**Action Medical Research written style quick guide**

**Introduction**

Our style guide helps to ensure all written communications present a consistent and professional style to the public, supporters and donors. The style rules should be followed when producing all online content and printed materials, as well as letters and correspondence on behalf of the charity.

This quick guide highlights the more common style issues to remember and will hopefully act as an easy-to-use reference guide to check anything you are unsure about.

If you have any queries, please speak to Clare Airey, Publications Editor, or email editor@action.org.uk

**Font / type / layout**

• Our house style font for printed materials is Gill Sans in 12 point.

• All materials should be produced in 12 point as it is the minimum font size required to meet basic accessibility standards. Exceptions are captions and picture credits.

• If Gill Sans is not available, please use Verdana. Helvetica is our preferred font for websites.

• Use single spacing after full stops and between lines.

• Please avoid putting body text and quotes in bold, underlining text and using quote marks around phrases you think are quirky or odd. When producing reports, it may be appropriate to use bold for titles and subtitles.

**Italics**

• Do use for book, film, magazine and TV titles, for example *Touching Lives*, *Big Brother*, *The Independent,* and for scientific names/Latin terms (but stick to plain text for online copy as it is easier to read on screen).

• Don’t use to emphasise words.

**Exclamation marks**

• Keep to a minimum and never use more than one at a time.

• Avoid using in headlines, titles or captions unless truly warranted.

**Full stops**

• Don’t use in headlines, titles, captions or after web or email addresses.

• Do use in standfirsts.

• Never use more than three full stops on ellipses (the dots that indicate continuation. For example: watch this space…)

**Quote style**

• Use double quotation marks (“) for directly quoted speech.

• There should be a comma or full stop at the end of a piece of a quote and this should be placed **inside** the closing quotation marks. For example, “Kira is 16 now, but in many ways she’s still a little girl,” says her mum Erika.

• Use a colon (:) if introducing the speaker first. For example, Sam says: “Even if this work does not affect Alfie in his lifetime, it could help other families in the future.”

**Case** (further examples/guidance can be found in the full style guide)

• Use upper case sparingly unless needed for names. Capitals are more difficult to read.

• Use a single initial capital in headings. No other words in a title should begin with a capital unless it is a natural capital such as a name or publication title.

• Don’t use upper case for ‘charity’, ‘trustee’ or ‘committee’ when using these as general terms. Also use will not Will (as in a gift in your will).

• If using an actual committee name, cap up in full, for example Lutterworth Committee.   
If it is a committee tied to an event, cap up the event name only, for example Spring Lunch committee. Refer to the full committee name in the first instance and just the ‘committee’ thereafter.

• In general, unless a medical condition is named after someone or begins a sentence, it should always be written in lower case.

• Research Training Fellowship(s) thereafter write fellowship(s); He/she is one of our Research Training Fellows.

**Apostrophes and contractions**

Apostrophes indicate a missing letter or letters (can’t, we’d) or a possessive (David’s book). A misplaced apostrophe can change the meaning of a sentence.  
  
• Words ending in ‘s’ use an apostrophe and an ‘s’, for example James’s diary, Chris’s office.

• For plurals, use an apostrophe only, for example Ladies’ Lunch.

• Plural nouns that do not end in ‘s’ take an apostrophe and ‘s’, for example saving and changing children’s lives.

• Exception: the possessive ‘its’ is similar to ‘his’ and therefore does not have an apostrophe.

• Do not use apostrophes in plurals of numbers and acronyms, for example 1990s not 1990’s, CFMs not CFM’s.

**Hyphens (-) and en dashes (–)**

Hyphens are different to en dashes. Hyphens are used to link words and parts of words. En dashes are used in pairs to mark off information not essential to understanding the rest of the sentence, and to show other kinds of break in a sentence where a comma, semicolon, or colon would be traditionally used.

There is no key for an en dash on your computer. To add an en dash to a Word document, go to the toolbar and select: Insert > Symbol > type 2013 in the character code field and click Insert.

