i.e. 5 percent, except when starting a sentence: “Five percent of ... “

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- Use “FY” rather than “fiscal year” followed by four figures, e.g., FY 2001 (space between “FY” and year). Also use four figures for calendar year, e.g., 2000.
- Use “P.L. 480” rather than “PL-480” or “Pub. L. No.”
- Use “CSH” for the Child Survival and Health Programs Fund account (formerly Child Survival and Disease Programs Fund, CSD), rather than CS.
- Make sure months are spelled out and not abbreviated.
- Do not use numeric representation of dates, e.g., 10/23/2009, but use the form “Oct. 23, 2009” in narrative. Numeric may be OK to use in some tables.
- State names get abbreviated with the official state abbreviations when with a city (e.g. Austin, TX) and spelled out when alone.
- Do not establish acronyms of USAID offices with preceding “M/” (e.g., M/CFO, M/CIO, M/OAA) as this may not be understood by readers outside USAID.
- Do not use the acronyms USAID/W or AID/W. Keep USAID/Washington.
- Do not use the acronym OCFO for the Office of the Chief Financial Officer. Use “Office of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO)” for first occurrence then “Office of the CFO” thereafter. If the acronym CFO for Chief Financial Officer (CFO) was established prior to the first occurrence, then just use Office of the CFO.
- Do not use the acronym CO; keep the full title of Contracting Officer. The same goes for Agreement Officer as opposed to AO.
- Do not use the acronym CS - spell out civil service (lowercase). The same goes for FS [keep as foreign service (lowercase)] and for GS [keep as general service (lowercase)].
- Use HHS as acronym for the Department of Health and Human Services, not DHHS.

Playing the Numbers Game

1.
 - Spell out numbers one through nine, and use figures for numbers 10 and greater. An exception with spelling out numbers one through nine is when referencing a range, e.g., 8 to 23. For these cases use figures for both.
 - Spell out numbers that begin a sentence, e.g., “Thirty years ago...”
 - In tables and text containing four-digit figures or more, use a comma, e.g., 1,276; 10,416; 115,000.

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- All ages use numbers, hence its “under-5 mortality” not under-five mortality.
- Do not use the comma between month and year when the day is not used, e.g., September 2001.
- Form the plural of numbers by adding an “s,” e.g., in the 1990s.
- Use numbers for dollar figures; spell out thousand, million, billion (do not use K, M, B in text, although can be acceptable in headlines), e.g., \$23 billion.

Consistency is a Capital Idea

- Capitalize the “G” in “government” when referring to the governing body of a country, e.g., U.S. Government or Government of Thailand. Do NOT capitalize government when used in a general sense, e.g., Asian governments, communist governments. Do not use USG for U.S. Government.
- Capitalize the “A” in Agency when referencing USAID or other specific “agency.” Otherwise, use the lowercase.
- Capitalize the following government terms as outlined:
Federal (only when referring to Federal Government)
- Do NOT capitalize the government terms “congressional” and “presidential” unless they are contained in a title.
- Use Internet (capital “I”), not internet.
- Capitalize the “T” in “tribe” when referring to a specific tribe, e.g., Cherokee Tribe. Do not capitalize when used in a general sense.
- Capitalize titles when followed by names, e.g., Mission Director Bill Smith. In other cases use lowercase, including when the name is broken out by commas as in a list, e.g., Bill Smith, mission director of Ecuador; Jane Smiley, executive officer for Microsoft; and...

Make Your Point!

1.
 - Enclose periods, commas, colons, and semicolons within quotation marks (e.g., “health,” and “health.”).
 - After a period, use one single space at the end of each sentence.
 - After a colon, use one space and a capital letter, e.g., “E-Government: As a web-based...”).
 - Use a hyphen between words when combined to form a unit modifier immediately preceding the word modified, e.g., less-developed countries, long-term development.

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- In sequences within sentences, use a comma before the last item in the sequence. For example, “Expanded diversity awareness training for new employees, managers, and supervisors.”
- For the following, please note whether a hyphen is used or not used:
 - a. policymaker
 - b. policy-making
 - c. decisionmaker
 - d. decision-making
 - e. multiyear
 - f. nonexpendable
 - g. counterterrorism
 - h. counternarcotics
- Use long dashes with no spaces on either side and not double dashes (e.g., “In fiscal year 2006, auditors for one CFO Act agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), provided positive assurance—which is an opinion based on the nature and extent of audit work performed—that USAID’s financial management systems substantially complied with the requirements of FFMIA.”).
- For cases in which you wish to combine descriptors like “small-sized and medium-sized” put the hyphen on the first word (“small- and medium-sized”).
- No spaces around “/” (e.g., and/or).

Other Bits and Pieces

- Form the plural of acronyms (and numbers) by adding “s,” e.g., PVOs, 1990s. Do NOT use “’s” to form the plural; the apostrophe indicates possession, not plurality.
- Hyphen Guidelines:
 - Use “crosscutting” and “crosswalk” without hyphens.
 - Use “interagency,” not “inter-agency” [no hyphen].
 - Use “government-wide,” not “governmentwide”; also use “department-wide” and “administration-wide” [with hyphen]. However, use “worldwide” and “nationwide” [no hyphen]
 - Use “re-engineer,” and not “reengineer.”
 - Use “antidumping” and not “anti-dumping,” “antiboycott” and not “anti-boycott” [no hyphen]. However, use “anti-terrorism” [with hyphen].
 - Use “well-being” [with hyphen] and not “well being.”
 - Use “ongoing” and not “on-going.”
 - Use “non-governmental organization,” not “nongovernmental organization.”
- Space Guidelines:
 - Use “database,” not “data base.”
 - Use “Health care,” not “Healthcare.”

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- Use “website,” not “Web site,” “Website,” or “web site.” Additionally use “web-based” as opposed to “web based” or “webbased.”
- Use “online,” not “on-line”; “time line,” not “timeline”; and “bottom line,” not “bottomline.”
- Use “ad hoc” not “ad-hoc” or “adhoc.”

- Data is treated as plural.

- Use “the Congress.” But congressional is lowercase.

- Use Congress’s as possessive.

- Use toward not towards (do not use the “s”).

- For cases where a formal name is used for an act, plan, report, etc.. (e.g., Performance and Accountability Report, Thrift Savings Plan, Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act), the references to the report, plan, or act should be lower case (e.g., the report ..., the plan..., the act...).

- Italicize report names (e.g., *FY 2008 Agency Financial Report*, *FY 2007 – FY 2012 Strategic Plan*, and *FY 2008 Congressional Budget Justification*).

- Italicize foreign program names on first reference, i.e., USAID *Tatweer*, but then use non italics in all future references.

Published to web at:

https://docs.google.com/a/usaaid.gov/document/d/1Do33IXej5gfBQijsM30u8VNuv0_0AWW6jm7WTBb_bQ4/edit?hl=en_US