

# **Communication Standards for the Ministry of Health 2012**

---

Citation: Ministry of Health. 2012. *Communication Standards for the Ministry of Health*.  
Wellington: Ministry of Health.

Published in May 2012 by the  
Ministry of Health  
PO Box 5013, Wellington 6145, New Zealand

ISBN 978-0-478-37392-9 (print)  
ISBN 978-0-478-37393-6 (online)  
HP 5453

This document is available at [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)



MANATŪ HAUORA

---

# Foreword

Integration is central to the delivery of health services for all New Zealanders, and that is reflected in how we work at the Ministry. While there are many parts to our organisation, the collective whole is greater than the sum of the parts. It is essential that our approach is integrated and collaborative and that we are responsive to each other, the health and disability sector and our Ministers.

Our communications reflect who we are and what we do, and they need to reflect our way of working as part of the health and disability sector and government in planning, monitoring and delivering health and disability services.

We need to mirror that we work as ‘one Ministry’ through our communications. To achieve this, we have developed a whole-of-Ministry approach for publications and communications material with easy-to-use templates, standardised business unit logos with the same colour and type, and a consistent look and feel in our publications.

The *Communication Standards* help you to write clearly and professionally and to make sure your messages are received as you intend them. This updated version of our Standards includes advice on Plain English writing, preferred spelling and referencing, and tips on how to write well.

Whether you are writing a letter, producing a publication or reporting to the Minister, I expect you to use these *Communication Standards*. Consistent writing contributes to the credibility of the Ministry and ensures our information can be used with confidence and trust.

Kevin Woods  
Director-General of Health



---

# Contents

Foreword	iii
<b>1 Principles of good writing</b>	<b>1</b>
Keep your sentences and paragraphs short and on one topic	1
Use subheadings	2
Using the active voice and passive voice	2
Use verbs instead of nouns	3
Use the right word	3
Choose the short or familiar word	3
Use specific, concrete language	4
Be concise	4
Punctuate correctly	5
Use an appropriate style and tone	5
Be inclusive	6
Be accurate	6
Tips for writing plain English	6
<b>2 Accessible communication</b>	<b>8</b>
Using inclusive language	8
Communicating with deaf and hearing impaired people	9
Accessible formatting	10
<b>3 Ministry preferred style of language</b>	<b>11</b>
Abbreviations	11
Brackets	13
Capitals/lower case	13
Italics	15
Numbers	16
Email and web addresses	19
Quotation marks	19
<b>4 Ministry preferred spelling and usage</b>	<b>21</b>
Terms used for the Ministry of Health	21
Terms used in Ministry of Health writing and publications	22
Titles and web addresses of district health boards	31

<b>5</b>	<b>Formatting documents, graphs and tables</b>	<b>32</b>
	Text fonts and headings	32
	Spacing	33
	Lists	33
	Bullet points	33
	The alphanumeric system	34
	Table of contents	35
	Graphs and tables	36
	Alt text	36
<b>6</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>38</b>
	References in the text	38
	Referencing non-electronic sources	41
	Referencing electronic sources	44
	Examples of correct forms of referencing	49
	Referencing Ministry of Health strategy publications	51
<b>7</b>	<b>Publishing a document</b>	<b>53</b>
	The process and timeline (based on a 60-page document)	53
	What you need to do	53
	Additional steps for getting hard copies only	54
	Internal sign-off	54
	Health Reports and the Weekly Report	54
	Printing	55
	Web publishing	55
	Mail outs	56
	Storage and distribution	56
	Other requirements	56
<b>8</b>	<b>Web publishing</b>	<b>58</b>
	Writing for the web	58
	Standards for the web	59
<b>9</b>	<b>Top tips for writing well</b>	<b>60</b>
	Language	60
	Style	60
	Abbreviations	61
	Bullet points	61

---

# 1 Principles of good writing

We all benefit by honing our communication skills. If you can become a better writer you increase the likelihood that your ideas will be put into action.

Whether you are writing a letter, a policy document or content for the web, write clearly and concisely and write each sentence as simply as possible. Sometimes you may choose to use formal language, but always avoid jargon.

If we don't use clear and simple language, our audiences will not want to read our information or, worse still, will misunderstand it. Put yourself in the reader's position. Ask yourself, 'Is the message I intend absolutely clear?' If a sentence in a piece you are writing does not make sense to you, it will not make sense to others.

Good writing requires practice. It is the logical arrangement of thought. Writing is thinking on paper. Anybody who thinks clearly should be able to write clearly and vice versa.

Good writing is specific and concrete.

When writing, consider your purpose, desired outcome and reader(s). Remember that even though your document may be written with a specialist audience in mind, it could be useful to a wider audience if it is written simply and clearly.

## **Keep your sentences and paragraphs short and on one topic**

Each sentence should contain just one dominant thought. Keep your average sentence length between 16 and 20 words. But don't be afraid to vary the sentence length – balance a long sentence with a shorter one.

A paragraph is a group of closely related sentences, usually beginning with a topic sentence that 'signposts' the topic of the paragraph. A good topic sentence expresses an idea that can be developed or enlarged upon by the supporting ideas.

Tailor paragraph length to the complexity of the text. In a newsletter, which is intended to be highly accessible and informal, ensure paragraphs are only one or two sentences long. In a discussion document developing complex ideas, paragraphs may have to be longer.

As a general rule, though, keep most paragraphs short. If you find a long paragraph is difficult to read, break it up into shorter paragraphs. Mix long and short paragraphs.

## Use subheadings

In longer documents, subheadings make your key messages visible. Web content also needs lots of subheadings to make the text easy to scan.

## Using the active voice and passive voice

Use the active voice most of the time when writing. Write in the active voice for stronger, more vivid, personal sentences. This is especially important in correspondence.

If the subject is performing the action, the sentence is in the active voice.

If the subject is being acted upon, the sentence is in the passive voice.

### Examples

Active voice:

The dog ate the bone.

You requested information on cervical screening.

Passive voice:

The bone was eaten by the dog.

Information on cervical screening was requested by you.

However, the passive voice is preferable when:

- the person or thing receiving the action is more important than the person or thing doing the action, or if the person or thing doing the action is unknown or unimportant; for example:

The PM was struck by an egg (passive)

is better than:

An egg struck the PM (active)

- the aim is to minimise or de-emphasise criticism; for example:

Three calculation errors were made in the project schedule (passive)

attributes no blame, whereas:

Peter made three calculation errors in the project schedule (active)

attributes blame.

## Use verbs instead of nouns

Use:

Productivity has improved

not:

An improvement in productivity has been made.

Use:

Profits fell sharply

not:

A sharp fall in profits occurred.

## Use the right word

Know the exact meaning of every word you use.

### Examples

discreet	careful and circumspect
discrete	separate
disinterested	impartial
uninterested	not interested
less	a decreased amount (there was less rain than expected)
fewer	a decreased number (fewer than 20 people attended)
lead	guide or show the way
led	past tense of lead

## Choose the short or familiar word

Write to express, not impress. Where you have a choice of words, choose the:

- familiar before the unfamiliar
- short word before the long, unless the long word is better.

### Examples

I think we should end [not terminate] the contract.

What choices [not alternatives] do I have?

We used [not utilised] their services twice last year.

Choose this:	over this:
do	accomplish
help	assistance
much	considerable
preventive	preventative
about	regarding
almost	virtually

## Use specific, concrete language

Specific and concrete words are more vivid than general and abstract ones.

Write:

It poured every day for a month

not:

A period of adverse weather set in.

Avoid jargon. The best test for jargon and gobbledegook is the question ‘Could this piece of writing be expressed more simply without any loss of meaning?’ If the answer is yes, you are reading jargon.

Write:

do

final result

meet

finished

Don’t write:

operationalise

bottom line

touch base

done and dusted

## Be concise

Make every word count.

Write:

We appreciate your generous gift

not:

We wish to express our appreciation for your generous gift.

Write:

We accept your proposal

not:

We would like to inform you that your proposal has been accepted.

<b>Write:</b>	<b>Don't write:</b>
sum or total	sum total
now	at the present time
for	for the purpose of
to	in order to
since, because	on the grounds that
for	on behalf of
daily	on a daily basis
consensus	consensus of opinion
about (or omit)	with regard to
provided	the provision of

## **Punctuate correctly**

Punctuation should be simple but accurate. A well punctuated document is easy to understand. Break long sentences up into short ones by using full stops rather than commas.