**Hyphen use** (please see full style guide for more detailed guidance)

As language develops, the need for hyphens changes – people used to write bath-room and   
to-day. For consistency, please follow these rules.

• No hyphens in: email, enewsletter, ebusiness, ecommerce, fundraising, longstanding, offline, online, ebook, ecommerce, ereader, high resolution, low resolution, pro rata.

• Do use hyphens in: cost-effective, evidence-based, first-time as in first-time supporter, full-time, hospital-acquired, in-house, mail-out, part-time, pre-existing, record-breaking, right-hand, sell-out, side-effects, world-class, x-ray, 10-year strategy, 100-mile bike ride.

• Be aware, in some cases hyphens are needed for clarity: consider the difference in meaning between ‘I saw a man eating shark today’ and ‘I saw a man-eating shark today’!

**NB: Up-to-date, cutting-edge, step-by-step, long-term, high-tech** (Also see Ages.)

These examples are hyphenated when used as adjectives before the noun, but not when they form the noun. See examples below:

The strategy will be adopted in the long term making it a long-term strategy.  
The system was high tech, which means it was a high-tech system.

**Web addresses**

Take care not to let web addresses be hyphenated inappropriately; break them at a sensible point within the name if you need to turn a line.

Write websites as one word, lower case, in full and use bold but without the ‘www.’ or ‘http://’. Add websites to the end of articles without a full stop.

Our website is **action.org.uk**

**Numbers**

Numbers **one to nine** should be written out **in words**.

**From 10**, numbers are written **as figures** (up to 999,999).

• Thereafter 1m, 3.2bn (except for people, for example 2 million participants).

Exceptions: year 2, key stage 1, page 1, day 3, top 5, route 4, appendix 1, 1.2cm, 3lbs are fine written as digits. For example: ‘Details of route 4 are on page 6’.

• Avoid beginning a sentence with a number but always spell out if so.

• Spell out up to ninth, then 10th, 21st, millionth (note it is 10th not 10th).

• One in six, one in 10 should be treated as singular. For example: One in 10 babies in the UK needs [not need] some form of special care.

**Money**  
When raising millions, our style is either £3.5m (no gap between amount and unit) or £3.5 million (with a gap if spelt out in full).

We use £1,000 not £1000 or £1k; £25,000 not £25000 or £25k.

**Per cent**

Write per cent in full unless the figures are in a table or headline and always use digits, for example 2 per cent not 2%, 45 per cent not 45%.

**Times and dates**

• Use am and pm, not 24-hour clock.

• List in order of day, month, year (eg 1 January 2017).

• Never use ordinals (‘th’, ‘st’). (eg not 1st January 2017).

**Ages**  
• Remember our general number style (one to nine written as words etc).

• Note placement of hyphens: ‘Kira is 16 years old’ needs no hyphens but ‘this is 16-year-old Kira’ does. This is because the first is a statement of fact, the second is a description.

**Distances for challenge events**

• Write out metres in full to avoid confusion with million.

• Abbreviate kilometres to km in lower case and do not add a space between the number and letters, for example 100km not 100 km. We sometimes refer to 100k in advertising as it is snappier.

Note when hyphens are/aren’t used:

• 100-mile bike ride, 100-mile route, 100-mile ride.

But do not hyphenate if letters rather than a word follow the 100: 100km bike ride not 100-km bike ride, 100km route not 100-km route.

• The route is 100 miles, the route is 100km, you can choose to ride 100 miles.

**Names**

**Using our name**

If, for space, you need to shorten the name Action Medical Research, then use Action and not the abbreviation AMR. Only refer to the charity as Action when the name has already been written out in full on the page in the first instance.

Use the singular form when referring to Action Medical Research as an organisation: Action Medical Research is funding research into epilepsy. Use the plural form when referring to Action as a group of individuals: We are Action Medical Research.

**Abbreviations, acronyms and ampersands**

For other organisations, write the full name first, with the initials in brackets next to it, and thereafter use the initials.

