ICANN COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES: STYLE GUIDE FOR WRITTEN CONTENT

First Edition, June 2017

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1. Introduction

Good writing is essential to effective communication. Our job is to communicate ICANN's vision and mission through the creation of quality content. Good content builds engagement, and engagement builds trust. This relationship-building tool informs and educates our audiences about ICANN. Our content should strengthen ICANN's identity – and our writing needs to be easy to understand, consistent, recognizable, and engaging.

Why Does Good Writing Matter?.
- Helps deepen engagement.
- Improves the quality of translations.
- Enhances ICANN's reputation.

What's in the Guide and Who's It For?

Writing takes a lot of time and effort. This guide gives you the "how" of good writing so you can focus on the "what." It presents ICANN's writing style and the standards for usage and grammar for all types of content. It is not comprehensive; rather, it covers major topics and common problem areas. The target audience is the ICANN organization – not Supporting Organizations or Advisory Committees.

We know that the guide is substantial, but it's meant to be used as a reference when you need to look up information. And, it's a living document – we will update it as needs change.

In addition, you can download a series of short, topical "cheat sheets" that address common topics:

- Announcements
- Blogs
- Event summaries
- Newsletter articles
- Social Media
- Headlines and Photo Captions

Access these publications on weCANN at https://go.icann.org/2sExKpi.

What Are Our Basic Principles?

The foundation of ICANN's style is plain English. ICANN's headquarters is in the U.S., so we follow American standards for word choice, spelling, and punctuation. Regardless of the type of content, our goal is to use simple, clear, and concise language.

In his essay "Politics and the English Language," George Orwell lists six simple rules for effective writing. In general, if you follow these rules, you can't go wrong:

1. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Read the full essay here:
https://go.icann.org/2rGkpzE

What Is ICANN Content?

ICANN creates and distributes a variety of content types targeted for different audiences. We produce announcements, blogs, infographics, presentations, proposals, reports, social media posts, videos, and webinars. We repurpose content on multiple platforms for multiple audiences – a video that appears on YouTube may also appear in a blog post.

What Are the Foundations of ICANN's Style?

ICANN bases its writing standards on other style guides. Sometimes ICANN standards contradict these authorities. In order of precedence, ICANN writing standards derive from these sources:

1. *AP Stylebook* – for grammar, punctuation and style. Some entries contain ICANN-specific customizations, including exceptions and examples. ICANN has licensed a number of concurrent seats of the AP Stylebook. You don't need to register, but you must be logged into the ICANN network or VPN (Full Tunnel) to access this URL using an ICANN email address.
https://www.apstylebook.com/icann_org/

2. *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* – for spelling. Although AP recommends the use of another dictionary, ICANN has chosen Merriam-Webster because it is free to everyone.
http://www.merriam-webster.com/

3. *Chicago Manual of Style* – for topics not covered by AP.
http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/

If you want to learn more about writing, see the publications listed in "More Writing Resources" on page 68, or send an email to
icanncontent@icann.org.

2. ICANN's Writing Style

ICANN's writing style is tailored for our unique ICANN community. Plain English is always our goal – it is simple, concise, consistent, and easy to understand.

ICANN is a global organization. We have a variety of English speakers – e.g., Americans, Britons, Canadians, Australians, Indians, South Africans – and many others whose first language is not English.

ICANN's writing style is based primarily on the principles of plain English. It also includes elements of global English, guidelines that make English easier for a global audience to understand. By adopting just a few practices from global English, we can meet the needs of our global audience.

> The tenets of plain English and global English are complementary. Everyone benefits when content is more accessible and a broader range of readers can understand ICANN's content. It also helps us produce better quality translations in less time and with fewer iterations.

Make Your Writing Easy to Understand

- Where possible, write content that a 14-year-old (someone with 8 years of education) can understand.
- Many tools, including Microsoft Word and Acrolinx, use the Flesch-Kincaid formulas to assess the reading level of your content. For more information, see "Readability Tools" on page 66.
- Write short sentences, use simple words, and be clear. Simplifying your writing helps everyone, regardless of language ability.
- Follow principles of plain English even if your audience understands technical content and ICANN terminology. Try to restrict the complexity of your content to technical terms and ICANN jargon you need to use.

Use Bias-Free Language

• Use gender-neutral pronouns. Use gender-specific pronouns only when they refer to specific people. Don't use *his* or *her* or *his/her*, and don't use *their* with a singular subject. Reword the sentence instead. Often, making the subject plural eliminates problems with pronouns.	✓ Sharon implied that she will not vote for your candidate. ✓ Employees must report their time off in the time accounting system. ✗ An employee must report his or her time off in the time accounting system. ✓ A system operator must use good judgment. ✗ A system operator must use their good judgment.
• Be sensitive to other cultures and religions. Avoid references that are culturally or geographically specific. Don't refer to seasons, which vary depending on where you are in the world. Instead, refer to a specific month or quarter. Avoid references to animals, human body parts, religions, or other cultural symbols.	✓ ICANN expects to deliver the proposal in the third quarter of 2017. ✗ ICANN expects to deliver the proposal in the fall of 2017.

Use a Simple and Consistent Vocabulary

- Use consistent terms to increase comprehension and improve the quality of translations.

• Define unfamiliar terms and acronyms the first time you use them.	✓ The Domain Name System (DNS) allows you to visit a website without entering the Internet Protocol (IP) address. ✗ The DNS allows you to visit a website without entering an IP address.

- Minimize jargon. ICANN's vocabulary includes many acronyms and specialized terms. While you can't escape ICANN jargon, you can minimize the usage.

• Use short and familiar words. Don't use formal or long words if simpler options exist.	✓ use ✓ begin ✓ about	✗ utilize ✗ commence ✗ approximately
• Choose single-word over multiword expressions.	✓ before ✓ to ✓ some	✗ prior to ✗ in order to ✗ a number of
• Use one-word, specific verbs instead of phrasal verbs, which are difficult for non-native speakers of English.	✓ introduce ✓ discover ✓ return	✗ bring up ✗ find out ✗ go back
• Avoid idioms, which are often culturally specific. The reference in an idiom may not translate from one culture to another.	✓ fair ✓ easy ✓ tell a secret	✗ level playing field ✗ piece of cake ✗ spill the beans
• Don't invent words – e.g., verbs from nouns, adjectives from verbs.		✗ unvalidatable ✗ irregardless ✗ participator
• Avoid unnecessary adjectives and adverbs. For example, the adverbs *very* and *really* don't add value to a sentence.	✓ This glossary contains ICANN terms. ✗ This useful glossary contains important ICANN terms. ✓ This meeting is important. ✗ This meeting is really important.	

Write Short Sentences and Paragraphs

- Present only one thought per sentence. If you have more than one point, write two sentences.

- Keep sentences to a maximum length of 26 words, but aim for 18 words or fewer. Keep your average sentence length to no more than 15 to 20 words.

Microsoft Word has built-in functionality to help determine the readability of content. For more information, see "Readability Tools" on page 66.

- Long sentences are not more impressive than short ones. They often contain grammatical errors and can be difficult to understand. Break up sentences with multiple clauses into separate sentences.	✓ Automated testing tools (commercial or in-house) help quality assurance personnel verify changes to software. Companies save time because automated testing takes less time than manual testing. (26 words total: 14 words + 12 words) ✗ Using automated testing tools (commercial or in-house) helps quality assurance personnel who are verifying changes to software, thus saving companies time because automated testing takes less time than manual testing. (One sentence with 30 words)

- Keep paragraphs to no more than three to five sentences. Sometimes one sentence is all you need to express an idea.

- Eliminate unnecessary words.	✓ It is impossible to finish the project by Friday without extra help. ✗ Finishing the project by Friday is an impossibility without some kind of additional help. ✓ During busy months, the manager asks employees to work overtime. ✗ During the busy months, the manager puts in requests for employees to work extra hours.

Use the Active Voice and Simple Verb Tenses

- Use the active voice and write declarative sentences (subject-verb-object). The active voice is the pillar of good writing.

Many authors default to the passive voice, mistakenly thinking that it sounds more formal. The passive voice is often easier to write, but readers understand the active voice better. For information on how to recognize the passive voice, tips for rewording and examples, see "Active Voice vs. Passive Voice" on page 18.	✓ A tornado destroyed the house. ✗ The house was destroyed by a tornado.

• Use the passive voice only when you want to put the emphasis on the receiver of the action. In the following sentence, the emphasis is on the CEO, not the editor.	The CEO of the company was interviewed by the magazine's editor.
• Use simple verb tenses.	✓ They did not predict Saturday's rain storm. ✗ They could not have predicted that on Saturday there would be a rain storm

Be Clear

• Be unambiguous. Reword sentences that a reader could misinterpret.	✓ The salesperson and the customer argued, and the customer left in a rage. ✗ The salesperson and the customer argued, and he left in a rage.
• Use precise subjects in sentences; vague subjects like *this is, it is, there are* cause confusion.	✓ Four members are on the committee. ✗ There are four members on the committee.
• Avoid stacks of nouns and modifiers, a common feature of business and technical English. Stacked nouns and modifiers save space, but they make sentences difficult to understand and translate. Use no more than two modifiers in a row before a noun. For more examples and tips for rewording, see "Stacks of Modifiers and Nouns" on page 20.	✓ training to improve business skills ✗ business skills improvement training
• For the benefit of non-native speakers of English, use positive wording over negative wording.	✓ The package will arrive after mid-March. ✗ The package will not arrive until mid-March ✓ Do you understand the context? ✗ You don't understand the context, do you?

• Don't eliminate articles (*a, an, the*) or optional pronouns (*that, who*) for the sake of space. When we eliminate these words, sentences often become ambiguous. And for non-native speakers of English, the sentences can be difficult to understand. Adding articles and optional pronouns almost always makes a sentence clearer.	It is validating software.
	   Is it? It is the validating software.
	   Or? It is validating the software.
	
	I saw many mistakes resulted from carelessness.
	   Is it? I saw that many mistakes resulted from carelessness.
	   Or? I saw many mistakes that resulted from carelessness.

3. Plan and Check Your Writing

Define Your Audience and Goal

Before you begin any kind of writing, ask yourself these two important questions:

- Who is this content for? (your audience)
- Why is this content important? (your goal)

If you can't answer these two questions, then you're not ready to start writing. It helps to write the answers to these questions at the top of your page to help guide your writing.

Write to Your Audience

Remember that you are trying to inform the audience, not prove how many words and pages you can write.

- Adjust your writing style to your audience and the type of content you are writing. Blog and social media posts call for a colloquial style, whereas announcements and reports are formal.
- Always strive to write clear, concise material using vocabulary that your audience understands.
- Be inclusive. Use language that brings in more people. ICANN insiders understand content written in a simpler style. However, newcomers cannot always understand material filled with ICANN-specific terminology, difficult sentence structures, and legalistic language.

• In a complex document, state assumptions about the reader up front.	✓ This document assumes familiarity with DNSSEC and PKI technical concepts. For a detailed background on these concepts, see …

Proof Your Work

Regardless of what you're writing, check your work.

- Read the content out loud – it's a great way to catch errors or awkwardly phrased sentences.

- Check all links to make sure they work and are useful.
- As you reread the content, look for ways to pare it down.