There is no need to put a comma before every instance of the words 'and', 'or' and 'with'. (It is the Ministry's style not to put a comma before the last item in a list.) Use colons, semicolons and dashes sparingly and correctly.

## **Use an appropriate style and tone**

### **Be positive and helpful**

You can often avoid being negative by using a positive phrase; for example, by using 'forgot' instead of 'did not remember'.

**Use:**

To help with this inquiry, I need more details

**not:**

Unfortunately I am unable to assist you with this inquiry due to insufficient details being provided.

### **Use personal pronouns**

Consider the situation from the reader's point of view.

**Say:**

Thank you for your input

**not:**

We consider your input to have been valuable.

## **Be inclusive**

Ministry communications should be free of sexism, racism, ageism and other forms of discriminatory language. (See section 2, 'Accessible communication'.)

## **Be accurate**

Edit and proofread everything and, as part of the peer review process, ask someone else to read it too.

### **Proofreading checklist**

Read the whole text highlighting any errors. Check the document for spelling or typing errors, grammatical errors, repetitions, omission of letters and words, and word use. Do not rely on the spell check in Word. It will not distinguish mistakes like 'form' instead of 'from', 'manger' instead of 'manager' or 'heath' instead of 'health'.

Check the content, especially dates, names and titles, website addresses, figures, facts and footnotes, incorrect numbers, labels on graphs, tables and charts, page numbers, headers and footers.

Check details of format: punctuation and capital letters, hyphenation, word breaks, font style and size, heading styles and positioning, alignment, margins and spacing.

## **Tips for writing plain English**

Overall, perhaps one of the most important things is to keep things simple. Using plain, clear language will help to get your message across effectively. It will benefit everyone because your information will be easier to understand.

Here are some pointers for presenting your information in plain English.

- Structure your material. Plan what you are going to say. Present information in a logical sequence.
- Keep sentences short. Remember the principle of keeping to one main idea in a sentence.
- Use an active rather than a passive voice.
- Use personal language. Using 'you' and 'we' makes writing more direct and understandable.
- Use lists where appropriate.
- Keep jargon to a minimum. If you need to use technical or difficult words, provide a glossary or a 'list of useful words'.

**Example**

Before: The first intervention is routinely asking about abuse so it can be identified and further interventions offered.

After: To identify abuse the first step is to ask questions and then offer help.

---

## 2 Accessible communication

### Using inclusive language

All Ministry communications must be free of sexism, racism, ageism and other forms of discriminatory language to ensure both equity and effective communication. As a matter of good practice, all writing should reflect the cultural, ethnic and disability diversity of New Zealand.

#### Sexism and racism

If a group being referred to does or could include both sexes, the words used should be neutral or refer to both sexes, such as ‘adult’, ‘spokesperson’, ‘chairperson’ or ‘firefighter’. In general, use terms that include all people, such as ‘artificial’ or ‘synthetic’ for ‘manmade’, ‘staffed’ for ‘manned’, ‘work hours’ for ‘man hours’.

Use terms of equal weight for both sexes: woman/man, girl/boy. Avoid clumsy constructions such as ‘he/she’. Using ‘they’ for ‘he/she’ or ‘their’ for ‘his/her’ is acceptable.

Wherever possible, use verbal and pictorial examples that show both sexes, different ethnicities, disabled people and people of different ages. Do not stereotype people.

#### Disabled people

There are differing views about which term should be used to refer to people with physical, sensory (sight, hearing) and/or learning disabilities. Here we use the term ‘disabled people’. In some situations and for some writing it may be appropriate to use other terms, such as ‘people with disabilities’ or ‘people with impairments’.

When referring to a specific type of disability it is appropriate to ‘put the person first’; for example, refer to ‘children with autism’ rather than ‘autistic children’, or ‘an adult with a learning disability’ rather than ‘a learning disabled adult’. When referring to people with a sensory disability, use the word impairment; for example, ‘adult with a hearing/visual impairment’, or ‘adult who is deaf/blind’.

One in five New Zealanders reports some level of long-term disability. Besides being a matter of good public relations, there are sound policy and legislative reasons to ensure that your information is available to everyone, including disabled people. It makes good sense to ensure disabled people can access the information you provide because:

- they and their families will be better informed
- you will be showing a commitment to the intentions of the New Zealand Disability Strategy and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which New Zealand ratified in 2008

- you will reach a greater number of people
- people without disabilities will also find it easier to access your information
- when you provide accessible information services you help to create a positive public image for the Ministry of Health.

## **Communicating with deaf and hearing impaired people**

Communicating with people who have a severe hearing loss can be stressful for everyone involved. It doesn't have to be so. Here are some tips that should help.

- Don't shout when you are speaking to a deaf or hearing impaired person. Shouting distorts your mouth and makes lip reading difficult.
- Make sure you have the person's attention before you start speaking. You could do this with a gentle tap on the shoulder.
- Make sure your lips can be seen. Don't cover your mouth with your hands or an object while you are speaking.
- Don't stand with a light or window at your back. The light needs to be on your face.
- Speak face to face without standing closer than you'd normally stand to a hearing person. If you are talking with your back to a deaf or hearing impaired person or shouting from another room, you won't be understood. Don't try to hold a conversation from across the room.
- Speak slowly, with gaps between each word and phrase. Many older people have difficulty following rapid speech, even when they can hear it without too much problem.
- Pronounce each word clearly. Make sure you don't miss the ends off words, or drop the tone at the ends of words and sentences, which makes it hard to follow.
- Vary your voice to find a tone that works. Some people have difficulty hearing high tones; for example, women's and children's voices.
- Try a different way of saying the same thing. Rather than repeating yourself, try another way of expressing what you want to say. Emphasise the key words in the sentence.
- Write it down. If you are having trouble being understood verbally, use written words and gestures to explain what you mean.
- Find an interpreter if the person you want to talk to uses sign language.
- Learn to sign. Make a start by using the finger spelling alphabet.

Above all, don't turn away. Don't give up. Hearing impaired and deaf people can communicate with you. It just takes a little more patience and effort.

Source: National Foundation for the Deaf website  
[www.nfd.org.nz/documents/Clear\\_communication.pdf](http://www.nfd.org.nz/documents/Clear_communication.pdf)

## **New Zealand Sign Language**

Deaf and hearing impaired people whose main language is New Zealand Sign Language may have difficulty understanding and interpreting written and spoken language.

When organising a public event (eg, a lecture, forum, or public meetings) it is recommended that you:

- plan well in advance the need for New Zealand Sign Language interpreters and make a booking for one or more interpreters
- advise presenters and other participants that New Zealand Sign Language interpreters will be available at the event
- where possible provide all written material to the interpreters well in advance of the meeting so they can familiarise themselves with the information (particularly if it has a highly technical or specialised content).

The following link includes advice on how to achieve effective communication with deaf and hearing impaired people and to work with New Zealand Sign Language interpreters:

[www.odi.govt.nz/resources/guides-and-toolkits/working-with-nzsl-interpreters/](http://www.odi.govt.nz/resources/guides-and-toolkits/working-with-nzsl-interpreters/)

## **Accessible formatting**

The Ministry of Health standard templates for publications and documents have been developed to be accessible.

Keep in mind the following when formatting your document.

- Documents and letters are easier to read if the text is not cramped, the margins are wide and there is plenty of white space on the page.
- Make sure there is good contrast between print and any background colour, and never print text over graphics.
- Do not use block capitals in headings, or italics and underlining for word emphasis, because they are not easily readable for people with visual impairments.
- Use ragged right rather than justified text (as in this document) to ensure even word spacing.

If you are producing a DVD, include captions for all dialogue. This not only helps hearing impaired people, but also helps get your message across if the volume is turned off. All web-based videos require captions to comply with the New Zealand Government Web Standards.

For some audiences you may wish to produce your publication in accessible formats such as large print, Braille, audiotape, DVD, easy-to-read or pictorial versions. Please contact the Web and Publications Team as early as possible if you need advice.

