

Editorial style guide

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Table of contents

BEFORE YOU BEGIN	3
PRODUCT STRATEGY: MATCHING PUBLICATION TO AUDIENCE.....	3
TONE	3
READABILITY.....	3
REFERENCES	4
CITATIONS	4
CITING AUTHORS IN AERO PUBLICATIONS	4
CREDITING OTHER CONTRIBUTORS	5
CITATION STYLE IN RESEARCH REPORTS	5
CITATION STYLE IN PRACTICE PUBLICATIONS	5
WRITING ABOUT AERO	6
STYLE RULES	7
PREFERRED TERMS: USE/DON'T USE	8
STAKEHOLDER-PREFERRED TERMS	9
ECEC SPECIFIC.....	9
SCHOOLS SPECIFIC	10
SPELLING AND WORD CHOICE	10
HELPFUL ACRONYMS	14
FILE NAMING	16
INTERNAL FILE NAMES	16
PUBLICATION FILE NAMES.....	16
APPENDIX 1: STANDARD TEXT FOR PUBLICATIONS	18
LONG PUBLICATION PRELIM TEXT	18
SHORT PUBLICATION PRODUCT DETAILS.....	19

Note: This style guide is intended for use by anyone writing or editing an AERO publication. It should be used in conjunction with the [Australian Government style manual](#). Anything not covered in this guide should be sought out in the government style manual.

Before you begin

Product strategy: Matching publication to audience

If you are a project lead and you are starting to think about the findings you want to share, or the message you want to convey, it's time for **product strategy**. Suiting the product to your goal.

Speak to your comms lead, who can advise on the options. They will want to know:

- Who is your audience?
- What engages your audiences? I.e., how do they like their content?
- What do we want them to know, think or feel?
- What do we want them to do?

Most of the time, it should be possible to achieve your communication goal without inventing a new publication type. But again, speak to your communications lead.

Tone

Use the [appropriate tone](#) for the target audience: **'formal'** or **'standard'**.

Writing aimed at researchers, academics and analysts (aka 'policy wonks') will usually be *formal*. That will cover most research reports.

Writing aimed at teachers, educators and even most school leaders should be *standard*. That will cover most, if not all, practice publications.

According to the [government style manual](#), 'Most people find standard tone easiest to understand'.

Readability

The government style manual and the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG) both strongly encourage a reading level of 'lower secondary'. That means writing 'to a reading level...of Year 7 (age range 12 to 14 years)'.

It is worth [quoting the style manual](#) at length:

Even highly literate people appreciate easy-to-read content, especially when the subject matter is complex or unfamiliar. And writing in a clear, concise way should not be seen as 'dumbing down' your content. No-one has ever complained about content being too easy to understand. Keeping your content clear and concise takes skill, but it is worth the effort.

References

AERO uses [APA referencing style](#).¹

A primary research report should be cited as per APA's '[report with individual authors](#)' style. For example:

Chen, S., Baxter, T., & Ogwayo, C. (2023). *Evidence use in schools: Full report*. Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO).
<https://www.edresearch.edu.au/resources/evidence-use-schools>

A *summary* of a primary report, or any other kind of publication, such as a practice guide or knowledge translation piece, should be cited as per APA's '[report by a government agency](#)' style. For example:

Australian Education Research Organisation. (2023). *Evidence use in schools: Summary report*. Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO).
<https://www.edresearch.edu.au/resources/evidence-use-schools>

Please also note:

- If a report is published online, the link to the report should be to the web landing page, *not* to the PDF.²
- A research report's reference list should only be given in the report's PDF version, as the report's web landing page will only contain a summary of the report.
- Conversely, a practice publication's reference list, if there is one, should *not* be given in its PDF version and *only* in its web landing page. (See also Citation style in practice publications.)

Citations

In keeping with tone guidelines (see [Tone](#), above), the correct approach to in-text citations will depend on the publication type.

Citing authors in AERO publications

AERO research reports (note, *only* research reports) may cite individual authors, AERO-aligned or otherwise.

¹ AERO researchers use [Zotero](#) to collect and store citations, which can be formatted into APA style for AERO publications. Zotero also allows inter-researcher citation visibility and sharing. Consult the [Zotero onboarding guide](#) or contact the Research Librarian for more information.

² The [government style manual](#) explains: 'Landing pages tend to be a more stable place to link to. PDFs are often renamed or moved around a site. Linking to a PDF also requires the user to download content.'