4. Write for Different Content Types and Platforms

ICANN's style guidelines apply regardless of the type of content you are writing, but different audiences and platforms dictate different approaches. For example, proposals written for a highly technical audience are different from social media posts. No matter what the content, try to be as inclusive as possible – write simply and explain ICANN jargon and technical concepts.

Point of View

Depending on your audience and the type of content you are writing, your point of view differs.

• In social media posts from ICANN accounts and in blog posts, use the first and second person: *we* for ICANN and *you* for the reader.	The Internet needs you! Are you interested in participating? After a successful ICANN54, we began the countdown to ICANN55 in Marrakech.
• In social media posts from personal accounts and in blog posts, feel free to be more personal and use the first person (*I* or *we*).	I thank you for your interest in this topic.
• In announcements, reports and other more formal content, use a neutral tone. Refer to both ICANN and stakeholders in the third person.	Today, ICANN announced … ICANN is seeking input from stakeholders.

Online Content

In most ways, good writing for one medium is good writing for another. But with online content, you have the added task of ensuring that readers can find your content. Best practices on how to optimize headings and add tags to improve findability of icann.org content, are coming soon.

Announcements

When writing an announcement, use an impersonal, formal style. Aim for a maximum of 250 to 300 words. These publications follow a specific format, in the following order:

• Headline (required) and subheadings (optional)	ICANN Launches New Engagement Office in Nairobi, Kenya
• Dateline	LOS ANGELES – 15 March 2017 – First sentence of announcement. MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay – 23 April 2017 – First sentence of announcement.

• Main point of announcement – in one sentence	Today, ICANN announced the opening of a new engagement office in Nairobi, Kenya.
• Call to action (optional)	Register for the webinar now!

- Details and supporting information
- Background (optional) – consider linking to background information or supporting documents

For detailed guidelines for writing announcements, visit weCANN at: https://go.icann.org/2sExKpi.

Blogs

With blog content, opinions, observations, and emotions are welcome. Blogs are colloquial, even in their translated form. However, your writing style should still be clear and concise. Aim for 300–500 words.

- Make sure that events described in the blog occurred within the past month.
- Write about only one topic. If you need to say more, write another blog.
- Write a meaningful headline. For more information, see "Headlines" on page 14.
- Write in an informal and conversational way. Use in the first person (I, we) and address the reader in the second person (you).
- Feel free to express opinions, observations and emotions.
- For blogs about conferences or meetings, follow the guidelines in "Event Summaries" on page 13.
- Be visual – add photos and images. Include captions for all photos. For guidelines and examples, see "Photo Captions" on page 16.

For detailed guidelines for writing blogs, visit weCANN at: https://go.icann.org/2sExKpi.

Event Summaries

Blog posts and newsletter articles often summarize events such as conferences and meetings. The challenge is to make the content interesting. An article that merely summarizes the agenda is dry and is not likely to engage readers.

• Use an approach that will make the content more interesting and relevant. Look for creative ways to tell your story:	○ Using a stakeholder as a central character ("I met Luisa. She is a first-time ICANNer…") ○ Q&A ○ Lessons learned ○ Interview ○ Top insights

- Write a meaningful headline. For more information, see "Headlines" on page 14.
- Always include the event name, description, date, and location.

• Include the number of participants, if it adds to the article. Find something to say besides the number: percentage increase, background of the attendees, percentage of newcomers.	The event attracted 100 participants, a 45% increase from last year.

Specialists in Internet security from 14 countries came together to draft a response to … |

- Describe ICANN's role in the conference and mention ICANN speakers. Try to weave the names into the narrative.
- Thank the key sponsors, but you don't have to list them all.

• Include *only* the highlights of the event; don't write about everything that happened. Don't just walk through the agenda, writing about keynote speeches, panels and wrap-up sessions. Keep your goal in mind as you write your narrative and select information that fits your goal.	○ What did participants learn (beyond a generic statement about Internet governance or the multistakeholder model)?
○ Were any notable people in attendance?
○ What were the accomplishments? Decisions? Papers? Next steps?
○ Were there hotly debated topics?
○ What was new from previous years?
○ What was the most interesting aspect of the event?
○ What would a participant report to someone who could not attend?

- Use subheadings to guide the readers through your summary – highlight what's important and what you want them to learn.
- Add photos of participants or speakers. Always include a photo caption; for guidelines and examples, see "Photo Captions" on page 16.
- Wrap up with a call to action. For example, suggest how the reader can learn more – include links to audio and video recordings, presentation materials or proceedings.

For detailed guidelines for writing event summaries, visit weCANN at: https://go.icann.org/2sExKpi.

Headlines

• Use simple language, action verbs, and the active voice. Make sure that your headline has a subject and a predicate.	ICANN Announces Opening of New Office in Nairobi, Kenya
• Avoid verbs that are also nouns, as they can be confusing in a headline.	eye, probe, limit, highlight
• Use the present tense for both present and past events. For future events, give a timeframe and use the future tense.	ICANN Launches African Engagement Office in Nairobi
ICANN Nurtures Aspiring Leaders with NextGen program

- Take care when using jargon, idioms, slang, humor, and puns. It may not be understandable or appropriate for a global audience.

• Don't use an acronym, unless the acronym widely known. If the article deals with a subject for which there is an acronym that is less well known, describe the event's significance in generic terms rather than using an acronym that the readers might not know.	ICANN57 Comes to a Close Cybersecurity Event Draws Record Numbers

For detailed guidelines for writing headlines, visit weCANN at: https://go.icann.org/2sExKpi.

Infographics

If you think you need an infographic, please review the ICANN Creation Guidelines on weCANN at: https://go.icann.org/2sExKpi.

Then complete the ICANN Creative Brief and send it to icanncontent@icann.org.

For the text in an infographic, follow these recommendations.

- Be consistent in wording, verb tenses, and presentation throughout the graphic.
- Use acronyms and abbreviations more liberally, but define them, possibly in a legend.
- Use ampersands if you need to save space, but be consistent.

For ICANN visual guidelines, including fonts and colors, see https://go.icann.org/2sExKpi.

Newsletter Articles

ICANN publishes monthly regional newsletters and other specialty newsletters. The goal of a newsletter article is to educate the ICANN community about notable events and accomplishments. Be clear and concise. Aim for 100–150 words.

- Make sure that events described in the article occurred within the past month.
- Write a meaningful headline.
- Write about only one topic. If you need to say more, write another article.
- For a regional newsletter, relate the article's content to the region.
- Assume that the reader is unfamiliar with ICANN terminology or processes. Avoid using too many acronyms, and define them when you first use them. Use simple words and sentence structures.
- Ask questions, especially if you receive content from someone else. Don't pass along material that you don't fully understand. If something seems unclear, ask questions. If you can't get answers, consider omitting the material.
- Be accurate when giving the names of people (or their titles), organizations or events, get the names exactly right – verify every proper name. Most organizations have English versions of their websites. The best places to find this kind of information are about or legal. Respect the spelling, punctuation, capitalization and spacing. Don't assume that a logo is the way an organization's name is written in plain text.
- Make stories more personal by adding photos of participants or speakers. Always include a caption with your photo.

For detailed guidelines for writing newsletter articles, visit weCANN at: https://go.icann.org/2sExKpi.

Photo Captions

Photos add visual interest to many types of content.

After headlines, photo captions may be the most-read elements of a blog post or news article.

In fact, many readers never read the story. Your caption should give enough information about a photo so readers can relate it to the story.

• Include who, what, why, when, where, and how (as many as are appropriate). Focus on:	○ Who's in the photo? List the names of all people in the photo, from left to right (if possible). Double-check the spelling of names. Be specific, but you don't need to give titles. ○ What's happening? Where? When? Give information that the reader can't ascertain from looking at the photo.

Tips

- Don't just repeat what's in the headline or body text, and don't tell the reader what's obvious.
- Write in complete sentences, using sentence capitalization and punctuation. Use conversational language and include all articles. Write in the active voice, using the present tense to make the photo seem immediate.
- Be concise. A single line is probably sufficient for newsletters and blog posts, but you can write a second sentence if you need to.
- Don't use clichés (looks on, poses) or give opinions (enthusiastic, best, eager).

Examples

ICANN community members Chuck Gomes and Keith Davidson receive the ICANN Multistakeholder Ethos Award at ICANN56 in Helsinki, Finland.

Tanzanica King and Josh Baulch from ICANN's Meeting Team discuss the new meeting strategy at ICANN56.

Social Media

Remember, you only have a few seconds to grab a reader's attention. Take the time to craft your text and create images to add to your post. It's the quality of the post that matters, not the number of posts you share.

- Keep your content short and concise. Focus on one specific message.
- Include a call to action. What do you want your follower to do? Read a blog? Watch a video?
- Add relevant and interesting images. Pictures increase engagement by up to 94 percent.
- Think mobile. Most users are viewing posts on mobile devices, so keep your images mobile friendly.
- Don't include all the information in the title. You want the reader to click and read the rest of the post.
- Use links to point readers to more information. If you use URLs, use a link shortener.
- Add relevant hashtags for Facebook and Twitter, but no more than two per post.

Before you post ICANN-related content to personal accounts, you are required to read ICANN's Social Media Guidelines. Visit weCANN at: https://go.icann.org/2sExKpi.

The same document provides best practices for the different social media platforms.

Technical Publications

Technical publications (including policy papers, reports, and research papers) tend to be specialized and use more technical language. However, the writing in these documents should still be understandable and follow ICANN's writing style, even if the content is highly technical.

Other Types of Content

The Communications Team also produces videos and other multimedia content. If you think you need this type of content, please review the ICANN Creation Guidelines on weCANN. Then complete the ICANN Creative Brief and send it to icanncontent@icann.org.

5. Common Writing Problems

This section contains some of the most frequently encountered writing challenges:

• Active voice vs. passive voice
• Stacks of modifiers and nouns
• Misplaced and dangling modifiers
• Parallel construction

Active Voice vs. Passive Voice

Writing clearly and concisely includes writing in the active voice instead of the passive voice. The overuse of the passive voice is a common problem in business and technical writing. Sentences using the passive voice can be flat, difficult to understand, ambiguous, and wordy.

What Is the Active Voice?

In an active sentence, the subject of the sentence performs the action. The active voice is clearer and is usually more concise than the passive voice.

Examples of the Active Voice

In each of the following sentences, the subject is in **bold**, the verb is in *italics*, and the predicate (receiver of the action) is <u>underlined</u>.	**The researchers** *published* <u>a report</u> detailing their findings. **Running in marathons** *became* <u>one of the greatest passions</u> of his life. **The committee members** *approved* <u>the meeting agenda</u>. **I** *would have asked for* <u>more time</u>. **Carelessness and disobeying traffic laws** *caused* <u>the accident</u>.
Other sentences have predicate adjectives or adverbs, but the predicate still comes after the subject.	**You** *seem* <u>distracted</u> today. **Everyone** *was talking* <u>at the same time</u>.

What Is the Passive Voice?

In a passive sentence, the verb acts upon the subject. In some cases, the performer of the action is missing or unclear.