---

## 3 Ministry preferred style of language

Using a consistent style of language for all Ministry of Health writing and documents helps to identify them. Applying the Ministry style to your document does not change its content or meaning. Being consistent helps readers because they are not distracted by a variety of styles. For guidance on spelling and usage, see section 4, ‘Ministry preferred spelling and usage’.

### Abbreviations

There are two main types of abbreviation: acronyms, which are abbreviations pronounced as words (eg, NASA, AIDS), and standard abbreviations, which are pronounced by sounding out each letter (eg, BBC, NRL).

As a general rule, avoid abbreviations. Readers not familiar with their meaning will easily become irritated, even if the abbreviation is spelt out on first occurrence (few people read a document from front to back) or is explained in a glossary. An abbreviation can be useful if it is widely known (eg, ACC) or if a term is used frequently throughout a document and spelling it out would be cumbersome (eg, DHBs for district health boards).

Avoid abbreviations such as ‘eg’, ‘ie’ and ‘NB’, unless they are used frequently (as in this document), and then only within brackets. Here you should weigh the annoyance of using the spelt-out form against the appearance of inconsistency (as when ‘for example’ and ‘eg’ are used in close proximity).

Avoid using an abbreviation as the first word in a sentence. Only use full stops with abbreviations to avoid ambiguity (eg, ‘no.’ for number).

Avoid ambiguous abbreviations, especially where the general public would interpret them differently from the intended health sector usage (eg, NRL = National Radiation Laboratory or National Rugby League).

### Names of organisations

Where the name of an organisation or publication is abbreviated in the text, write the name in full the first time it is used and show the abbreviation in brackets immediately after the words. For example:

Dr McDowall joined the World Health Organization (WHO) last year. Her contract has since been extended by WHO.

Do not use the spelt-out form plus bracketed abbreviation in headings. If you use an abbreviation in a heading, make sure the spelt-out form is clearly visible in the text.

If the document is lengthy, write the name in full the first time it is used in each chapter, then show the abbreviation in brackets after the words, as above.

However, spelling out very common abbreviations (such as UK) in every chapter can be unnecessary, so judgement should be used based on the audience.

## **Titles and qualifications**

Abbreviate titles of distinction and qualifications following a name and set them in small capitals without full stops. For example:

Jarvis Cocker FRS, FRCNZ, FCANZ.

Do not use a full stop after abbreviated titles such as Ms, Mr, Prof and Dr.

## **Species names**

The genus (eg, *Escherichia*) but not the species (eg, *coli*) may be abbreviated after first appearing in full; thus use *Escherichia coli* and subsequently *E. coli*. (Note that a full stop follows the abbreviation to comply with international style conventions.) Use enough letters to avoid confusion (eg, *Strep.* for *Streptococcus*, *Sal.* for *Salmonella*, *Sh.* for *Shigella*).

## **Abbreviations in references, tables and figures**

Use the following abbreviations in references, tables and figures. Spell them out in full in the text (except when used within brackets). Note the use of full stops in some cases.

<b>App</b>	appendix
<b>bull.</b>	bulletin
<b>cf</b>	compare
<b>ch(s)</b>	chapter(s)
<b>ed(s)</b>	editor(s)
<b>et al</b>	and others
<b>f</b>	following page
<b>ff</b>	following pages
<b>fig.</b>	figure
<b>figs</b>	figures
<b>no.</b>	number
<b>nos</b>	numbers
<b>p</b>	page
<b>para</b>	paragraph
<b>pp</b>	pages
<b>pt</b>	part

<b>sec</b>	section(s)
<b>suppl</b>	supplement
<b>table</b>	do not abbreviate table
<b>vol</b>	volume.

For units of measure and numbers, see the subsection on numbers.

## Brackets

Use round brackets (also known as parentheses) to enclose remarks not intended to be part of the main statement.

Hepatitis A (which used to be called infectious hepatitis) is one of three kinds of viral hepatitis.

For several years the rate increased (from 5 to 18 percent).

Try to choose foods from the four food groups. (For more information, see page 305.)

Note the punctuation used in the above examples. If the information in brackets is not a complete sentence, put the punctuation outside the brackets (as shown here). If the brackets surround a sentence, the sentence should start with an initial capital letter and there should be a full stop before the closing bracket. (It should look like this.)

Do not put a comma before the opening bracket. If a comma is needed, put it after the closing bracket.

The article was published in June (as part of a discussion document), but they received no feedback until November.

Try to avoid brackets within brackets by rewording the text.

Use square brackets [like these] to indicate words inserted by the present author or editor in quotations. The material within the square brackets does not affect the punctuation of the outer sentence.

## Capitals/lower case

The tendency in modern English is to use lower case where possible, and this is preferred in Ministry of Health publications. For example, use ‘general practitioner’, not ‘General Practitioner’. Here are some of the more common rules that apply, particularly in Ministry documents.

### Names of organisations and similar entities

Whenever the full, official names of organisations, institutions and similar entities are cited, all components other than articles, prepositions and conjunctions are given initial capitals; for example:

the Mental Health Foundation

the Ministry of Education.

But note:

The Treasury  
The Hague  
The Netherlands.

## **Official titles and offices**

When a person's official title is given in full, each element other than an article or a preposition is given an initial capital; for example:

the Prime Minister of New Zealand  
Rt Hon David Attenborough, Prime Minister  
the Minister of Education  
the Director of Mental Health.

Use lower-case initial letters when:

- reference is made solely to the particular office or to someone who no longer holds that office; for example:  
Lange became prime minister in 1984  
Mary wants to become the deputy director-general
- the title is used generically; for example:  
As you know, doctors, chief executives and managers are usually busy people.

## **Acts and government language**

The titles of legislation are always given initial capitals; for example, the Official Information Act 1982. Use the date the first time an Act is mentioned. Do not put a comma before the year. In subsequent text referring to a specific Act, 'the Act' can be used where there is no possibility of ambiguity; for example:

This was stated in the Official Information Act 1982. The Act was passed.

The names of international treaties, conventions, protocols and government programmes are always capitalised when written in full; for example:

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Treaty of Waitangi.

The following are capitalised:

The Budget  
Cabinet  
Crown, but Crown entities  
Government, but government when it is generic, for example, previous governments  
Minister, Ministers (except when referring to a minister of religion), but ministerial  
Parliament, but parliamentary  
State  
Vote (as in Vote Health).

## **Diseases and syndromes**

Use lower case for the names of diseases, syndromes, signs, symptoms, tests and so on. Exceptions are proper names forming part of the term, acronyms or classification symbols. For example, always write Hodgkin's disease, hepatitis B and AIDS as shown here.

## **Names of infectious organisms**

Following scientific convention, use an initial capital for the genus (generic) name and lower case for the species (specific) name (eg, *Escherichia coli*).

Do not use a capital or italicise the common names of diseases or pathological conditions (eg, listeria and listeriosis), but do italicise scientific names (eg, *Listeria monocytogenes*).

## **Chemical symbols and names**

Write the names of chemical elements and compounds in lower case. Use initial capitals set without full stops for chemical symbols. For example: NaCl, sodium chloride, O<sub>3</sub>, ozone.

## **Trade names**

Capitalise proprietary trade names (eg, Penbritin, Amoxil, Aspro).

Use lower case for common, approved or generic names (eg, ampicillin, amoxicillin, aspirin).

## **Italics**

Use italics sparingly in text because they are difficult to read for those who are sight-impaired, particularly on the web. Avoid using italics solely for the purpose of adding emphasis to a word.

Use italics for the:

- titles of books, films, musical works, plays, poems, periodicals, reports
- names of parties in the citation of law cases (eg, *Donahue vs Stevenson*)
- names of newspapers (but note the initial 'the' is not italicised (eg, it was stated in the *Dominion Post* on 26 December 2011)
- scientific names of biological organisms, as noted above (eg, *Salmonella* causes salmonella enteritis).

# Numbers

## Cardinal numbers

Write the cardinal numbers one to nine as words when used in text; for example:

There were two series of tests.

Use figures (10, 11, etc) for numbers over nine; for example:

Only 99 of the town's original 354 settlers could attend the parade.