In general, do not abbreviate terms that occur only once or twice and do not use informal abbreviations: ‘info’ for information or ‘net’ for ‘internet’.

Don’t abbreviate names such as Imperial College London to Imperial; University College London (UCL) and thereafter UCL is fine.

Don’t use full stops in acronyms: USA not U.S.A. or names NJ Jordison not N.J. Jordison.

If you have to use ‘eg’ and ‘ie’ do not include the full stops.

Don’t use ampersands (&) except where they occur in names such as organisations (P&O). Ideally they should not be used in titles. Occasionally, we may use ampersands where space is short, for example in tables or online.

**Personal titles**

When introducing a professor in text for the first time, always spell their title and name in full, for example Professor Jane Norman not Prof Norman. After the first mention, you may call them by their title and surname only, for example Professor Norman. For doctors, you may use the abbreviation Dr when introducing them as this is a commonly abbreviated address like Mr and Mrs, but always use their full name first, for example Dr Sallie Baxendale, thereafter Dr Baxendale.

**Job titles**

Use capital letters for someone’s title only when it is used with their name, for example Sarah Moss, Director of Communications; thereafter refer to the ‘director of communications’.

Vice President (no hyphen)

Chair (not chairman or chairwoman)

Co-chair (note use of upper and lower case)

**Correct form for event titles** –note spacing, upper/lower case, digits and hyphens

Action Cream Teas

Action London to Paris / London to Paris bike ride\*

Celebration of Motorsport Dinner

Champions of CycleSport Dinner

Davina's Big Sussex Bike Ride

Dine with Davina

RIDE100 series

Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100

Trek the Night

Race the Sun  
Three Peaks Challenge

Mountain series   
Virgin Money London Marathon

Vitality London 10,000

Scumrun

\* Spell out as a rule. If you have to abbreviate to L2P, always spell out at first mention: Action London to Paris (L2P).

Other sub-brands and terms:  
Action Weekly Lottery

Bring your Bear

Give as you Live

Saving Tiny Lives research campaign

SPARKS NI (a Northern Ireland committee)

Tribute Funds  
Walk for Tiny Lives

**Bullet point lists**

Always use a colon (:) to announce a list.

When the items on a list are each one or two words, they should be in lower case and in the same grammatical form. For example, if you were listing items to take on a PLOD, all the points might simply be nouns:

* suncream
* torch
* waterproof clothing.

In this instance, put a full stop at the end of the list, not after each bullet point.

However, if each bullet point is more than two words and a complete sentence beginning with a capital letter, use a full stop at the end of each one. For example:

What is included?

1. International return flights to Kathmandu.
2. Twin accommodation in a hotel at the beginning and end of a trek.
3. Twin shared tent accommodation on the trek.

**Exception**

Please note that the layout of some promotional materials may warrant a different approach which our designers would advise on.

**A note about language**

A list of contentious words can be found in the full style guide.

**Actionisms**

• Refer to ‘infant deaths’ not ‘infant mortality’.

• Refer to ‘newborn babies’ not ‘newborns’ (for impact).

• Where possible say ‘the project was funded by Action Medical Research’ not ‘the Action Medical Research-funded project / Action-funded project’.

**Spelling** (including use of accents)

• Please ensure that your computer’s spellchecker is set to UK English.

• Use the English style ‘s’ not ‘z’ in words such as civilisation, authorisation, organisation etc.

As a rule, it is ‘-ise’ not ‘-ize’ at end of a word, for example maximise, synthesise, specialise, emphasise, organise (but use ‘capsize’).

• Use accents on French, German, Spanish and Irish Gaelic words. People’s names, in whatever language, should also be given appropriate accents where known as should places, for example Champs Elysées.

**The full style guide contains a list of tricky/preferred spellings** (especially in relation to medical conditions), when to use two words and when to use one, and guidance on problematic words, such as those where different spellings relate to   
different meanings such as affect or effect.

If in doubt, please use the online Oxford Dictionary, **oxforddictionaries.com/** for spelling help.