Individual authors are also listed in the 'Authors' and 'How to cite' sections of the publication prelims (see '[Appendix 1: Standard text for publications](#)', below) and on the report landing page.

The 'Authorship' guide of the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (2018) states, 'as a general rule, all those who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution should be named as authors'. Providing 'they agree to be listed as an author'.³

The order of author listings should be negotiated between the report authors under the leadership of the lead author.

Where First Nations research is involved, consult the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) [Code of Ethics](#) for guidance on contributions, attribution and acknowledgement and dissemination.

For styling of citations, see References, above.

Crediting other contributors

Where a legal agreement exists with an external collaborator, credits and copyright notices must align with the agreement. However, as per the NHMRC guidelines, only 'those who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution' to the report may be cited as authors. (AERO production staff are not credited as authors or otherwise.)

Citation style in research reports

Research reports tend to take a formal approach to citations, which is one way of demonstrating their rigour and authority.

Research reports should follow the author-date approach favoured by the American Psychological Association (APA), which is recommended by the [government style manual](#). E.g., 'Jones (2017) reported similar results' or 'Other results were similar (Jones 2017)', followed by a reference list at the end of the publication.

Citation style in practice publications

Practice publications are intended for a non-academic, largely practitioner audience.

Examples:

- [Spacing and retrieval practice guide](#)

³ See also AERO's Open Access, Research Authorship, Publication and Dissemination Procedure (or contact the Manager, Research Governance and Ethics).

- [Supporting teachers to use research evidence well in practice](#)
- [Evaluating non-academic sources – The CRAAP test](#)

The credibility of practice publications derives in part from the AERO brand, which, in turn, is underpinned by the rigour of AERO’s research. But this does not mean practice publications need to ‘ape’ research reports. It is enough that both kinds of products are seen to originate from the same organisation with the same high standards.

Because of their audience and intended purpose, practice publications do not and *should not* reference the literature in the same formal, ‘author-date’ manner that research reports do. They should put usability to the fore.

Practice publications should minimise the number of references they include. Many will require zero references. And those that do contain references should use unobtrusive superscript endnotes⁴ instead of author-date referencing.

Finally, practice publications should not include reference sections in the PDF publication, but instead link to a References (‘and further reading’ if appropriate) section in the publication’s web landing page. It should look similar to this:

References and further reading



Writing about AERO

Rule	Examples
See edresearch.edu.au/about-us for the official AERO story	
Refer to AERO in the singular, however if in a tract of text the word ‘AERO’ gets too repetitive, you may use ‘we’ to break things up (even though this is not strictly grammatical).	The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) is pleased to announce...

⁴ As opposed to superscript *footnotes*, like this one.

Rule	Examples
Spell out AERO in full in the first instance and give acronym in brackets. Use the acronym after that. (Note 'the' is not capitalised unless it is the first word of a sentence.)	As above.
In legal circumstances, use 'Australian Education Research Organisation Limited (AERO)'	

Style rules

Rule	Examples
Use single quotes. Only use double quotes for quotes within quotes.	He said, 'I asked her and she said, "Fine with me," so I took the picture down.'
Do not place a space either side of a forward slash.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrong: 'day / night' • Right: 'day/night'
Use sentence case for headings and when referring to publications or AERO projects. Note that when a publication has a subtitle, the first letter after the colon is capitalised.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About us • 'Our Tiered Interventions project aims to...' • Evidence use in schools: A national snapshot
Use title case for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • legal acts and documents • policies, programs and official documents • policy elements • books, movies etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Conduct • Research Agenda • Strategic Plan • Tried and Tested • Literacy Learning Progressions - Writing

Rule	Examples
<p>Do not use underline, except for hyperlinks.</p> <p>Limit use of italics and of bold.</p> <p>Remember to always use the Word template styles for headings and quotes, rather than adding your own formatting.</p>	<p>From a paper about equity:</p> <p>‘...all students need access to high-quality instruction that will support them to achieve. Schools and teachers need to be adequately equipped to support excellent and equitable outcomes for all students.’</p>

Preferred terms: Use/don't use

Use	Do not use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations people • Aboriginal person • Torres Strait Islander person • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people • If possible, use specific nation or community names, for example: use “She is a Noongar woman” rather “She is an Aboriginal woman”. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aborigine • ATSI • Indigenous (when referring specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people). And especially not ‘indigenous’ without a capital.
Australian Curriculum	National curriculum
Australian Government	Commonwealth
The Department of Education	The education department
Early childhood and care service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare centres • Day care • For more information, refer to ‘How to talk about ECEC’
edresearch.edu.au	www.edresearch.edu.au
English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D)	EAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person with disability • People with disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabled person • Able-bodied

Use	Do not use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Person without disability 	<p>There is more advice on how to use respectful language in the style manual.</p>

Stakeholder-preferred terms

Stakeholder groups should be referred to as specifically as possible in external documents. Try to avoid catch-alls such as ‘stakeholders’, ‘audience’, ‘education professionals’, and ‘education practitioners’.