The standard exceptions to this rule occur:

- when a number begins a sentence (always spell out)
- when directly comparing two numbers (always give the same format; eg, a ratio of 2 to 11, not a ratio of two to 11)
- for large whole numbers (eg, 5 million not 5,000,000)
- for page numbers, street numbers and years (never spell out)
- with abbreviated quantities (never spell out; eg, 5 kg)
- in tables and figures (never spell out).

Note: hyphenate the numbers twenty-one to ninety-nine when they are written in full.

## Ordinal numbers

Ordinal numbers follow the same rules as cardinal numbers. For example: third not 3rd; 28th not twenty-eighth.

## Fractions

Spell out simple fractions with hyphens; for example: one-third, three-quarters.

Write mixed numbers containing fractions as figures; for example:  $5\frac{1}{2}$ .

## Rates

Use 'per' not a slash to express rates in text and brackets. For example: The rate for non-Māori was 56 per 100,000.

Use a slash (solidus) in tables and graphs. For example: 56/100,000.

## Ranges

Always express ranges numerically. For example: 2–3 percent. Use an en dash (–) not a hyphen (-).

Common phrases for expressing ranges come in pairs: 'between ... and' and 'from ... to'.

Write:

between 1980 and 1990

not:

between 1980–1990

and:

from 6 to 16

not:

from 6–16.

Use ‘to’ not a dash for spelt-out numbers; for example:

Five to eight subjects were chosen

not:

Five–eight subjects were chosen.

## **Measurements, distances and amounts**

For measurements, always use symbols and write the number in figures. For example, use ‘3 km’ not ‘three km’; ‘30°C’ not ‘thirty °C’.

Put a space before the unit symbol; for example:

The road is 5 km

Take 5 mg of that poison and you’re dead.

The temperature symbol is an exception (30°C not 30 °C).

Be careful using the symbol for litres. In many typefaces a small letter ‘l’ is indistinguishable from the number ‘1’. This is where the space before the symbol helps. For example: 5 l is clearer than 5l. However, it is usually better to use the capital ‘L’ to avoid any problems. For example, use ‘5 L’, ‘10 mL’.

## **Time**

The unit symbols for hour, minute and second are h, min and s respectively. These symbols should be restricted to tables and figures. Avoid using them in the text.

Use a space between the figures and the ‘am’ and ‘pm’ (written without full stops) when referring to time; for example:

It starts at 3.30 pm tomorrow.

## **Thousands**

Separate thousands with a comma rather than a space. For example, use ‘200,000’ and ‘10,000’.

Numbers of four digits or fewer should be written without a comma. For example, use ‘4000’. However, money amounts should be written with a comma: \$5,250.

In Europe the comma is used to indicate a decimal place. Thus '5,983' refers to a number just under six. As a result, to avoid the obvious potential for confusion much scientific writing has taken to using a thin space to indicate blocks of a thousand (eg, 53 643 711). This system should not be used in Ministry writing.

### **Percentage symbol**

Use the word 'percent' in text that is mainly narrative and with few or no other symbols. In more technical text, especially when a number of other symbols are used, the % sign is more appropriate.

Whether or not a symbol follows, always express the preceding number as a figure; for example:

More than 5 percent of the team was under the age of five.

The % symbol must always be used in tables and figures.

### **Telephone and fax numbers**

Place a space between the first three numbers and the last four in telephone and fax numbers. Do not use a hyphen.

Put the area code in brackets with one space before the following number; for example:

(09) 495 0345.

For international use, the format is:

+ 64 9 495 0345.

### **Money**

Express sums of money that would be cumbersome to show in figures, or to spell out in full, in units of millions accompanied by figures and a dollar sign; for example:

The price of \$3.4 million was agreed upon by both parties.

Traditionally in New Zealand usage the word 'billion' was ambiguous between the British usage (a million million) and the American usage (a thousand million). The American usage is now generally accepted here.

### **Dates**

The order for dates is: day, month, year; for example:

23 March 1990.

Do not insert commas between the month and the year. Do not say 'on the 5th of May'; instead say 'on 5 May'.

In the text, spell out the names of months and days of the week in full. They may be abbreviated in tables and graphs (without a full stop); for example:

Mon, Tues, Wed, Thur, Fri, Sat, Sun

Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec.

Refer to a span of time between years as:

from 1924 to 1928

not:

from 1924–28;

or

1924–28

not:

1924–1928 or 1924/28.

When referring to financial years, you can say:

The 2006/07 fiscal year.

Use ‘2006/07’ rather than ‘2006/7’.

Express decades as the 1960s (not the 1960’s or the ‘60s) or the sixties (not the ‘sixties).

## Email and web addresses

If an email or web address occurs at the end of a sentence, do not end the sentence with a full stop unless the address is enclosed within brackets. Give the full website address and do not end it with a forward slash (eg, [www.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz)). Only use <http://> if the web address does not include [www](http://www) and it’s unclear that you are referring to a website.

## Quotation marks

The Ministry style for small sections of quoted material (less than four lines) is single quotation marks. If the quoted material extends over four lines it should be indented and offset as a block quote. Do not put quotes into italics.

Use double quotation marks to denote a quotation within a quotation; for example:

The Minister’s response was, ‘Whenever I hear someone say, “We can’t afford to do it”, I reply, “Can we afford not to do it?” and we go on from there’.

If the quoted matter extends through more than one paragraph, use opening quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph and closing quotation marks at the end of the last paragraph only.

Ensure that you always use matching pairs of quotation marks: ‘ ‘ or “ “ not “ ‘.

Quotation marks can be used to draw attention to new or unusual words, or words used ironically or differently from their original meaning; for example:

The 'new' structure is actually nine months old.

Try to minimise this usage. Metaphors are a natural part of speech, and don't need to be set off by quotation marks. If you find yourself putting phrases such as 'kicked up a stink' or 'went back to the drawing board' in quotation marks, it could mean that they are too informal for the context.

Titles of articles and chapter or section headings referred to within a sentence are enclosed in quotation marks; for example:

The article 'Report tackles problem of glue ear' appeared in this week's newsletter.

Note that punctuation that is not part of the quoted material is placed outside the quotation marks; for example:

To exit, press 'Return'.

### **Direct speech**

If the sentence does not start with direct speech, use a comma before the opening quotation marks and begin the speech with an initial capital; for example:

He said to her, 'It's not fair.'

If the speech starts the sentence, end the speech with a comma then closing quotation marks. The rest of the sentence will follow; for example:

'I am tired of hearing that,' she told him.

If direct speech is broken up by a phrase indicating who is talking, continue the sentence with a lower case letter; for example:

'You say that,' he said, 'but I'm sure you don't mean it.'

If both the quotation at the end of the sentence and the main sentence itself require a question mark or an exclamation mark, one mark, placed inside the closing quotation marks, serves for both:

Why are you always saying, 'Have you done it?'

not:

Why are you always saying, 'Have you done it?'?

---

## 4 Ministry preferred spelling and usage

This section lists the preferred spelling and usage of words and terms for Ministry of Health writing and documents. Even if you are personally attached to a particular spelling choice, use Ministry-preferred spelling to:

- reflect the Ministry's commitment to consistency
- help readers so that they are not distracted by a variety of spellings
- save the cost of freelance editing should your document require extra style editing to standardise the spelling.

If you need additional information about English language not covered here, contact the Web and Publications team.

The Ministry uses *The New Zealand Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford University Press 2005) as its spelling reference text. You can use other and earlier editions of Oxford dictionaries as well, but there may be some differences. Check with the Web and Publications team if you have any queries. You should note that:

- the following list of preferred spelling and usage takes precedence over the Oxford dictionary spelling (although most of the spelling is identical to that found in the Oxford dictionaries)
- Ministry style is -ise rather than -ize (eg, ionising, not ionizing)
- British rather than American spelling should be used.

Note, too, that words in the Microsoft spell check may not match the Ministry standard. You can add words to the spell check, but the spellings that come with the package cannot be changed.

### Terms used for the Ministry of Health

Use the following terms to refer to the Ministry of Health:

- the Ministry (note the capital 'M')
- the Ministry of Health
- Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health).

Do not use the following terms or abbreviations:

- the Health Ministry
- Min of Health
- MOH or MoH.

The Ministry of Health and any other organisation is singular (eg, The Ministry is looking into the problem).