Passive constructions include a form *to be*, followed by the verb's past participle (typically *-ed*).	… had been finished … … will be protected … … is known … … will be acknowledged …

Another clue that a sentence is passive is when a predicate begins with by.	… by the founding organization … by Kathy … by the organizer of the event … by management

Examples of the Passive Voice

The test *was passed* by **the majority of the students**.

The new policy *is being considered* by **the team**.

A new plan *was submitted* to the organization (Who submitted it?)

A new procedure *was implemented* this week. (Who implemented?)

Problems With the Passive Voice

The passive voice is not only wordy, but it results in awkward or confusing sentences. When a sentence with multiple clauses uses the passive voice, it becomes difficult to understand and translate.

How to Reword Passive Sentences

Look at the main verb in the sentence and try to find the subject of that verb (a phrase starting with *by* is a clue). If you cannot find the subject, you can often infer it from the surrounding text. If you can't determine the subject, do some research.	✗ Passive voice ✓ Active voice ✗ The house was destroyed by the earthquake. ✓ The earthquake destroyed the house. ✗ The view of the ocean was obstructed by telephone wires. ✓ Telephone wires obstructed the view of the ocean. ✗ It is assumed by the doctor that the heart attack was caused partly by stress. ✓ The doctor assumed that stress contributed to the heart attack. ✗ After they were told that the plumbing wasn't working, they moved to a new room. ✓ After the desk clerk told them that the plumbing wasn't working, they moved to a new room. ✗ Because of structural problems, the building was condemned. ✓ Because of structural problems, the inspectors condemned the building.

When to Use the Passive Voice

- You want to put emphasis on the action or the recipient of the action.

  Penicillin was discovered by Alexander Fleming in 1928.

- You want to be tactful and don't want to name the subject.

  The new policy was administered poorly.

- You don't know the subject, or the subject is not important.

  Every year, millions of people are treated for cancer.

- You want to express authority.

  Cars are not allowed in the garage before 8:00.

Stacks of Modifiers and Nouns

In English, especially in business and technical writing, we tend to stack nouns and adjectives, one after another. This construction saves space and is easy for the writer, but difficult for the reader. Because this construction does not exist in most other languages, translation is problematic.

To avoid this problem, don't place more than two modifiers before a noun.

To untangle noun clusters and modifier stacks:

- Try to understand the meaning. Figure out what's modifying what. (It's not always easy.)
- Break up the clusters of nouns. Try using a verb in place of one of the nouns.
- Change the order of the words.
- Add hyphens or commas to improve clarity.

- If all else fails, completely rephrase.

✗ Before   ✓ After

✗ consensus-based multistakeholder decision-making model
✓ multistakeholder model for making decisions based on building consensus

✗ abuse report-handling requirements
✓ requirements for handling reports of abuse

✗ business-process-management methodologies
✓ methodologies for managing business processes

✗ service level agreement improvement communication rollout plan
✓ plan for communicating the rollout of improvements in service-level agreements

✗ mail server update rollout process
✓ process for rolling out updates to the mail server

✗ comprehensive personnel onboarding plan
✓ comprehensive plan for onboarding personnel

✗ experienced educational research facility employees
✓ experienced employees from the educational research facility

Problems With Modifiers

Misused or misplaced modifiers can cause readers to misinterpret content. Issues with modifiers are common in first drafts. The best way to find these problems is to reread text carefully and look for places where you can interpret content in more than one way.

Misplaced Modifiers

Place a modifier closest to the word it describes.	
With words like *almost*, *nearly*, *just,* or *only*, the sentence changes meaning depending on the position of the modifier.	Only Joshua ate lunch in the cafeteria. (No one else ate in the cafeteria.) Joshua ate only lunch in the cafeteria. (He didn't eat any other meal in the cafeteria.) Joshua ate lunch only in the cafeteria. (He never ate lunch anywhere else.) Joshua only ate lunch in the cafeteria. (He didn't do anything else in the cafeteria.)

In other cases, a misplaced modifier causes the sentence to be unclear (or even comical).

✗ Before	Problem	✓ After
Will gave a presentation at the meeting, which ran overtime.	Which ran late, the presentation or the meeting?	Will's presentation at the meeting ran overtime.
Mia saw Enzo and Carla driving to the office.	Who was driving to the office? Depending on the answer, the rewrite is different.	Driving to the office, Mia saw Enzo and Carla. Mia saw Enzo and Carla, who were driving to the office.
The woman boarded the plane wearing jeans and a t-shirt.	The plane wore jeans and a t shirt?	The woman, wearing jeans and a t-shirt, boarded the plane.

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier refers to something that is not present in the sentence. In the following sentence, the first clause clearly refers to *the team*.	Having finished the project, the team went out to celebrate.

However, in the following sentences, the modifiers don't refer to anything present in the sentence.

✗ Before	Problem	✓ After
Having arrived at 11:15, the meeting had already started.	Who arrived?	Having arrived at 11:15, Ali missed the beginning of the meeting.
Completing the order, the package will arrive on Monday.	Who completed the order?	I completed the order, and the package will arrive on Monday.
Not understanding the problem, it was difficult to find a solution.	Who didn't understand?	Because Maria didn't understand the problem, she found it difficult to find a solution.

Squinting Modifiers

A squinting modifier is a specific kind of misplaced modifier. The reader can interpret a squinting modifier to qualify either the words that come before it or the words that come after it. The sentence ends up having two different interpretations. You can usually correct this kind of problem by moving the modifier and rearranging the sentence.

✗ Before	Problem	✓ After
The teacher promised after the spring vacation to reduce the amount of homework.	What does *after the spring vacation* modify?	After the spring vacation, the teacher promised to reduce the amount of homework. The teacher promised that after the spring break he would reduce the amount of homework.
They told me on Saturday they would walk home with me.	What does *on Saturday* modify?	On Saturday, they told me that they would walk me home. They told me that on Saturday they would walk me home.

Parallel Construction

Parallel construction means using the same grammatical patterns to unify the content, particularly in lists and headings. Content that is parallel looks polished, while content that is not parallel looks sloppy. In some cases, neglecting details that make your sentences parallel results in sentences that are grammatically incorrect.

To make content parallel, use the same grammatical form, for example:

- gerunds (–*ing* form of a verb)
- present tense verbs
- nouns
- adjectives
- prepositional phrases

× Before	Problem	✓ After
Team members agreed to: - *Respect* fellow teammates. - *Finishing* projects on time. - *Discussions* of areas of confusion.	The sentence mixes forms: present tense verb, gerund, noun. The rewrite uses present tense verbs.	Team members agreed to: - *Respect* fellow teammates. - *Finish* projects on time. - *Discuss* areas of confusion.
She covered many topics, including *closing new business* and *employee retention*.	The list has a gerund and a noun. The first rewrite uses gerunds; the second uses nouns.	She covered many topics, including *closing* new business and *increasing* employee retention. She covered many topics, including *new business* and *employee retention*.
I wanted to know the process for *initiation* of a new proposal, *gaining* the approval of reviewers, and *goals* set for the third quarter.	The sentence mixes forms: noun, gerund, noun. The rewrite uses gerunds.	I wanted to know the process for *initiating* a new proposal, *gaining* the approval of reviewers, and *setting* goals for the third quarter.
I've seen increased awareness and excitement *about* the new project.	*About* works for excitement, but not for awareness, which takes *of* as a preposition. The rewrite uses both prepositions.	I've seen increased awareness *of* and excitement *about* the new project.
How to Install the Software Logging On Shutdown Procedure (Headings in a document)	The headings mix *How to*, a gerund and a noun. The rewrite uses gerunds.	Installing the Software Logging On Shutting Down

6. Style and Usage Reference

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ICANN uses many acronyms and abbreviations, often too many. Acronyms interrupt the flow of a sentence and confuse people unfamiliar with ICANN. A tenet of plain English is to avoid overloading readers with jargon and acronyms. Try using the full name or find a plain English equivalent.

We try to ensure that new acronyms and terms are necessary, and that the definitions are in plain English. Before you introduce a new term or acronym, you need to email the Communications Team to seek approval. icanncontent@icann.org

• If an acronym or abbreviation is well known, you don't need to define it.	USA, EU, ASCII, DVD
• In AP usage, some commonly used abbreviations don't have a period. When in doubt, refer to the AP Stylebook.	U.S. (US in headlines) U.N. (UN in headlines)

• For other acronyms, on the first mention, use the full name and follow with the acronym in parentheses. W⎯⎯ (A)	
Don't insert a comma after the parentheses unless it would normally be there to make the sentence grammatically correct. After defining, use only the acronym in subsequent mentions.	The Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) met at ICANN55. … Internet Assigned Names Authority (IANA). IANA …

• In a long or complex document, define acronyms once per chapter (or major section).

• In general, don't define an acronym if you don't use it later in the text; instead, use the full name.	The Computer Society of India is an example of an At-Large Structure.
However, make an exception for the name of a non-ICANN organization that is better known by its acronym than by its full name. Spell it out and give the acronym in parentheses, even if you mention it only once.	The Japan Network Information Center (JPNIC) hosted the meeting.

• Sometimes, especially in graphics and headings, using the full name takes up too much space or makes for difficult reading. In those cases:	○ In headings, use the acronym, but define it in the first sentence of the following paragraph. ○ In graphics, use the acronym, but consider adding a legend that defines all acronyms.
• Avoid sentences that sound like alphabet soup.	The proposal was introduced in all RIRs (AFRINIC, APNIC, ARIN, LACNIC, and RIPE) and entered final call in LACNIC, RIPE, and APNIC.
• Don't add an apostrophe in the plural form of an acronym.	TLDs, RFCs
• Use the correct capitalization and punctuation of the acronym or abbreviation.	gTLD-MoU, ccTLD, AT&T, EuroInternet, DOC

- In general, capitalization of the full name mirrors the capitalization in the acronym. However, many acronyms use all capital letters, but are not proper nouns. Use your judgment and try to minimize the use of initial capitalization. For a fuller explanation and examples, see "Capitalization" on page 27.

• If an abbreviation ending in a period comes at the end of a sentence, don't add an extra period.	He has worked his entire career at the U.N.
• If an abbreviation ending in a period comes before a comma, question mark, or exclamation point, keep the period and add the punctuation mark.	The next time I'm in the U.S., I will visit New York. I love the U.K.!

Academic Degrees

• Spell out and don't capitalize the specialty: associate degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctorate. Abbreviate when showing credentials after a name, and set off with commas: B.A, M.A, LL.D., Ph.D.	Chang has a master's degree in psychology from Stanford University. Thomas Burns, Ph.D., spoke to the media.

Ampersand

• In text, don't use an ampersand unless the ampersand is part of an organization's official name (full name or acronym).	AT&T, Marks & Spencer

- In graphics, consider space requirements and if needed, use ampersands. Use ampersands or spell out *and*, but be consistent.
- Check to see if ampersands display online correctly. Sometimes you need to use the HTML entity name (&) or entity number (&) for proper rendering.

Bold

- Use bold text for headlines, headings, table header rows, and options on a user interface.

Capitalization

- Don't use block capitals for text – mixed case is easier to read. However, ICANN uses all capital letters for meeting transcriptions because live transcription feeds are typically in all capital letters.

- When defining an acronym, capitalize terms *only* if they would otherwise be capitalized.