Preferred terms, general:

- educators and teachers (‘educators’ alone cannot stand in for both)
- schools and early childhood education and care
- children and young people (when talking about ultimate outcomes) or children and students (when talking about those attending services and schools).
- school and service leaders
- education policymakers
- parents and primary caregivers
- national education architecture
- researchers and academics

Terms to avoid:

- educators as a stand-in for ‘educators and teachers’
- empower
- evidence-literacy (use ‘literacy’ only in a curriculum sense)
- journey
- mobilisation
- reach out
- research-literacy
- practitioners

ECEC specific

Refer to [‘How to talk about ECEC’](#).

Notes:

- Instead of Director/manager, use service leader.
- Approved learning frameworks – refer to as EYLF V2.0 and MTOP V2.0.
- ‘Children’ refers to all children birth to 5 years; ‘very young children’ is used to distinguish infants under 2 years.

Schools specific

- Schools
- Students
- Teachers
- Educational support officers
- School leaders
- Principals
- Systems and sectors

Spelling and word choice

Spelling preference is generally the first option cited in the Macquarie dictionary, except where specified below.

For preferred spellings of Indigenous languages and place names, go to www.firstlanguages.org.au/nangun-wruk.

A

Aboriginal (adj. only; do not use as a noun)

Aboriginal person

acknowledgement

Acknowledgement of Country

Additional learning needs (not 'special needs')

among (not 'amongst')

Australian Curriculum

Australian Parliament (prefer to 'Commonwealth'; never use 'Federal')

B

budget (government's)

C

comprise (not 'comprises of')

cooperate (not 'co-operate')

coordinate

criterion (sing.); criteria (pl.)

curriculum (sing.); curricula (pl.)

Custodians (Aboriginal)

D

data ('data are' / 'data is': use *plural* when using formal tone, e.g., in research reports, and *singular* when using standard tone, e.g., in practice publications)

decision-maker; decision-making (both adjective and noun)

E

educational value (not 'educational soundness')

e.g., (may be used instead of 'for example')

e-learning

Elders (Aboriginal)

F

Facebook

Far North Queensland

federal (generic term: 'federal, state and local governments', but always use Australian Government as proper name)

Foundation (year)

F-10

Foundation – Year 10

G

Google (noun), google (verb)

government (use lower case in generic sense, use upper case for the title of specific governments, 'the Victorian Government'; 'the Australian Government'. Use lower case for 'governments' when referring to more than one specific government, 'the Australian and state governments')

H

higher-order thinking

homepage

I

i.e., (may be used instead of 'namely' or 'that is to say')

inquiry (not enquiry)

internet, intranet

J

judgement

L

learning object (but prefer: 'interactive resource')

learning progressions

log in, log out (verb)

login, logout (noun, adj)

long-term (adj)

M

Mathematics (learning area)

mathematics (area of knowledge)

measurement scale

metacognitive

minister (capitalised when used as address, 'Yes, Minister', or as a part of a full title, 'Minister for Education and Training'; not capitalised otherwise)

N

national benchmark

National School Reform Agreement

non-government (adj.)

O

on demand (noun, 'device is on demand')

on-demand (adj., 'on-demand resources')

online

on screen (noun, 'see on screen')

onscreen (adj., 'onscreen resources')

Opposition (initial cap for specific use, 'Today in Parliament, the Opposition moved a motion'; lower case for generic use, 'in the Westminster system, the role of the opposition is ...')

organisation (but note: 'World Health Organization'; 'United Nations Organization')

P

Parliament (use upper case when referring to a particular parliament, with or without a preceding qualifying word, 'the South Australian Parliament', 'the Parliament'; otherwise lower case)

part-time (adj.)