For Ministry of Health writing and publications, follow the style given in the list below, even when an Oxford dictionary gives a different preference (or you have a personal preference for a different spelling).

## Terms used in Ministry of Health writing and publications

<b>ACART</b>	Advisory Committee on Assisted Reproductive Technology
<b>acknowledgement</b>	spell with an 'e'
<b>Act</b>	the Act, initial capital. The first mention of a named Act must be followed by its date (eg, the Privacy Act 1993).
<b>advisor</b>	and advisory; do not use 'adviser'
<b>affect</b>	used as a verb, it usually means 'to act upon or to produce an effect on' (eg, his heart is affected by the drugs). In a psychological text, 'affect' can be used as a noun and refers to a feeling or emotion.
<b>age group</b>	two words
<b>ageing</b>	spell with an 'e'
<b>age-specific</b>	hyphenated (compound adjective)
<b>age-standardised</b>	hyphenated (compound adjective)
<b>AIDS</b>	capitals, no full stops; note: this is the abbreviation for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, which is caused by the HIV virus
<b>airborne</b>	one word
<b>antenatal</b>	one word
<b>Associate Minister</b>	note capitals
<b>audiovisual</b>	one word
<b>B4 School Check</b>	initial capitals
<b>bacteria</b>	plural; the singular is 'bacterium'
<b>benefited, benefiting</b>	one 't' only
<b>bilateral</b>	one word
<b>birthweight</b>	one word
<b>breast milk</b>	two words
<b>breastfeed</b>	one word
<b>Cabinet</b>	initial capital for noun (when it refers to the government committee) and when used adjectivally (eg, a Cabinet meeting)
<b>caregiver</b>	one word

<b>chapter</b>	usually lower case (eg, ‘see chapter 3’); if the chapter is actually labelled ‘Chapter 3’, use upper case (eg, ‘see Chapter 3’)
<b>chart book</b>	two words
<b>checklist</b>	one word
<b>childbearing</b>	one word
<b>community-based</b>	hyphenated (compound adjective)
<b>Community Services Card</b>	initial caps
<b>cooperation</b>	not hyphenated
<b>coordinate</b>	not hyphenated
<b>coordinator</b>	not hyphenated
<b>cost-effective</b>	hyphenated as attributive and non-attributive compound adjective (eg, ‘a cost-effective measure’ and the ‘the measure was cost-effective’)
<b>criteria</b>	plural; the singular is ‘criterion’
<b>cut-off</b>	hyphenated as noun and compound adjective
<b>CYMRC</b>	Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee
<b>data</b>	in specialised scientific usage ‘data’ is considered to be plural, as in ‘The data were collected’ (the singular is datum). In modern non-scientific use, however, it is often not treated as a plural, but as a mass noun (like information) that takes a singular verb: ‘Data was collected over a number of years’. Note: some authors can be very vehement about this usage, so it pays to get agreement.
<b>data set</b>	two words
<b>database</b>	one word
<b>Deaf</b>	the capitalised D is used to denote a distinct cultural group of people who are deaf, who use the New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) as their first or preferred language, and who identify with the Deaf community and Deaf culture
<b>decision-making</b>	hyphenated as noun and compound adjective
<b>deinstitutionalisation</b>	one word
<b>Deputy Director-General</b>	note position of hyphen
<b>DHB</b>	district health board; lower case if generic, capitals when it is part of a title; for example, ‘Waitemata District Health Board is one of three Auckland district health boards’
<b>DHBNZ</b>	District Health Boards of New Zealand
<b>diarrhoea</b>	note spelling: not diarrhea
<b>Director-General</b>	hyphenated

<b>Directors-General</b>	hyphenated (plural 's' on 'Director')
<b>Down syndrome</b>	Note: not Down's
<b>drinking-water</b>	hyphenated
<b>ECART</b>	Ethics Committee on Assisted Reproductive Technology
<b>effect</b>	used as a noun it usually means 'the result or consequence of an action' (eg, the effect of the drugs); used as a verb it usually means 'to bring about' (eg, he wanted to effect a quick retreat)
<b>eg</b>	no full stops; avoid in text (use 'such as', 'for example' or 'for instance'); use within brackets only, with comma following (eg, like this)
<b>elderly</b>	do not use; use <b>older people</b>
<b>ELT</b>	the Ministry's Executive Leadership Team, comprising the Director-General and Deputy Directors-General
<b>email</b>	lower case, one word, no hyphen
<b>et al</b>	no full stops; abbreviation of <i>et alii</i> or <i>et aliae</i> (and others)
<b>etc</b>	no full stop; avoid in text (if unavoidable, use 'and so on')
<b>ex-smoker</b>	hyphenated
<b>factsheet</b>	one word
<b>feed back (verb)</b>	two words
<b>feedback (noun)</b>	one word (eg, we are waiting for feedback on the proposal)
<b>fetus</b>	plural: fetuses
<b>Figure</b>	in the text, use initial capital (eg, see Figure 23)
<b>focuses, focused</b>	only one 's'
<b>follow up (verb)</b>	two words
<b>follow-up (noun/adjective)</b>	hyphenated (eg, 'the follow-up')
<b>foodborne</b>	one word
<b>formatted, formatting</b>	use two t's
<b>formula</b>	'formulas' is the plural in general usage ('formulae' is used for mathematics and statistics)
<b>forum</b>	'forums' is the plural ('for a' is the plural only when referring to the word in its ancient Roman context)
<b>framework</b>	one word
<b>freephone</b>	one word
<b>freepost</b>	one word
<b>Funding Agreement</b>	initial capitals only when a specific funding agreement is being referred to (eg, MidCentral Health Funding Agreement)
<b>fundraising</b>	one word

<b>gender</b>	in traditional usage, ‘gender’ refers to masculine, feminine or neuter classes of noun. Since the mid-20th century the words ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ both have the sense ‘the state of being male or female’, but are typically used in different ways: ‘sex’ tends to refer to biological differences, while ‘gender’ tends to refer to cultural or social ones.
<b>Government</b>	initial capital when referring to a specific government (eg, the Government negotiated), but use lower case when referring to government(s) in general (eg, various governments have tackled this issue)
<b>government department</b>	lower case
<b>government policy</b>	lower case
<b>Governor-General</b>	hyphenated, initial capitals
<b>gram</b>	not ‘gramme’
<b>graph</b>	lower case (eg, ‘see graph 1’); see separate entries for ‘Figure’ and ‘Table’
<b>group</b>	initial capital is used when referring to a named group of the Ministry of Health (eg, Public Health Group), but ‘two groups’
<b>haemoglobin</b>	use British-style spelling (not hemoglobin)
<b>haemophiliac</b>	use British-style spelling (not hemophiliac)
<b>hapū</b>	groups of whānau with common ancestral links; note macron
<b>Hawke’s Bay</b>	apostrophe (but note that Healthcare Hawkes Bay does not use an apostrophe)
<b>health care</b>	two words
<b>health protection officer</b>	initial capitals to refer to the specific office holder (eg, the Health Protection Officer arrived), but lower case when used generically (eg, various health protection officers attended)
<b>helpdesk</b>	one word
<b>helpline</b>	one word
<b>hep B</b>	accepted abbreviation for hepatitis B
<b>HIV</b>	abbreviation for human immunodeficiency virus, the virus that causes AIDS
<b>Hodgkin’s disease</b>	always spell with the apostrophe
<b>HQSC</b>	Health Quality & Safety Commission (note the ampersand)
<b>HWNZ</b>	Health Workforce New Zealand
<b>ie</b>	no full stops; avoid in text (use that is); use within brackets only, with comma following (ie, like this)
<b>immunisation</b>	spell with an ‘s’, not a ‘z’
<b>industry</b>	singular (the industry is interested)