Because of the large number of acronyms, ICANN and other organizations overuse capital letters.	top-level domain (TLD) intellectual property rights (IPR) country code top-level domain (ccTLD) Internet governance (IG) Middle East Network Operators Group (MENOG) Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA)
• Use initial capitalization for proper nouns – people, place names, most businesses, schools and universities, organizations, and department names.	Veronika, Bill Gates Dakar, San Francisco, Africa Time Warner Cable, Verizon, Accenture Harvard University, Amherst College European Union, United Nations, World Bank Department of Commerce, Communications Department

- Use headline-style capitalization for titles of publications, headlines, headings and section titles, table and figure titles, and table header rows. For rules and examples, see "Headline-Style Capitalization" on page 34.
- In some cases, capitalize job titles or positions; see "Titles and Honorifics" on page 46.

Collective Nouns

A *collective noun* is used for a group of people – e.g., team, audience, majority.

• Because ICANN uses American English, collective nouns referring to a single unit are singular. The appropriate pronoun is *it*, and the appropriate possessive is *its*.	The class elects its president in September. The staff attends the annual meeting. The committee designates its chairperson.
• Institutions and countries with plural names are singular.	The House of Lords is adjourning. The French Government is issuing a statement. The Philippines is located in Southeast Asia.
• When you are emphasizing the individual members or elements in a group, a collective noun can be plural.	ICANN staff are arriving at the meeting room early. The team are revising their status reports.
• In a prepositional phrase, remember that the subject is generally singular, even if the rest of the phrase is plural.	The group of students is visiting London.
• Sometimes it's easier to avoid awkward constructions by rewording a sentence or clarifying with a word like *members*.	ICANN staff members are arriving at the meeting room early. The student group is visiting London.

Contractions

A *contraction* is a single word formed from two words, with an apostrophe replacing the missing letters. Contractions are informal constructions.	you're (you are) shouldn't (should not) can't (cannot) I've (I have) she's (she is) what's (what is)

• Feel free to use contractions in informal content:	○ Blog posts ○ Social media posts They're here. You'll receive your packet tomorrow.
• Don't use contractions in more formal content:	○ Announcements ○ Proposals ○ Technical reports We will not provide responses to comments during the calls. We will write this article for newcomers.

• Avoid using *should've, could've, would've* – these contractions are hard to read.

Cross-References

Cross-references point a reader of a document to another place in the same document. Cross-references are a feature of technical documentation such as reports and proposals. Because you don't know if the reader is reading the content online or from a printed copy, you have to create cross-references that work in either case.

Note that for content that is primarily read online (e.g., blogs and announcements), links serve the same purpose. For best practices for creating good link text, see "Hyperlinks" on page 35.

Cross-References Within the Same Document

Your goal with cross-references is to make your document more usable. Therefore, you need to tell readers what kind of information to expect at the target location.

• Start your sentence with why readers would want to follow the cross-reference. Based on your description, they can decide whether or not that information is of value to them.	For definitions of frequently used terms, see … For best practices for creating hyperlinks, see …
• For the cross-reference, give the name of the section and the page number. Link both the text and the page number. Use quotation marks around names of chapter and section headings.	"Recommendations" on page 15. "Chapter 1: Introduction" on page 3.

• Give the name of the document, and if applicable, give the URL. For information about how to format titles, see "Titles of Publications" on page 46. For information about formatting URLs, see "URLs" on page 47.	The report "Greasing the Wheels of the Internet Economy" https://go.icann.org/2qO2gN5 …

Data and Metadata

> The words *data* and *metadata* can be either singular or plural nouns, depending on the context.

It's often a judgment call which one you should use, but follow these general guidelines.

• Use the singular form when referring to *data* or *metadata* in a conceptual way or when referring to the information as a whole, not individual facts. (Try substituting the word *information*.)	Data is unavailable for 2015. Metadata is a set of data that describes data.
• Use the plural form when referring to individual pieces of information. (Try substituting the word *facts*.)	The data consist of names, addresses, and phone numbers. Image metadata include the time and date a photo was taken.

Datelines

- Place the dateline at the beginning of the first paragraph of an announcement. AP specifies which cities don't require any other designation.
- Use all capital letters for city names; capitalize only the first letter for state or country names.

• The standard ICANN format is:	MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay – 15 January 2015 – First sentence of body copy.
• For these ICANN locations, the AP standard is to use only the city name.	BEIJING LOS ANGELES BRUSSELS SINGAPORE GENEVA WASHINGTON ISTANBUL

• For these ICANN locations, the AP standard is to use the city name, followed by the short form of country name.	MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay NAIROBI, Kenya SEOUL, Republic of Korea

In the previous examples, *Uruguay*, *Kenya,* and *Republic of Korea* are the short forms of the country names. For information about how to look up official names of countries, see "Geographic Names" on page 33.

Dates

• ICANN uses *day month year* format for dates. Don't abbreviate months in narrative text. For ranges of dates, use an en-dash (–). Alternatively, introduce with the preposition *from* and follow with the preposition *to*.	on 7 April 2013 from 2011 to 2012 2015–2016 from 31 January to 4 February 2016 from 10 to 22 November 10–22 November 2015
• If the date includes the day of the week, set off the *day month year* with commas.	Sunday, 10 July 2016, is the day we arrive. We arrive on Sunday, 10 July 2016.
• Whenever you refer to *today*, *tomorrow,* or *yesterday* (e.g., in a news release), also include the date, unless it appears at the top of the document.	Today (10 June 2013), ICANN announced that…
• With a specific date, where space is an issue, you can abbreviate the following months: Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.	12 July 2014 31 Sept. 2016

• In tables or graphics, where space is an issue, use truncated months with no periods:
Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec.

• If you have space constraints, use numerals only, in the format *dd-mm-yyyy*.	01-10-2016 (for 1 October 2016)

Domain Names

Format

Alphabetic characters in ASCII domain names are case insensitive. Characters in the non-Latin and Latin with diacritics are case sensitive and must be lowercase.

• For consistency, use lowercase letters for parts of domain names, including top-level domains.	The program was launched this year with staff members from registries for .ci, .mg, .cm, .bf, and .ga.

Examples

Sometimes you need to use an example of a top-level domain in your writing. ICANN is authorized to use *.example*.

• Use any domain name ending in *.example*. You can use *.example* by itself, or as part of a longer domain name.	corporation.example

Email Addresses

• Write email addresses in full, in lowercase and as active *mailto* links. Don't include any other words as part of the link.	queries.beijingec@icann.org

Figures

• You can give figures titles or not – it's your choice – but be consistent within a document. If you have titles, use heading-style capitalization. For rules and examples, see "Headline-Style Capitalization" on page 34.

Footnotes

Footnotes are notes at the bottom of a page, used primarily to cite references. Footnotes interrupt the reader; if you don't need them, don't use them. Bibliographies and end notes are alternate ways to present source information.

• Use footnotes only in formal reports, as they can intimidate readers.
• Don't use footnotes to add explanatory text; instead, integrate the content into the text.
• Avoid long footnotes.

Foreign Terms

> If a foreign term is in common usage in English, use plain text. If a term is not commonly understood, define the term the first time you use it and italicize it.

On subsequent occurrences, use the term in plain text. Use the correct diacritical marks (accents).	ad hoc, cabaret, avant-garde, per diem, subpoena, tête-à-tête We saw many *riads* (Moroccan homes with interior courtyards) – which is your favorite riad?

Geographic Names

Country Names

- Use the ISO 3166-1 standard for country names.
  The ISO website has an online search tool: https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#search.
  Select **Country codes** and choose a language on the first screen, then type part of a country name and press Enter.

Use the short form of the country name except when ICANN is legally required to use another form.	South Africa, France, United States of America (or USA), Japan

Abbreviations

• In general, don't abbreviate city and country names. The exception is a multiword place name with a well-known abbreviation. In this case, you don't need to define the abbreviation. With a few exceptions, use all capital letters with periods. Don't add an extra period at the end of a sentence.	U.S., U.K., D.C.
In AP usage, some commonly used abbreviations don't have a period. When in doubt, refer to the AP Stylebook.	US (in headings, USA) LA (spell out the first mention, then use LA afterwards)

- Spell out state names in text, but you can abbreviate them in datelines and tables.
  Use the standard abbreviations found here: http://www.stateabbreviations.us/.
  Don't use two-letter postal codes.

Punctuation

• In text, if you refer to a city and state, or city and country, place a comma after the state or country name.	He traveled from Barcelona, Spain, to Stockholm, Sweden.

• For rules about using punctuation with abbreviations, see "Abbreviations and Acronyms" on page 25.

Headline-Style Capitalization

• Use headline-style capitalization for the following:	○ Titles of publications, including books, articles, reports ○ Headlines ○ Headings and section titles ○ Table and figure titles ○ Table header rows

General Rules

• Capitalize the first letter of the following:	○ First and last word ○ First word following a colon ○ Principal words – nouns, adjectives, adverbs ○ Verbs (including forms of *to be* and *to have* (*Is, Was, Were, Had, Has*) ○ Pronouns (*His, Her, It, This, Whose, Our*) ○ Prepositions in a phrasal verb (*Take Out, Move On, Put Off, Work Out*) ○ Prepositions and conjunctions of four letters or more (*From, Between, Through, Neither*) ○ Subordinating conjunctions (*If, When, However, As, Because, Although, Then*) ○ All words in a hyphenated construction (*Well-Known*)
• Lowercase all other words.	*Examples* Decision-Making Authority Logging On and Off Pre-Existing Condition ICANN55 Public Meeting in Marrakech A Work of Art by Our Favorite Artist Installing on Your Windows Machine How Does This Meet Your Needs?

Hyperlinks

Social Media and Infographics

• In social media, where space is at a premium, use shortened URLs available through bitly: https://bitly.com	Our newsletters are available here: https://go.icann.org/2kxHQnZ

Special Reports

- Adhere to the format used in a special publication such as an Annual Report. See here: https://go.icann.org/2qVhOxK 🌐🔍

Blogs, Announcements, Web Pages on ICANN.org

- Use hyperlinks with descriptive text instead of URLs. Reserve URLs for content that is printed or likely to be printed. For guidelines and examples, see "URLs" on page 48.
- Link to a specific page rather than a high-level page or a search page.
- Check all links and make sure that if the content is for the public, that any links included are accessible without login.

> - Use descriptive hyperlink text instead of *click here*. You can use the title or content of the destination page or tell the reader what to expect on that page. Work the link into the text so it is grammatical and flows.

- Make the text of hypertext link easy to scan – try to keep it to four words or fewer. If possible, use a keyword as the first word of the hyperlink. You want the reader to understand the gist of the hyperlink without reading all the surrounding text.
- Capitalize words in hyperlinks only if they are normally capitalized.
- Warn the reader before linking directly to downloads.
- If the punctuation is part of the link, make it part of the hyperlink text. Otherwise, place punctuation after the link.

Examples

- ✓ Read about CANTO's mission.
- ✗ Read about CANTO's mission: http://canto.org/about-us/canto-mission-and-vision/.

- ✓ Sign up for our free monthly newsletter.
  The ICANN55 agenda …
  ICANN hosted the second Turkey DNS Forum …
  Read the full announcement.
  For information about Internet communication, see The Web Design Glossary.
  RSVP for this event.
  Audio in English (download) | Audio in Spanish

ICANN Public Meetings

• Format the name of an ICANN Public Meeting without a space between ICANN and the meeting number. You can also follow it with the name of the city.	ICANN55 ICANN55 Marrakech

Internet

• Always capitalize *Internet*.