PDF (adj., noun, verb)

pedagogy (use minimally)

per cent (use symbol % in most instances)

percentage

plug-in

PowerPoint

pre-empt

preschool

printout (noun)

problem-solving

professional learning

program

R

recreate (create again)

reintroduce

re-use

S

the Senate, senator/s (capital S when used in a title, e.g., Senator Smith)

site map

stand-alone (adj.)

state (use initial capital when using as a part of a proper name, 'the State Library of NSW', otherwise do not capitalise)

storyline

T

territory (capitalise when referring to the Northern Territory)

third party (but 'third-party rights')

timeframe

towards (not 'toward', 'as he came towards me')

Traditional Owners

U

URL

usable

usability

user-centred design

W

webpage

wellbeing

Welcome to Country

while (not 'whilst')

wiki (but 'Wikipedia')

Work Plan (in reference to AERO's 'Annual Work Plan')

workplan (all instances except above)

Y

year (capitalise when referring to a specific grade, 'Year 2, Years 2-10')

Helpful acronyms

Acronym	
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACARA Act	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008
ACECQA	Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACNC	Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
ACTS	Australian Curriculum and Teaching Services
AESOC	Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (formerly AEEYSOC)

Acronym	
AEU	Australian Education Union
AG	Australian Government
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ANR	National Report on Schooling in Australia
APS	Australian Public Service
ASL	Average staffing level
ATSIEAG	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Advisory Group
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ECPG	Early Childhood Policy Group
EMM	Education Ministers Meeting
ESA	Education Services Australia
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
ICT	Information and communication technology
IEU	Independent Education Union
ISA	Independent Schools Australia (previously ISCA)
ISCA	Independent Schools Council of Australia
ISQ	Independent Schools Queensland
IT	Information technology
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LOE	Letter of Expectation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
NCEC	National Catholic Education Commission
NEI	National Evidence Institute
NMF	National Measurement Framework

Acronym	
NQF	National Quality Framework
NSRA	National School Reform Agreement
PAG	Project Advisory Group
PBS	Portfolio Budget Statements
PGPA Act	Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013
PGPA Rule	Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PL	Professional Learning
PS	Public Service
QA	Quality Assurance
RBA	Reserve Bank of Australia
SPG	Schools Policy Group
TEMAG	Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group
USI	Unique Student Identifier
VETiS	Vocational Education and Training in Schools

File naming

Internal file names

- Example file name: Implementation plan_Draft v1_161220; Implementation plan_Final v1_161220
- Clear and brief document title – preferably under 30 characters
- Include version numbering
- Include date. Format: yyyyymmdd or yyyyymm

Publication file names

Before upload onto a website or digital distribution, give a file a 'web-friendly' file name. This means:

- no spaces (hyphens to replace spaces)

Editorial style guide

- no version numbering
- no dates
- all lower-case

Examples

- implementation-plan
- tried-tested-mastery-learning

Appendix 1: Standard text for publications

Long publication prelim text

The inside front cover of long publications (research reports and some longer practice guides) should contain the following prelim text:

About AERO

The Australian Education Research Organisation ([AERO](#)) is Australia's national education evidence body, working towards excellent and equitable outcomes for all children and young people.

(In joint publications, e.g., [this co-publication with Monash Q](#), you may include another 'About' section with up to 25 words about the partner organisation.)

Acknowledgements

AERO acknowledges that this publication was made possible by the joint funding it receives from Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

Publication-specific acknowledgements, e.g.: 'This report was commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment... The authors would like to thank all those who participated in...etc.'

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands, waterways, skies, islands and sea country across Australia. We pay our deepest respects to First Nations cultures and Elders past and present. We endeavour to continually value and learn from First Nations knowledges and educational practices.

Authors

You can list authors here even if the publication does not qualify for APA [report with individual authors](#) treatment, – i.e., is not a research report.

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How to cite

See [References](#) and [Citations](#), above.

Publication details

ISBN xxxx (Online)

ISBN xxxx (PDF)

Cover image: [credit]

Short publication product details

In short publications – i.e., those without a prelim page – place a copyright statement in the publication footer. E.g.:

© 2023 Australian Education Research Organisation Ltd ([AERO](#)). [CCBY 4.0](#), excluding image pl: iStock.com/Bob Mills.

If the publication has had input from partners, contributors or external authors, a boxed text at the end of the publication can contain the acknowledgement. E.g.:

Our transitions resources were developed in partnership with Monash University. AERO appreciates the valuable input from the Transitions Project Advisory Group (PAG) members, the Practitioner Working Group (PWG) and expert reviewers Dr Jennifer Cartmel, Dr Bruce Hurst and Dr Kathy Cologan. Views represented in these resources are attributable to AERO, and do not represent an endorsed view from PAG and PWG members, expert reviewers, or others consulted in the resources' development.