<b>inpatient</b>	one word
<b>interagency</b>	one word
<b>internet</b>	lower case
<b>intersectoral</b>	one word
<b>intranet</b>	lower case
<b>-ise</b>	not ‘-ize’; thus ‘realise’, ‘organise’ (but note: World Health Organization is an exception)
<b>IT Health Board</b>	National Health IT Board, known formally as the National Health Information Technology Board
<b>its</b>	possessive (its own), no apostrophe
<b>it’s</b>	short for ‘it is’ or ‘it has’; use the apostrophe only if the words ‘it is’ or ‘it has’ could be substituted into the sentence (eg, ‘It’s windy today’). Note that this contraction should be avoided in all but very informal, conversational documents.
<b>iwi</b>	tribe; note lower case
<b>-ize</b>	do not use; see <b>-ise</b>
<b>judgement</b>	spell with an ‘e’ (note: the legal spelling is ‘judgment’, without an ‘e’)
<b>kaumātua</b>	adult, older person, elder
<b>kilogram</b>	not ‘kilogramme’
<b>lifetime</b>	one word
<b>live-born</b>	hyphenated
<b>long term</b>	two words (but hyphenate when used as a compound adjective: eg, ‘long-term gains’)
<b>macron</b>	a short dash placed above a vowel in the Māori alphabet (eg, ā, ō, ū) to indicate a long vowel sound
<b>manager</b>	lower case, but use a capital when writing the full title of a particular manager (eg, the Manager, Communications)
<b>Māori</b>	initial capital; use a macron over the ‘a’ to indicate the long vowel sound, rather than the ‘aa’ convention
<b>Māori health</b>	‘health’ is lower case
<b>marae</b>	lower case
<b>matua/mātua</b>	parent/parents; note macron for plural
<b>media</b>	plural, the singular is medium (thus: the media have taken a keen interest in this issue). However, it is now acceptable in standard English to treat ‘media’ (when referring to radio, newspapers, etc) as a collective noun (like staff or information). Thus: ‘the media is interested in this issue’ is also acceptable usage.

<b>medical officer of health</b>	lower case unless referring to a specific office holder; do not abbreviate to MOH, to avoid confusion with Ministry of Health
<b>Medsafe</b>	a business group of the Ministry of Health
<b>Member of Parliament</b>	initial capitals for both singular and plural
<b>memorandum</b>	plural is <b>memoranda</b>
<b>MeNZB™</b>	term used for meningococcal B vaccine
<b>micro-organism</b>	hyphenated
<b>midday</b>	one word
<b>Minister</b>	use initial capital for both singular and plural
<b>ministerial</b>	lower case
<b>multidisciplinary</b>	one word
<b>multifaceted</b>	one word
<b>NASC</b>	Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) organisation
<b>National Health IT Board</b>	see <b>IT Health Board</b>
<b>nationwide</b>	one word
<b>NB</b>	no full stops; abbreviation for <i>nota bene</i> (ie, note well); avoid in text; usually followed by a colon
<b>NEAC</b>	National Ethics Advisory Committee, short for National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability Support Services Ethics
<b>NGO</b>	no punctuation; abbreviation for <b>non-governmental organisation</b>
<b>NHB</b>	National Health Board
<b>NHBBU</b>	National Health Board Business Unit
<b>NHC</b>	short form of National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability
<b>non-governmental organisation</b>	lower case (note ‘al’)
<b>non-Māori</b>	hyphenated
<b>non-smoking</b>	hyphenated
<b>non-violent</b>	hyphenated
<b>NRL</b>	National Radiation Laboratory, a business group of the Ministry of Health
<b>nurse practitioner</b>	lower case
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>older people</b>	not ‘the elderly’

<b>on call</b>	two words (but hyphenate as a compound adjective; eg, ‘an on-call nurse’)
<b>ongoing</b>	one word
<b>online</b>	one word
<b>Opposition</b>	initial capital for parliamentary Opposition
<b>organise, organisation</b>	spell with an ‘s’ rather than a ‘z’ (the World Health Organization is an exception)
<b>outpatient</b>	one word
<b>overcrowded</b>	one word
<b>override</b>	one word, two r’s
<b>Pacific peoples</b>	the plural form recognises the diversity of nationalities, ethnic groups and languages of people deriving from the Pacific Islands. However, the singular is still appropriate when referring to individuals (three Pacific people is not the same as three Pacific peoples), and it is preferable to use ‘Pacific’ as the adjective rather than ‘Pacific peoples’ (eg, ‘Pacific girls’, not ‘Pacific peoples girls’).
<b>page</b>	lower case when referring to a page number (eg, see page 6)
<b>Pākehā</b>	initial capital (an initial capital is the style when referring to any ethnic group); two macrons
<b>Parliament</b>	initial capital
<b>per annum</b>	two words; avoid in text (use per year)
<b>percent</b>	one word; use in narrative text; use ‘%’ in highly technical text, and always in tables and figures
<b>person</b>	the preferred plural is people (not persons)
<b>PHARMAC</b>	Pharmaceutical Management Agency Ltd
<b>PHO</b>	primary health organisation; lower case if generic, initial capitals when it is part of a title; for example, Manawatu Primary Health Organisation is part of a larger primary health organisation network
<b>policy maker</b>	two words
<b>population-based</b>	hyphenated (compound adjective)
<b>postnatal</b>	one word
<b>postpartum</b>	one word
<b>post-test</b>	hyphenated (but <b>pretest</b> )
<b>prenatal</b>	one word
<b>preschool</b>	one word
<b>pretest</b>	one word (but <b>post-test</b> )
<b>preventable</b>	not preventible

<b>preventive</b>	do not use preventative
<b>programme</b>	not ‘program’ (unless referring to a computer program)
<b>public health unit</b>	lower case when used generically, but use initial capitals if referring to a named public health unit
<b>radioactive</b>	one word
<b>rangatahi</b>	Māori youths and young adults aged 13–24 years (no macron)
<b>rest home</b>	two words
<b>roadshow</b>	one word
<b>roll-out</b>	hyphenate the noun (the roll-out will start next year); two words for the verb (to roll out)
<b>school aged</b>	two words (but hyphenate when used as a compound adjective; eg, ‘school-aged children’)
<b>schoolchildren</b>	one word
<b>section</b>	lower case, when referring to a particular section in an Act of Parliament, such as section 4, or to part of a document, and also when referring to a specific section in the Ministry of Health, such as the Communications section
<b>self-harm</b>	hyphenated
<b>set-up</b>	hyphenate the noun (a different set-up), but to set up (verb)
<b>sex</b>	male or female; see <b>gender</b>
<b>short term</b>	two words (but hyphenate when used as a compound adjective; eg, ‘short-term gains’)
<b>sign off</b>	two words for noun and verb (but hyphenate as a compound adjective; eg, ‘the sign-off process’)
<b>smokefree</b>	one word (but note: the Smoke-free Environments Act 1990)
<b>sociodemographic</b>	one word
<b>socioeconomic</b>	one word
<b>STI</b>	capitals, no full stops; only to be used after first written in full with abbreviation following in brackets: ‘a sexually transmitted infection (STI)’
<b>stillborn</b>	one word
<b>strategy</b>	lower case, unless referring to a specific named strategy
<b>sunscreen</b>	one word
<b>Table</b>	in the text, use initial capital (eg, see Table 45)
<b>tangata/tāngata</b>	person/people; note macron for plural
<b>tangata whaiora</b>	two words, not tangata whai ora

<b>tāngata whenua</b>	‘people of the land’. Avoid using synonymously with ‘Māori’; usually a particular iwi or hapū will be tāngata whenua in an area and this can have important implications for consultation processes.
<b>targeted, targeting</b>	use single ‘t’, not double
<b>taskforce</b>	one word
<b>taxpayer</b>	one word
<b>TB</b>	capitals, no full stops; abbreviation for tuberculosis
<b>Te Puni Kōkiri</b>	use this, not Ministry for Māori Development
<b>timeframe</b>	one word
<b>timeline</b>	one word
<b>tollfree</b>	one word
<b>trialled/trialling</b>	two ‘l’s
<b>uncooperative</b>	no hyphen
<b>uncoordinated</b>	no hyphen
<b>under-report</b>	hyphenated
<b>under-represent</b>	hyphenated
<b>under way</b>	two words (originally a nautical term, ‘under weigh’)
<b>up to date</b>	no hyphens except when used as a compound adjective (eg, up-to-date schedules)
<b>waterborne</b>	one word
<b>web</b>	lower case when short for World Wide Web
<b>website</b>	one word, lower case
<b>well child care</b>	no hyphens; note: use <b>Well Child</b> when referring to the Well Child programme
<b>Well Child / Tamariki Ora</b>	initial capitals, Well Child is two words
<b>wellbeing</b>	one word
<b>whānau</b>	extended family; note macron
<b>whānau ora</b>	lower case; but Whānau Ora when referring to the Whānau Ora programme
<b>WHO</b>	capitals, no full stops; abbreviation for <b>World Health Organization</b> ; use after first written in full followed by abbreviation in brackets
<b>workplace</b>	one word
<b>World Health Organization</b>	initial capitals (note the ‘z’ spelling)