Regardless of AP and other style conventions that have recently moved to lowercase the term, the ICANN convention is to capitalize it.

• Use the term *Internet*; don't use *Web*.

IP Address Examples

• For IPv4, use these authorized IP addresses in examples. Change the number after the last decimal to any number between 0 and 255. (Leave the other numbers the same.) • Note that these IP addresses don't resolve – they don't bring up a webpage.	192.0.2.0 to 192.0.2.255 198.51.100.0 to 198.51.100.255 203.0.113.0 to 203.0.113.255
• For IPv6, use one of these authorized IP addresses in examples. • Note that letters must be lowercase.	fd84:69e1:1ce7::25 2001:db8::53 fd84:69e1:1ce7:5522::a290:c749:736b 2001:db8::80

• Refer to non-example IPv4 and IPv6 addresses only if the address is unlikely to change; however, add a note that the address could change in the future. For example, you can list the IP addresses of the root name servers.

Italics

- Italicize a new or key term the first time you use it.

Typically, you should define the term in the same or next sentence.	A *top-level domain* is the last segment of an Internet domain name.
• Italicize the first mention of a foreign word that is not in general use in English; see "[Foreign Terms](#)" on page 33.	Chocolate is my *raison d'être*.
• Italicize words you want to emphasize (such as *not*, *always,* or *never*). Don't overuse; use only when the word is critical or skipping over it would cause a major problem.	Before installing a new version of the software, *always* back up your PC first.
• Italicize the titles of books, long reports, magazines, and newspapers. For how to treat other kinds of content, see "[Titles of Publications](#)" on page 47.	*New York Times* *Elements of Style* *IANA Stewardship Transition Proposal*
• Italicize words or phrases that you use out of grammatical context in a sentence. Use common sense – if using italics makes a sentence difficult to read, use quotation marks instead.	*You're* is the contraction for *you are*. Avoid using the adverb *very*. Sometimes people say "I" even though "me" is more correct.

Latin Abbreviations – e.g., etc., i.e.

ICANN style only permits two Latin abbreviations: *e.g.* (for example) and *etc*. (and so on, and so forth). When in doubt, use the English versions of these terms.

e.g. (for example)

• Lowercase the abbreviation *e.g.* and follow with a comma. In general, introduce with a comma.	Use sans serif fonts, e.g., Arial and Helvetica. Use sans serif fonts, for example, Arial and Helvetica.

You can also introduce the phrase with parentheses or en-dashes. Choose the option that makes your sentence the most readable.	The buffet has many options (e.g., vegetarian, non-vegetarian and desserts). Green leafy vegetables – for example, kale and spinach – can improve overall health.
• In an independent clause; precede with a semicolon instead of a comma.	I love to travel to the Caribbean; e.g., Martinique is a favorite vacation spot.
• Don't start a sentence with *e.g.* Use *For example* instead and follow with a comma.	Cybercriminals use many tactics to gain access to data. For example, they use horizontal or vertical privilege escalation.

etc. (and so on, and so forth)

• Precede with a comma and follow with a period. When used in the middle of a sentence, follow with another comma or set off with a pair of parentheses or en-dashes.	Nails, screws, bolts, etc., require proper tools. The collection included precious gemstones: diamonds, rubies, emeralds, etc. Spring bulbs – crocus, daffodils, etc. – can survive a late freeze. Always capitalize the days of the week (Monday, Tuesday, and so on).

i.e. (that is, that is to say)

• ICANN doesn't support the use of *i.e.*, which is frequently misused and misunderstood. Instead, use *that is* or *that is to say*. Better yet, reword so that you don't have to explain.	Service is included, that is, don't leave a tip. Don't leave a tip as service is included.

Lists – Bulleted and Numbered

Lists make text easier to scan. Use bulleted or numbered lists in text, tables, or graphics.

Types of Lists

- Use a bulleted list when order is not important.
- Use a numbered list only when order is important (e.g., procedures, steps in a process). Don't use a numbered list just because you have stated how many items are in the list.

Guidelines

- Except in tables and graphics, always use a lead-in sentence or phrase.

• Don't use *and* or *or* between list items.	- apples - oranges - bananas
• Write a lead-in sentence that is a full grammatical sentence punctuated with a colon. You can also write a lead-in sentence where each item in the list makes sense as a continuation of the lead-in sentence.	I want to visit three cities: - Rome - Florence - Milan He will start the day tomorrow by: - Taking out the trash. - Washing the dishes. - Dusting the furniture.

- Make all list items parallel in structure. For example, use all gerunds (*-ing* verb forms), all nouns or all present tense verbs. For a detailed description and examples, see "Parallel Construction" on page 24.

Capitalization and Punctuation

- For numbered lists, always capitalize the first word in the list. For bulleted lists, if each item is a phrase, capitalize the first word. If each item is one or two words, you have the option of capitalizing or not, but be consistent.
- Don't end list items with commas or semicolons.

- Put a period at the end of list items *only* if they are complete sentences or the list items are phrases that complete the lead-in sentence.

The class has four requirements:
- Finish your homework.
- Manage your time wisely.
- Treat others with kindness

The grocer delivered:
- bananas
- apples
- peaches

I want to:
- Speak French.
- Learn to play the piano.
- Take tap-dancing lessons.

Subordinate Lists

- Avoid subordinate lists. If you use them, follow the guidelines for first-level lists.

Examples of Lists and Subordinate Lists

Use these settings options to control the default options:

- page size and orientation
- font
- margins

The publishing process has three steps:

1. Archive the old version of the document.
2. Post the new version of the document.
3. Notify the readers that a new version exists.

Your application must include the following documents:

- Three letters of recommendation
- Identification one form of photo identification:
  - Driver's license
  - Passport

Money

- ICANN is a U.S.-based organization and presents financial statements in U.S. dollars. Unless otherwise stated, assume that all currency amounts are in U.S. dollars.

Precede numbers with the $ symbol. Use *million* or *billion* instead of writing out the full number (when precision is not required).	Net revenue for the three months before 30 September was $59 million.
• For other currencies, or with a mixture of currencies, spell out the non-U.S. currencies with the number first. Include the country name if more than one country has the same currency. Don't use symbols except for the U.S. dollar sign, and don't convert amounts into another currency.	1 million Australian dollars 10 pounds sterling 10 euros 100 million rand 100 million Turkish lira 2000 yen 100 million Uruguayan pesos 1 yuan The total was 53 million Canadian dollars. Treasurer Wayne Swan approved 16 million pounds sterling. The cost of the flight was 650 euros.
• In legal or technical documents, or where different currencies are discussed together, use the ISO Currency Code. The format is the ISO 4217 code, followed by a space, then the currency amount. • Refer to the full list of ISO Currency Codes: https://go.icann.org/2rHa8TE.	The amount is EUR 3500. The budgeted amount was USD 50 million.

Names of People

- For the first reference, use the full name. For subsequent references, use only the surname.

Include diacritical marks (accents).	Göran Marby, François Truffaut Ann Johnson chaired the meeting. Johnson called the meeting to order on time.
• In some cultures, the surname precedes the given name. ICANN uses the Westernized form of presenting names (given name + surname). The ICANN Outlook directory lists names in this format.	Isamu Noguchi… Noguchi was best known for Yo-Yo Ma… Ma performs …

Numbers

- Spell out zero through nine and use numerals for 10 and greater.

The same rule applies to ordinal numbers; spell out first through ninth, and use 10th after that.	The committee meets two times per month. We found 47 of the 65 errors in the document. He is a three-time winner of the award. The Italian Renaissance began in the 14th century and lasted until the end of the 16th century.
• Be flexible and use common sense. If you have a mixture of numerals and spelled-out numbers in the same sentence or paragraph, make a choice and be consistent.	The jury was composed of 12 members and 3 alternates. The first person to speak was Andrea; the tenth was Maria.
• For numbered items such as pages, rooms, chapters, or versions, use numerals.	They were in seats 5 through 17. The solutions are on page 8. See *Study Recommendations*, Version 5. Chapter 3 is where the book starts to become interesting.
• If a number starts a sentence, write it out in full, except for years.	Thirty-four hula-hoops were found in the researcher's box. 2006 was a good year for my family.
• For numerals over 999, insert a comma for clarity.	Over 9,000 people live in that part of the city.
• Spell out common fractions.	one-half, one-quarter, two-thirds
• Use decimals for percentages, but don't use the percent symbol. Precede numbers less than *1.0* with a *0*.	He cut the budget by 4.5 percent. The new projection is for 0.5 percent growth.
• Use *to* instead of an en-dash (–) in ranges. In tables, graphics, dates, and times, you can use either one.	500 to 900 16–17 February 16:00–18:00 UTC
• Use *million* (and *billion*) instead of the full numeral (when precision is not required).	$138 million, 24 million pounds sterling, two billion people

- In tables, use numerals throughout.

Organizations and Institutions

- Look up an organization's name and use it properly: capitalization, spelling, and punctuation.

If an organization's title uses an ampersand or British spelling, retain that usage. Define an abbreviation only if you use it again later. All organizations are singular.	College of William & Mary DotAsia Organisation United States Department of Commerce (U.S. DOC) Korea Association of Information & Telecommunication The U.S. Government is closing early today because of the snow storm.

Parenthetical Phrases

- Avoid overusing parenthetical phrases – they make a sentence hard to read.

- You can set off parenthetical content with parentheses, dashes or commas. For detailed rules for each type of punctuation, see "Commas" on page 50, "Dashes" on page 51 and "Parentheses (and Related Punctuation)" on page 54.	The first day of the conference – 21 October – is when vendor booths open. The first day of the conference (21 October) is when vendor booths open. The first day of conference, 21 October, is when vendor booths open.
- Don't nest parenthetical phrases. For a phrase within a phrase, consider rewording or changing the punctuation.	✓ You can fly into either of the two Paris airports – Orly (ORY) or Charles de Gaulle (CDG). ✗ You can fly into either of the two Paris airports (Orly (ORY) and Charles de Gaulle (CDG)).

Plurals

- In general, you form a plural by adding an *s* or *es* to the end of a word. If a word has more than one plural form, use the first plural listed in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*.	Following are some commonly misused or exceptional plural forms:

Singular	Plural
appendix	appendixes (not appendices)
crisis	crises
criterion	criteria
forum	forums
index	indexes (not indices)
phenomenon	phenomena
referendum	referendums
syllabus	syllabuses

Prefixes

• In general, don't hyphenate when the word after the prefix starts with a consonant.	multistakeholder intergovernmental postgraduate antibody	preregister nonfiction unnatural copilot
• When a prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel, use a hyphen (except for *coordinate* and *cooperate*).	re-elect coordination	anti-inflammatory cooperation
• Use a hyphen if the word after the prefix is capitalized.	ex-President pre-Columbian	mid-June trans-Pacific
• Use a hyphen for the prefix *all-*, *ex-* (meaning former), and *self-*.	ex-president all-hands meeting	self-esteem

Pronouns

• Use subject pronouns for the performers of the action. (Sometimes the verb is not stated.) Subject pronouns are: *I, you, he, she, we, they, who*.	They want to finish the project, but we kept postponing the start date. The man who is sitting by the window is my father. My brothers are older than I. (*I am* is implied.)
• Use object pronouns for the receivers of the action. Object pronouns are: *me, you, him, her, us, them, whom*.	Marcy is going to talk to him. Those kids went to school with us for many years. Please mail the tickets to her and me. The person to whom Ella gave the money lost it.

Seasons of the Year

• Avoid referring to seasons of the year, which differ depending on where you live.	✓ I like cold-weather sports, for example, skiing and ice hockey. ✗ I like winter sports, for example, skiing and ice hockey.

Spaces

- Insert only one space after a colon or period.

Insert one space before and after an en-dash when used in text. Don't insert a space when used with numbers (date and time ranges).	Three dates are possibilities for the meeting – 30 June, 2 July, and 6 July. The event occurs from 6–8 September 2016. Sessions run from 09:00–18:00 UTC.

Special Characters

ICANN content often requires special characters not on your keyboard. Frequently used characters include:

- en-dash (–)
- accented letters (ö, à, é, etc.)
- non-breaking space (prevents a bad line break, e.g., 10 participants)
- non-breaking hyphen (prevents a bad line break at a hyphen, e.g., e-commerce)

To find out how to insert a special character, refer to the software application's Help feature.

Tables

Use tables to simplify the presentation of complex information, particularly if you want to show a side-by-side comparison. Because the organization and presentation of tables differ widely, we are providing guidelines rather than inflexible rules.

- Give tables titles or not – it's your choice – but be consistent within a document. Sometimes section headings serve as titles for tables. If you have titles, use headline-style capitalization. For rules and examples, see "Headline-Style Capitalization" on page 34.
- If your table has a heading row, set it to repeat at the top of each page. Use headline capitalization on heading rows and make the text bold.
- In general, center-align titles and left-align body rows unless you have a good reason not to. If you have columns of numbers, you can right-align or align at decimal point.
- Balance the width of the table cells.
- Use sentence capitalization in table cells.

Telephone Numbers

- Use spaces between parts a phone number; don't use hyphens, periods, or parentheses. For international numbers, prefix the country code with a plus sign (+).

• If you want to, lead with *Telephone:* or *Mobile:* or *Fax:* (don't use abbreviations such as *Tel.* or *Mob.*).	+1 310 301 5800 Fax: +65 6822 6212 Telephone: +33 892 70 12 39

Time and Time Zones

Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) is the standard time zone for ICANN communications.

- To avoid confusion, always include time zones, both UTC and any appropriate local time zones.

- When referring to event times at ICANN Public Meetings, use the time zone of the meeting location. For example, for ICANN55, the local time zone in Morocco was Western European Time (WET). (In this case, WET and UTC are the same, but you should still use WET.)

• For the first use of a time zone, refer to the full name (in initial capital letters). For subsequent uses, use the acronym.	Eastern Daylight Time (EDT), India Standard Time (IST), Central European Standard Time (CEST) Session 1 starts at 10:00 Pacific Standard Time (PST). Session 2 starts at 16:00 PST.

- Specify time using the 24-hour clock. Don't use *a.m.* and *p.m.*

• The committee met on 21 June at 15:00 UTC. For a range of times, separate the times with an en dash (–) or the word *to*.	The webinar is on 30 August 2015 from 15:00–17:00 UTC. The class is scheduled from 14:00 to 16:00 UTC.

Titles and Honorifics

• Capitalize formal job titles or honorifics. Unless a title is short, place it after the name and set it off with commas.	Johann Schmidt, Vice President of Consumer Affairs, spoke first. ICANN President and CEO Göran Marby participated in the call. We were hoping to see Queen Elizabeth and the Prince of Wales.

• For titles of ICANN staff members used in external publications, precede the title with *ICANN* or *ICANN's*.	Albert Daniels, ICANN's Senior Manager of Stakeholder Engagement for the Caribbean, spoke …
• Use a conversational form of a title instead of a title that contains commas.	✓ President of the Global Domains Division ✗ President, Global Domains Division
• When a title contains commas that you can't avoid using, set it off with en-dashes instead of commas.	ICANN Day's officiator was Dr. Jeff Ramsay – Botswana's Deputy Permanent Secretary for Media at the Ministry of Communications, Science and Technology.

• Spell out *Vice President* in most types of content. In social media and newsletters articles (where space is limited), use *VP*.

• Lowercase job descriptions that are not formal titles.	She likes her job as a system administrator.

Titles of Publications

• Use headline-style capitalization. For rules and examples, see "Headline-Style Capitalization" on page 34.

• Italicize the titles of books, long reports, magazines, and newspapers.	*Oxford Guide to Plain English* *IANA Stewardship Transition Proposal* *The New York Times* *Wall Street Journal*
• Use quotation marks for short reports, articles, chapters, announcements, titles of blogs, blog posts, television shows, movies, podcasts, or videos.	"Chapter 1: Overview" "ICANN55 Marrakech GAC Communiqué" "Greasing the Wheels of the Internet Economy"

Underlining

• Don't use underlining within the text of a document. Stick to the format of the ICANN Word and PowerPoint templates regarding underlining headlines and subheadlines.

URLs

- Use URLs primarily for printed content (or content that a reader is likely to print). For content that a reader is likely to view online, in most cases, use hyperlinks instead. For guidelines and examples, see "Hyperlinks" on page 35.

• For content that is mostly read online (e.g., announcements or blogs), limit the use of URLs to high-level addresses such as an organization's home page.	We invite you to visit the ICANN website: https://www.icann.org/.

	• Follow these guidelines when giving the name of a URL: ○ Include *http://* or *https://*, which differentiates a URL from a domain name. For example, https://www.example.com is a URL, while *example.com* is a domain name. ○ When you can access a site with either *http:* or *https:*, use the *https:* version. ○ Drop *www* if the URL resolves without it. ○ Drop the trailing slash, which is optional.

• If you have punctuation after the URL, and make sure that it is outside the live link. • For long addresses, shorten the URL using a service such as https://bitly.com/. The ICANN Communications Department has access to a custom link shortener using the URL: https://.go.icann.org/XXX. If you want to use this service, please email: icanncontent@icann.org.	*Examples* ✓ For more information, visit http://ucla.edu. ✓ See http://iana.org. ✓ Register on the ICANN55 website: https://meetings.icann.org/en/marrakech55. ✓ Enhancing ICANN Accountability: http://bit.ly/1GaqNhI ✗ Enhancing ICANN Accountability: https://community.icann.org/display/acctcrosscomm/CCWG+on+Enhancing+ICANN+Accountability

7. Punctuation

This is not a complete guide to punctuation. Instead, it provides guidelines for common trouble areas. The AP Stylebook contains complete information, including exceptions and uncommon cases.

Apostrophes

Apostrophes indicate possession, not pluralization.

• For plural nouns that end in s, add an apostrophe.	stakeholders' voices, conferences' locations
• For singular nouns that end in *s*, add 's.	business's location, boss's birthday
• For proper names that end in *s*, add only an apostrophe.	Honduras' economy, James' office
• For plurals of a single letter, add 's.	He received A's and B's.
• Don't add an apostrophe for plurals of numbers (including years), multiple letters, or acronyms.	ABCs, XYZs TLDs, APIs 1990s, 1950s 4s and 5s (referring to the actual numeral)
• Use apostrophes with acronyms *only* to indicate possession.	The accident damaged the SUV's bumper. There are three SUVs in the parking lot.

Colons

• Use a colon to introduce a list or a long quote. Capitalize the word following the colon *only* if it begins a complete sentence. Insert one space after the colon.	The project had three flaws: lack of definition, poor planning, and sloppy execution. He promised this: "Every employee will benefit from the reorganization."

Commas

• Set off an introductory phrase with a comma.	As long as you are my student, I will continue to encourage you. On the first Monday of the month, we hold a company-wide status meeting. Regardless of how serious the situation is, they will maintain a positive attitude. On 15 January 2016, he started his new job with ICANN.
• Use a comma to separate compound sentences joined with conjunctions such as *and*, *but,* and *so*.	I really want to go to the concert, but I am tired. It was getting late, and the children were not home yet.
• Place commas to separate adjectives that are equal in importance (often a judgment call).	The dark, ominous clouds rolled in. The serpentine, unpaved roads made for difficult driving. – BUT – The room contained an old wooden table.
• Set off parenthetical information with commas. To test if the information is truly parenthetical, try omitting the phrase set off by commas from the sentence. If the sentence still makes sense, the information is parenthetical. • For more ways to punctuate a parenthetical phrase, see "Parenthetical Phrases" on page 39.	The course, which finished in July, was open to all students. – BUT – Anyone who walks into the meeting late has to stand in the back of the room.
• Use commas to set off a person's age, title, company, home town, or country.	Barack Obama, President of the U.S., and François Hollande, President of France, attended the ceremony. The awards went to Mark Thomson, RGB Electronics, and Young-Jin Suh, Seoul MediaTech.
• Use commas to separate items in a series.	She went to the market and bought apples, bananas, and peaches.

The Oxford (serial) comma is the addition of a comma before the last item in a series. The serial comma is commonly used in technical content. Although it is not AP standard, it is the standard in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, and ICANN will adhere to the use of the Oxford comma.

The methods protect against unauthorized viewing, sharing, modification, or deletion.

The breakfast options are steak and eggs, a ham and cheese omelet, or oatmeal.

The regular meetings facilitate engagement among technology and service vendors, regional and international agencies, and regulators.

The attacker will progressively probe the system to gain more privileges, access sensitive information from other accounts, or obtain complete administrative control.

Dashes

Consistent with AP style, ICANN uses the en-dash (–) for ranges of numbers and to set off text phrases. ICANN does not use the em-dash (—).

Don't confuse en-dashes with hyphens (-), which are shorter. To learn about the purpose and usage of hyphens, see "Hyphens and Hyphenation" on page 52.

• Use an en-dash (–), without spaces, in date and time ranges and before negative numbers. For other ranges of numbers, use the word *to* in text, but the en-dash is acceptable in tables.	1–3 March 2016 –3 degrees Celsius 20 to 30 attendees
• Use an en-dash (–), preceded and followed by a space, to take the place of commas, colons, or parentheses.	She seemed annoyed when the train arrived late – more than 15 minutes after the scheduled arrival. The woman's nieces – the daughters of her eldest brother – attended the ceremony. I love fruit desserts – especially lemon meringue pie.

Ellipses

Use an ellipsis (…) to indicate parts of quoted material that you have omitted. If material is missing from both the beginning and end of the quotation, place an ellipsis in both places.	Four score and seven years ago …

Exclamation Points

In formal publications, don't use exclamation points. Even in more informal content, such as social media posts, limit the use of exclamation marks.

Hyphens and Hyphenation

Use hyphen (-) mostly to join words (compound adjectives, prefixes, spelled-out numbers) or to separate syllables at the end of a line of text. Hyphens also join parts of an abbreviated date.

Don't confuse hyphens with en-dashes (–), which are longer. To learn about the purpose and usage of en-dashes, see "Dashes" on page 50.