<b>www</b>	lower case; no full stops (abbreviation for World Wide Web, used as part of web address)
<b>X-ray</b>	preferred spelling; note initial capital and hyphen
<b>year-end</b>	hyphenated

## **Titles and web addresses of district health boards**

### **North Island**

- Auckland District Health Board ([www.adhb.govt.nz](http://www.adhb.govt.nz))
- Bay of Plenty District Health Board ([www.bopdhb.govt.nz](http://www.bopdhb.govt.nz))
- Capital & Coast District Health Board ([www.ccdhb.org.nz](http://www.ccdhb.org.nz))
- Counties Manukau District Health Board ([www.cmdhb.org.nz](http://www.cmdhb.org.nz))
- Hawke's Bay District Health Board ([www.hawkesbay.health.nz](http://www.hawkesbay.health.nz))
- Hutt Valley District Health Board ([www.huttvalleydhd.org.nz](http://www.huttvalleydhd.org.nz))
- Lakes District Health Board ([www.lakesdhd.govt.nz](http://www.lakesdhd.govt.nz))
- MidCentral District Health Board ([www.midcentraldhd.govt.nz](http://www.midcentraldhd.govt.nz))
- Northland District Health Board ([www.northlanddhd.org.nz](http://www.northlanddhd.org.nz))
- Tairāwhiti District Health Board ([www.tdh.org.nz](http://www.tdh.org.nz))
- Taranaki District Health Board ([www.tdhd.org.nz](http://www.tdhd.org.nz))
- Waikato District Health Board ([www.waikatodhd.govt.nz](http://www.waikatodhd.govt.nz))
- Wairarapa District Health Board ([www.wairarapa.dhd.org.nz](http://www.wairarapa.dhd.org.nz))
- Waitemata District Health Board ([www.waitematadhd.govt.nz](http://www.waitematadhd.govt.nz))
- Whanganui District Health Board ([www.wdhd.org.nz](http://www.wdhd.org.nz))

### **South Island**

- Canterbury District Health Board ([www.cdhd.govt.nz](http://www.cdhd.govt.nz))
- Nelson Marlborough District Health Board ([www.nmdhd.govt.nz](http://www.nmdhd.govt.nz))
- South Canterbury District Health Board ([www.scdhd.health.nz](http://www.scdhd.health.nz))
- Southern District Health Board ([www.southerndhd.govt.nz](http://www.southerndhd.govt.nz))
- West Coast District Health Board ([www.westcoastdhd.org.nz](http://www.westcoastdhd.org.nz))

---

## 5 Formatting documents, graphs and tables

Like your writing, formatting should be clear and consistent. Using a consistent format in your writing and for documents helps get your message across.

The Web and Publications team organises professional editing and formatting of all published documents. However, it is helpful if your document is as near to Ministry standards as possible before it is submitted to the Web and Publications team.

If you are producing an internal document, Word templates have been developed to create a professional standardised format for documents. These templates contain the Ministry logo and correct styles for widely used Ministry documents – health report, memo, fax, letter and PowerPoint etc. These templates are available in the A–Z forms on MOH@WK.

### Text fonts and headings

The Ministry standard text font is Arial 12 point. This includes ministerial and Ministry correspondence; briefing papers and reports to Ministers; Cabinet submissions; Official Information requests and Parliamentary Questions; and presentations made to the Minister of Health, external agencies, departments and community groups.

The font for PowerPoint is Georgia, which is clear and easy to read in a presentation format.

For documents that are being published, speak to the Web and Publications team for information on styles. They can provide external designers and formatters with publication templates and visual identity guidelines.

An easy way to set headings to the correct style is to format the headings (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc) using the Style function in Word. If you are publishing your document it makes it much easier for the designer to lay out the document later. You can check that everything has worked correctly by generating a table of contents and ensuring that all the headings have appeared and that they are in the correct hierarchy. See the subsection ‘Table of contents’ below for instructions on how to do this.

## Spacing

Leave one space at the end of a sentence before the next sentence starts.

Leave one line space above each heading. The extra spacing required will be added automatically if the document is to be formatted professionally.

Do not put a line space between a heading and the start of the text in the paragraph. Use the heading styles to do this. Do put a line space between paragraphs.

## Lists

Many health-related documents contain lists or points that need to be emphasised. Often these can be run on in normal text, but if the list is long and/or complicated, or if the points require special emphasis, then consider setting them out using an alphanumeric system (numbers and letters of the alphabet) or bullet points. Note that an overuse of numbering or bulleting defeats the purpose of this layout device.

Use numbers only when the points need to be distinguished in some way. For example, they may indicate an order of importance or the steps in a sequence, or you may want to refer to them in the text. Bullets are used to highlight points that do not need to be distinguished in this way.

The following examples explain the different systems and show how they look.

## Bullet points

There are two main kinds of bulleted list. In the first type, the bullet list functions as part of a long sentence. At the start of this sentence there is a clause or phrase that introduces the bullet list, and this clause or phrase ends with a colon (never a semicolon). In the second type, the bullet list functions as a set of complete sentences and therefore it is introduced by a complete sentence that ends with a full stop.

When introducing bullet points with a phrase or clause:

- the phrase or clause ends with a colon
- each bullet point begins with a lower-case letter
- there is no end-of-line punctuation until the last point
- the second-to-last point does not end with 'and' or 'or'
- the last point ends in a full stop.

Note that because this type of bullet list functions like one whole sentence, many people feel it should retain all the punctuation of a sentence (ie, with a semicolon after each point and a conjunction after the second-to-last point). However, the bullets themselves can be seen as a typographical device that separates the items in the list, so any other punctuation is redundant.

When the bullet list is introduced by a complete sentence, the style is different.

- There is no colon (just a full stop).
- Each bullet point begins with a capital letter.
- Each bullet point is completed with a full stop.
- For lists within a bulleted list:
  - indent further and separate the points with en dashes (–) (en dashes are longer than hyphens and can be found in Word under INSERT > SYMBOL > SPECIAL CHARACTERS)
  - distinguish any further levels by:
    - continuing to use the en dashes
    - indenting further.

Note that if the bulleting is getting this complicated it may be a sign that the text needs to be treated in a different way.

If each of the points in a sentence-type bullet list begins with the same word (or words), it is often preferable to add those words to the end of the opening clause or phrase and delete them from the beginning of all the bullet points (as in the following examples).

*Avoid:* The aim was to:

- encourage an attitude that is helpful
- encourage an attitude that works with different groups
- encourage an attitude that facilitates communication.

*Preferred:* The aim was to encourage an attitude that:

- is helpful
- works with different groups
- facilitates communication.

## **The alphanumeric system**

As for bullet points, there are two main kinds of numbered list. In the first type, the numbered list functions as part of a long sentence. At the start of this sentence there is a clause or phrase that introduces the alphanumeric list and this clause or phrase ends with a colon (never a semicolon). In the second type, the alphanumeric list functions as a set of complete sentences and therefore it is introduced by a complete sentence that ends with a full stop.

When numbering points, do not use brackets. Use a full stop after the number. Use the following style.

1. If there is a complete sentence before the numbered list (ending with a full stop), begin each numbered point with a capital letter and end each sentence with a full stop. In this case, each numeric point must stand by itself as a complete and grammatical sentence.
2. If there is a clause or phrase introducing the numbered list (ending with a colon), use a full stop only to complete the final sentence in the last numeric point. Start each numbered clause or phrase with a lower-case initial letter.
3. For a list inside a numbered list, use an a, b, c system, preceded by a colon, and:
  - a. do not use a capital letter to start the point
  - b. indent consistently, inside the numeric system. Try to avoid a list that mixes phrases/clauses with complete sentences and even groups of sentences (as here). If a new sentence is unavoidable, it will not receive a full stop, to keep with the style of the list
  - c. if you need a third level, use small roman numerals preceded by a colon, and ensure that you:
    - i. indent the points one more tab space, so it is very easy to distinguish between the end of a level and the end of the overall list
    - ii. do not use initial capitals
  - d. if you are using any of these levels, use a full stop at the end of the list.