Hyphens in Numbers and Dates

• Use a hyphen for spelling out fractions and numbers from 21 to 99.	twenty-three, sixty-nine three-fourths, one-half
• Use a hyphen to join the parts of an abbreviated date.	1-12-2016

Hyphens in Prefixes

• Use a hyphen with prefixes that require them. For guidelines and examples, see "Prefixes" on page 42.	pre-engineered, anti-inflammatory

Hyphens in Compound Modifiers

The use of hyphens with modifiers is not standard. The purpose of the hyphen is to increase understanding and to show that the modifiers refer to the same noun. The following are guidelines, not inflexible rules – you need to exercise your own judgment.

• Hyphenate all parts of a compound modifier that precedes a noun (to join it as a single modifier) if it makes the content clearer.	all-in-one computer cross-community working group real-time data Italian-American cooking lower-right corner matter-of-fact attitude better-qualified candidate user-friendly interface full-time employee 10-million-dollar deal three-legged stool 1950s-era fashion
• Don't hyphenate a compound modifier that follows a noun. With the verb *to be*, use your judgment – if the lack of a hyphen makes the sentence less clear, add it.	The employee works full time. The function is built in. The athlete was well trained. The interface was user friendly. She is quick-witted. The restaurant is first-rate.
• A major exception is *top-level*, which is a common ICANN term. Hyphenate it whether or not it precedes *domain*.	A domain at the top-level of the DNS … A top-level domain …
• Don't hyphenate adverbs ending in *–ly*.	partially written document moderately cold weather easily remembered fact outrageously dressed person
• Avoid using split compound modifiers, which are difficult to translate and understand. Instead, repeat the adjective.	✓ first- and second-year students ✗ first-year and second-year students

Parentheses (and Related Punctuation)

• If the phrase inside the parentheses is a complete sentence, treat it as such. Start with a capital letter and put the period, question mark, or exclamation point inside the parentheses. Otherwise, start with a lowercase letter and place the punctuation outside the parentheses.	I received a present from my uncle (who lives in Japan). They finished several science sources (biology, chemistry, physics). Read that book. (You will be amazed.) He refused to accept the paper even one minute after the deadline (17:00 EDT)! Are you arriving at 16:00 (EDT)?
• If a parenthetical phrase is not complete sentence, but comes at the end of a sentence, add terminal punctuation even if punctuation exists inside the parentheses.	I have not seen that film (and I never will!). He visited Germany in 2013 (or was it 2014?).

Periods

• Add only one space after a period.

Quotation Marks (and Related Punctuation)

• Use double quotation marks for quoted material. Use single quotes only for quotes within quotes.

• For multiple-paragraph quotations, begin each paragraph with an open quotation mark, but use a close quotation mark only at the end of the final paragraph.	"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. "Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure."

Capitalization

• If the material inside the quotation marks is a complete sentence, start with a capital letter; otherwise, use a lowercase letter.

Lead-in Punctuation

• Use a comma or colon to introduce a quote that is a full sentence.	The reporter said, "This failure is an indication of a serious problem." The reporter said: "This failure is an indication of a serious problem." The reporter said that this failure was an indication of a "serious problem."

Terminal Punctuation

• Always put a comma or period inside the close quotation mark, even if it is a single word.	I wrote an article called "Cooking with Lemons." His family called him "Will," but his coworkers called him "William."
• Put a semicolon after the close quotation mark.	Martha described the project as "a complete disaster"; her teammates disagreed.
• Place exclamation points and question marks inside the quotes if they pertain to the quoted material. Otherwise, place after the close quotation mark. At the end of a sentence, don't add a period after an exclamation point or question mark.	I've never seen "Mars Attacks!" Have you registered for "Managing Change"?

Semicolons

• Use a semicolon to join two related independent clauses. To be safe, just split into separate sentences.	They did not approve the proposal; they suggested several changes They did not approve the proposal. They suggested changes. In 1990, she was starting her career; by 2010, she was CEO of the company. In 1990, she was starting her career. By 2010, she was CEO of the company.

• Use semicolons for clarity in a series with embedded commas. Use instead of the commas that would normally set off each item in the series.	The conference attendees came from Bangalore, India; Sofia, Bulgaria; and Frankfurt, Germany. The new facility will have a gym; baseball, soccer, and polo fields; and a swimming pool.

• For rules for using semicolons in quotations, see "Quotation Marks (and Related Punctuation)" on page 54.

Slashes

• Don't use slashes to indicate word choices such as *and/ or*, *he/she,* or *writer/producer*.	✓ He is a writer and producer. ✗ He is a writer/producer. ✓ New employees must submit their payroll forms to Alicia Jones. ✗ A new employee should submit his/her payroll form to Alicia Jones.

Square Brackets

• Use square brackets for material that you add to a quote to make it clearer. Use *only* when the sentence is unclear otherwise.	I arrived [at the hotel] on time.

8. Commonly Confused or Misused Words

accept, except

accept – to receive or believe

We will *accept* comments after the end of the month.

except – not including, other than

Offices are open every day *except* Sundays.

adverse, averse

adverse – unfavorable

The weather forecaster predicted *adverse* weather.

averse – reluctant, opposed

I am *averse* to running and jogging.

advice, advise

advice – guidance (noun)

Please don't give me any more *advice*.

advise – to recommend, suggest (verb)

The company *advised* its employees to be cautious.

affect, effect, impact

affect – to influence

Blooming fruit trees *affected* her allergies.

effect, impact – a result

What is the *effect* of caffeine on alertness?

We studied the *impact* on the economy.

Note: Don't use *impact* as a verb; use *affect* instead. *Effect* can also be a verb, but the meaning is different; avoid using it so that you don't cause confusion.

a lot, allot

a lot – much, many, often

This house costs *a lot* of money.

The children look *a lot* like their mother.

allot – to give an amount, distribute

He *allotted* two hours to finish the draft.

Note: The commonly used word *alot* does not exist – don't use it.

allude, refer

allude – to make an indirect reference

In his speech, he *alluded* to his recent financial woes.

refer – to mention specifically

She *referred* frequently to Dr. Young, her mentor.

allusion, illusion

allusion – indirect reference

He made *allusions* to criticism, but gave no details.

illusion – something that falsely seems real

The game gives the *illusion* that you are really flying.

alternate, alternative

alternate – every second one (adjective),

   outside the usual (adjective),

    substitute (noun)

The meeting occurs on *alternate* Wednesdays.

Today we're taking an *alternate* route to go home.

The jury had twelve members and three *alternates*.

alternative – option (noun),

   unconventional (adjective)

The menu has vegetarian *alternatives*.

It's an *alternative* approach to fighting the disease.

among, between

among – used for a group of three or more

I divided the money *among* all members of the team.

between – used for a group of two,

   (or between two groups)

She is standing *between* the two largest rocks.

The rivalry *between* the two groups is legendary.

amount, number

amount – used with mass nouns

I put the correct *amount* of salt in the recipe.

number – used with nouns you can count

They had a *number* of reasons for rejecting the plan.

anybody, anyone, any body, any one

anybody, anyone –
   does not refer to a specific person

Anybody can open this door.

Don't talk to *anyone* until I get there.

any one – singles out a member of a group

Any one of the children can finish this job.

assure, ensure, insure

assure – to make certain or give confidence
   (to a person, animal, group)

Let me *assure* you that he is honest.

ensure – to guarantee an event or condition

Careful planning does not always *ensure* success.

insure – used for insurance policies

This auto policy *insures* you against theft.

because, since

because – for that reason

They went to the movie *because* I recommended it.

since – from that time forward

He has lived in that house *since* 2013.

beside, besides

beside – next to

Put the table *beside* the window.

besides – in addition to

Besides football, she likes to play tennis.

can, may, might

can – is able to,
   has permission to (in modern usage)

He *can* play the violin.

You *can* answer the phone if you want to.

may – has permission to, suggests
   something is possible

May I ask you a question?

It *may* rain tonight.

might – past tense of may, present tense
   suggests something is not likely

They *might* have gone swimming, but they didn't.

I *might* go scuba diving – in my next life!

Note: More and more, *can* is acceptable as a replacement for *may* in the context of permission. Today, *may* sometimes seems overly formal. Also, at *may* is ambiguous because it has two different connotations (possibility and permission).

communication, communications

communication – exchange of information

Communication is essential to any relationship.

communications – technology, tactics, or
   systems related to information

The *Communications* team produces the newsletter.

complementary, complimentary

complementary – making the other better

The team members have *complementary* strengths.

complimentary – flattering (adjective),
   free, without cost (adjective)

They made *complimentary* remarks about her work.

We received *complimentary* tickets to the play.

compose, comprise, constitute

comprise – to consist of

compose – to make up (active)

   (passive)

constitute – to make up

The U.S *comprises* 50 states.

Fifty states *compose* the U.S. (Sounds awkward.)

The U.S is *composed* of 50 states.

Fifty states *constitute* the U.S.

> Note: The commonly used construction *comprised* of is incorrect. Because they are so often misused, *comprise* and *compose* may sound awkward when used correctly. Avoid the issue altogether by substituting *constitute* or *is composed of*.

continually, continuously

continually – occurring frequently

continuously – without interruption

Our car was *continually* breaking down.

The alarm rang *continuously* for three hours.

differ from, differ with

differ from – to be unlike

differ with – to disagree with

American English *differs* from British English.

I *differ* with your interpretation of the facts.

discreet, discrete

discreet –cautious, reserved (as in speech)

discrete – separate

The doctor is *discreet* in talking about her patients.

The building was divided into three *discrete* parts.

either … or, neither … nor

either … or – use as a pair

neither … nor – use as a pair

You may park *either* in the garage *or* on the street.

Neither Sarah *nor* Max is free tonight.

farther, further

farther – beyond (in distance)

further – beyond (in degree or time)

We don't want to walk any *farther*.

They will look *further* into the source of the problem.

fewer than, less

fewer – used with nouns you can count

less – used with mass nouns

Fewer than 15 people came the lecture.

I have *less* patience than my sister.

imply, infer

imply – to hint at

infer – to deduce

Are you *implying* that I'm always late?

She *inferred* the meaning from the look on his face.

its, it's

its – possessive adjective for it

it's – contraction of it is or it has

The tree still had all *its* leaves.

It's been raining all day.

Hint: Try replacing with *it is* or *it has*. If the sentence doesn't make sense, use *its*.

like, as

like – used in comparisons

as, as if – used to begin a clause

Jim looks *like* his brother

The baby looked *as if* she wanted to eat.

loose, lose

loose – not tight

lose – to misplace

His belt is too *loose* since he has lost weight.

Try not to *lose* your keys.

many, much

much – used with mass nouns

many – used with nouns you can count

How *much* snow do you think we will get?

I receive too *many* emails!

more than, over

AP recently made these two
interchangeable.

The package weighed *more than* 2.5 pounds.

The package weighed *over* 2.5 pounds.

oral, verbal, written

oral – spoken

verbal – pertaining to words (oral or written)

written – committed to paper

The students have an *oral* exam on Thursday.

My *verbal* skills are uneven – I speak better than I write.

They had a *written* contract.

principal, principle

principal – head of a school (noun),
   main (adjective)

principle – law or tenet

Ms. Chen is the *principal* the high school.

The *principal* reason for coming is to meet Joan.

Newton formulated the *principle* of gravity.

regardless, irregardless

regardless – despite

Will you go *regardless* of the cost of the ticket?

Note: The commonly used word *irregardless* is nonstandard – don't use it.

stationary, stationery

stationary – not moving, still

stationery – paper

He rides on a *stationary* bike every morning.

I used the fancy *stationery* for the invitations.

than, then

than – used for comparisons

then – coming after

She is taller *than* her teammate.

Let's have lunch, *then* we'll talk about the project.

that, which

that – restricts to a subset

which – does not restrict

This line is for all cars *that* failed inspection.

The report, *which* was approved on 1 June, was the first attempt to describe the problem.

Tip: The rules are more complex than this simple explanation. You can usually remove a clause starting with *which* from a sentence and not change the meaning. When you remove a clause starting with *that*, the meaning of the sentence changes.

their, there, they're

their – possessive adjective for they

there – preposition indicating place,
   indefinite pronoun

they're – contraction of they are

Their office building is across the street.

Wait for me over *there* in the lobby.

There is a strange smell in the room.

They're wondering where you are.

to, too, two

to – preposition	They are going *to* the museum.
too – also	She wants to visit London, *too*.
two – number	I have *two* sisters and one brother.

where, were

where – preposition for location	*Where* are you going?
were – past tense of are	In 2000, they *were* students at the university.

who's, whose

who's – contraction of who is	Emily is the girl *who's* going to rake your leaves.
whose – possessive form of who or which	Tyler is the boy *whose* bicycle was stolen.

Hint: Try replacing with *who is*. If the sentence doesn't make sense, use *whose*.

wish, want

wish – to hope	I *wish* I would win the lottery.
want – to desire to	If you *want* to back up your computer, do it now.

Note: Don't use *wish* in a business context when you really mean *want*.

you're, your

you're – contraction of you are	*You're* the first person to arrive
your – possessive adjective for you	*Your* mother is already at the table.

9. Terminology

Defining New ICANN Terms and Acronyms

Historically, ICANN has overused acronyms, creating them when they are unnecessary. Sometimes, the same acronym has multiple definitions.

ICANN-specific terminology has its own set of problems. Many documents, processes, groups, or projects include names that are either ungrammatical, misspelled, or are long noun strings in need of simplification.

> Once acronyms and terms are in common use, we're often stuck with them. To avoid this situation, going forward, the Communications Team will review new terminology and acronyms. If you want to create a new acronym or new term, request approval by sending an email to:
> ✉ icanncontent@icann.org.

Capitalization of ICANN Terms

Like many organizations, ICANN sometimes over-capitalizes our own terms, but the basic rules of capitalization should still apply. When using ICANN terms, capitalize proper nouns; lowercase common nouns.

• Refer to the three parts of ICANN as follows:	○ ICANN Board of Directors, ICANN Board, Board ○ ICANN community, community ○ ICANN organization, organization

The *ICANN Board of Directors* is the official, legal name of a specific group, so it is a proper noun. Both *ICANN community* and *ICANN organization* are common nouns. *ICANN community* refers to a broad collection of other groups and individuals. Likewise, *ICANN organization* is a description – it's not ICANN's official, legal name.

• Use lowercase letters for general terms – e.g., groups, processes, events, and publications. Capitalize the first major word of specific entities.	working group — GAC Public Safety Working Group
	committee — Executive Committee
	policy development process — GNSO Policy Development Process
	forum — Eastern European DNS Forum
	report — ICANN Annual Report
	program — New gTLD Program
	conference — World Internet Conference
	meeting — ICANN Public Meeting
• The following terms fall into a "gray area," but ICANN treats them as proper nouns because they have a specific meaning and constitution.	○ Advisory Committees ○ Supporting Organizations

ICANN Offices

ICANN follows the following categorization for our offices:

Regional Offices:
Los Angeles, U.S.A (Headquarters)
Istanbul, Turkey
Montevideo, Uruguay
Singapore

Engagement Centers:
Beijing, China
Brussels, Belgium
Geneva, Switzerland
Nairobi, Kenya
Seoul, Republic of Korea
Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

Partnership Centers:
Asunción, Paraguay
Cairo, Egypt

Approved "About ICANN" Paragraph

Please use the following text if you need to describe ICANN. This is the standard language we are using across our content and has been approved by the Executive Team.	ICANN's mission is to help ensure a stable, secure and unified global Internet. To reach another person on the Internet, you need to type an address – a name or a number – into your computer or other device. That address must be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN helps coordinate and support these unique identifiers across the world. ICANN was formed in 1998 as a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation with a community of participants from all over the world.

Common ICANN Terms

This list shows the capitalization and spelling of frequently used ICANN terms.

Address Supporting Organization (ASO)	ICANN Board
Advisory Committee (AC)	ICANN Learn
At-Large	ICANN organization (not staff)
At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC)	ICANN Public Meeting
At-Large Structure (ALS)	ICANN58, ICANN59, etc.
At-Large Structures (ALSes)	Internationalized Domain Name (IDN)
Council (e.g., ccNSO Council, GNSO Council)	Internet
Country Code Names Supporting Organization (ccNSO)	Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA)
CCWG-Accountability	Internet governance
country code top-level domain (ccTLD)	Internet Protocol
cross-community working group	IPv4, IPv6
CWG-Stewardship	Multistakeholder
domain name	Naming Services portal
Domain Name System	newcomer
enhancing ICANN accountability	Newcomers Program
Fellowship Program	NextGen@ICANN
FY16 Q3 Stakeholder Call	NextGenner
Generic Names Supporting Organization (GNSO)	registrar
generic top-level domain (gTLD)	registry
Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC)	Root Server System Advisory Committee (RSSAC)
hub office (e.g., APAC and EMEA hub offices)	Security and Stability Advisory Committee (SSAC)
IANA functions	Supporting Organization (SO)
IANA stewardship transition	top-level, top-level domain (TLD)
ICANN community	WHOIS

ICANN Preferred Terms

This list shows terms that ICANN prefers for you to use.	✓ global	✗ international
	✓ newcomer (ICANN meeting)	✗ first-timer
	✓ webinar	✗ web conference

Bias-Free Terminology

This list gives examples of terms that are free of bias toward language, culture, gender, or ability.	✓ committee chair	✗ chairman, chairwoman
	✓ developed country	✗ first-world country
	✓ developing country	✗ third-world country
	✓ person with a disability	✗ disabled person, handicapped person
	✓ previous and following	✗ up and down, before and after, above and below
	✓ specific month or quarter	✗ spring, summer, winter, fall

10. Readability Tools

Microsoft Word and Acrolinx have built-in tools for measuring readability. Both tools use Flesch-Kincaid readability scores that are calculated from a formula based on the number of words per sentence and number of syllables per word.

Flesch-Kincaid measurements are not perfect, but you can get a general idea of readability.
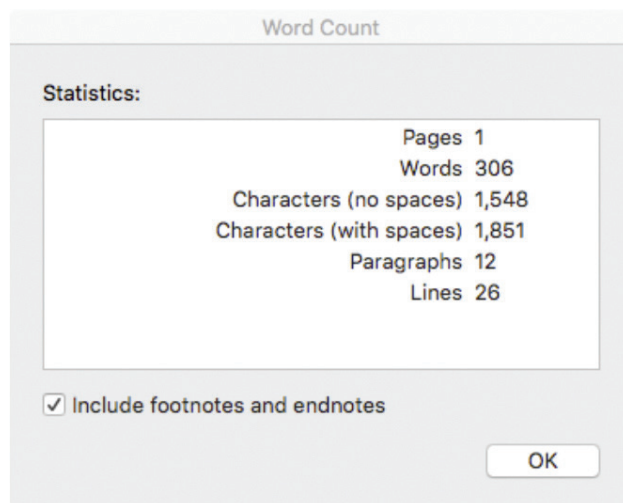
Because the formulas use numbers of syllables, content with many long names of people, places, or organizations may skew the score.

Microsoft Word

Word has useful tools for calculating word totals and readability.

- **Word Count (Tools > Word Count)**

  You can use this option for selected text or a whole document.

  > **Word Count**
  >
  > Statistics:
  >
  > | | |
  > |---|---|
  > | Pages | 1 |
  > | Words | 306 |
  > | Characters (no spaces) | 1,548 |
  > | Characters (with spaces) | 1,851 |
  > | Paragraphs | 12 |
  > | Lines | 26 |
  >
  > ☑ Include footnotes and endnotes
  >
  > OK

- **Spell-Check (Tools > Spelling and Grammar)**

  The statistics are displayed in a dialog box at the end of a spelling check. To enable:

  1. In Word, open **Options** (Windows)/**Preferences** (Mac).
  2. Click **Spelling & Grammar**.
  3. Select **Check grammar as you type, Check spelling with grammar** and **Readability statistics**.

  Several of the statistics give useful information.

  > **Readability Statistics**
  >
  > **Counts**
  >
  > | | |
  > |---|---|
  > | Words | 1,269 |
  > | Characters | 8,013 |
  > | Paragraphs | 95 |
  > | Sentences | 104 |
  >
  > **Averages**
  >
  > | | |
  > |---|---|
  > | Sentences per Paragraph | 2.2 |
  > | Words per Sentence | 9.8 |
  > | Characters per Word | 4.7 |
  >
  > **Readability**
  >
  > | | |
  > |---|---|
  > | Flesch Reading Ease | 66.6 |
  > | Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level | 6.3 |

- **Words**. This statistic gives the total number of words in the file.
- **Sentences per Paragraph**. Ideally, this number will be between 3 and 5.
- **Words per Sentence**. Ideally, this number is under 14. A good target is between 15 and 20. Anything over 21 means your sentences are too long.
- **Flesch Reading Ease**. The score is a 100-point scale. The higher the score, the more readable the document. Plain English is between 60 and 70. Anything higher than 60 is a good score.
- **Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level**. The score is presented as a U.S. grade level, which equates to the number of years of education required to understand the text. Your goal is to score 8.0 or lower (meaning that a 14-year-old can understand the content easily).

Acrolinx

Acrolinx is a tool that the Language Services team uses to measure the readability of documents. Acrolinx is highly customizable and can flag grammatical constructions and words for authors to avoid. You must have a license to use Acrolinx. If you have questions or think you want to use it, please submit a ticket to the Language Services Department via its Samanage portal.

11. More Writing Resources

For more pointers on grammar, style, and punctuation, see the following guides:

- *The Economist, [The Economist Style Guide](), Wiley, 2010.*
- Edward P. Bailey, *Plain English at Work: A Guide to Writing and Speaking*, Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Martin Cutts, *Oxford Guide to Plain English*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Rachel McAlpine, [*Global English: Global English for Global Business*](), ISBN 978-0-476-0138-6-0, 2013.
- Patricia O'Connor, *Woe is I: A Grammarphobes Guide to Better English in Plain English*, Riverhead Books, 2010.
- Janice (Ginny) Redish, *Letting Go of the Words: Web Content that Works*, Morgan Kaufman, 2012.
- William A. Sabin, *The Gregg Reference Manual*, McGraw Hill, 2005.
- William Strunk, Jr., and E.B. White, [*Elements of Style*](), Bartleby.com, 1999.

If you have questions about these guidelines or about writing in general, email icanncontent@icann.org.