Use a numeric system and bullet points consistently within the same document (both may be appropriate). If more than one person is working on a document, set clear guidelines, make sure everyone has a copy of the guidelines and make sure everyone follows them.

## Table of contents

You can construct a table of contents by carefully typing in all the headings and subheadings, but it is much easier to auto-generate the contents list using the Word software. To auto-generate a table of contents you will first need to apply a style to all the headings. Then place your cursor at the point you want the table of contents to appear, look under INSERT > INDEX AND TABLES > TABLE OF CONTENTS, choose the number of levels of headings you wish to appear in your contents list (and any other options), and click OK.

You will always need to check the result. Some headings may not have the correct style applied, or a piece of text may have a heading style and appear erroneously in the table.

To redo your table of contents, select the contents list (it should all turn grey), then press F9 or right click on the list and follow the cues.

Note: if you apply the Heading 1 style to ‘Contents’ it will appear in the contents list, which should be avoided. Use a style not picked up by the auto-generate function, but make it look exactly the same as the Heading 1 style.

Note also that a table of contents should be headed ‘Contents’, not ‘Table of Contents’.

## **Graphs and tables**

Ensure that graphs and tables are consistent in style when they are created. The Microsoft Excel templates for line, bar, column and pie graphs enable graphs to be produced consistently and quickly. Use the default settings on the templates and keep graphs simple and clear.

If your document needs to be typeset for publication, accompany all graphs produced in Excel with the supporting data sheet. Do not embed graphs in the Word file; rather, save them in Word as images, and provide them as a separate Excel file, clearly labelled.

Provide alt text for all graphs, diagrams and images (see below for more information about alt text).

Keep titles as short as possible and reflect the principal content only. Do not include the figure number and title on the graph itself. They should be prepared with the rest of the text. Add source information for each graph and format it as for a reference in the text.

Use portrait rather than landscape orientation for tables, where at all possible. This may mean having to recast the table to fit.

## **Alt text**

All documents that are published on the Ministry website must have alternative text (alt text) for all graphic images within that document.

Alt text is text that serves the same purpose and conveys the same essential information as an image. In situations where the image is not available to the reader (perhaps because they have turned off images in their web browser or are using a screen reader due to a visual impairment), alt text ensures no information or functionality is lost. Absent or unhelpful alt text is a source of frustration for visually impaired users of the web.

Alt text should be short; for example, ‘A nurse practitioner’, or ‘Diana shakes hands with John’. If it needs to be longer, the important details should appear in the first few words, which helps the screen reader user to skip to the key point.

Only use Alt text if an image actually conveys information to the reader – it doesn’t need to be used for design elements.

## **Maps and diagrams**

With maps, diagrams and graphs, the colour, position and size of elements are not important. Instead, concentrate on the information being presented. For example, a graph may have alt text ‘Smoking rates, by age group, 2010’, and a diagram may have alt text ‘Stocking a refrigerator for vaccine use’.

## **Using alt text in a Word document**

Inserting alt text into a Word document is easy.

- Click the picture or shape.
- On the Format menu, click AutoShape or Picture and then click the Web tab.
- In the Alternative text box, type the text you want. The text can be as long as you want.

---

## 6 References

Authors writing in the health and disability sector will often want to refer to another publication. The Ministry of Health standard form of referencing is the author–date system of referencing.

The author–date system has the following advantages.

- It is easy for someone unfamiliar with the document to check that every reference in the text is in the reference list.
- If some of the text is deleted, the entire reference system does not have to be redone.
- The system is not reliant on electronic systems, so references do not have to be retyped when they are converted into a different electronic format.
- The reader is able to see the author of an idea or quote without having to move to the end of the chapter or the book.

If you believe that your document would be improved by using another system of referencing, discuss this with the Web and Publications team before going ahead with it.

### References in the text

#### General

References in the text (also known as ‘text citations’) should show in brackets the author’s surname (no initials), or the name of the organisation taking authorship, followed by the year of publication. Do not use punctuation to separate author and date; for example:

(Smith 2010).

#### Two or more references

Use a semicolon to separate more than one citation and insert a comma between two references by the same author. Put these latter citations in date order, from earliest to most recent; for example:

(Smith 1986; Ministry of Health 2010, 2011).

The order in which multiple references are given is determined by the author who cites them.

If there are two authors for a reference, give both names separated by ‘and’ (not ‘&’):

(Smith and Jones 2009).

Reference three or more authors as:

(Smith et al 2006).

If the same author produced more than one publication in a year, these publications need to be put into alphabetical order (by publication name) in the reference list, the years should be assigned letters (a, b, c, etc), and these letters should then be added to the author–date citations in the text itself; for example:

(Jones 2005a; Public Health Association 2010d).

Note that the ordering of these year–letter combinations bears no relation to the order in which the reader encounters the citations in the text.

### **Citation format**

The only reason for putting surnames first is to alphabetise the names efficiently. In any context where names are not alphabetised (eg, in footnotes), the initials should precede the surname.

Place references at the end of a sentence if possible, just before the punctuation mark.

There is no punctuation before the reference in brackets; for example:

... with poor health and no positive role models (Jackman 2008).

### **Correspondence between text and reference list**

The author and date of all citations in the text must correspond exactly with the list of references at the end of the document. There should never be citations in the text that have no corresponding item in the reference list, and it is undesirable to have items in the reference list that are not referred to in the text. These should go in a separate list headed ‘Bibliography’ or ‘Further reading’, whichever is appropriate.

### **Editor listed as author**

Treat editors the same as authors in text references; for example:

(Chalmers 2009).

It is only in the reference list that ‘(ed)’ or ‘(eds)’ will follow the name(s).

### **An organisation as author**

Some group names are lengthy or are composed of several parts and are awkward in text references. Use abbreviations or shortened forms, but be sure the entry in the reference list begins with the abbreviation used in the text reference. For example, if you use ‘(WHO 2003)’ in the text, you must use ‘WHO’ in the reference list, not ‘World Health Organization’.

## Statutes

In the text, give the name of the Act and the year it was passed (eg, the Privacy Act 1993). Do not use any punctuation between the name of the Act and the year. Do not italicise Acts of Parliament.

## Personal communications

Personal communications – such as letters, memos, minutes of meetings, telephone conversations – do not usually provide recoverable data so are not included in the reference list. Cite personal communications in the text only. Give the initials as well as the surname of the communicator, and provide as exact a date as possible. For example:

(WE Brown, personal communication, April 2010)

(Minutes of Corporate Services Group meeting, 23 March 2010).

## Newspapers

Do not include newspaper articles in the reference list. Cite all newspaper references in the text or (preferably) in footnotes; for example:

‘Doctor’s advert breaches codes’. *Dominion Post*, 15 July 2010, p 6.

## Websites

When referring to a website (rather than a particular document), cite it in running text or in a footnote. There is no need to give the date accessed. This will go in the reference list; for example:

The report is available on the Ministry of Health website ([www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)).

## Emails

Emails are handled in the same way as other personal communications; in other words, they are cited in the text, not the reference list. As a minimum, give the name of the sender and the date of the message, but the person’s role can also be informative; for example:

Since 2007 the number has dropped to 150 per year (BD Black, Department of Gerontology, Otago University, personal communication, 2 April 2009).

## Blogs

Blogs, by their nature, are continually updated and/or added to, and so a standard author–date citation is not appropriate. Also, there may be one or more authors, who may use their own names or pseudonyms. It is therefore preferable to make the blog name the author name in the citation and give an author name in the text if known.

In the text we may have:

It has been argued by A. Wilson (Ulcer-Wars Blog, 6 April 2007) ...

In the references we will have:

Ulcer-Wars Blog, comment posted 6 April 2007, [www.ulcer-wars.com/archives/2006/ulcer.html](http://www.ulcer-wars.com/archives/2006/ulcer.html) (accessed 4 June 2008).

## Referencing non-electronic sources

### General format of items

Place the complete list of references at the end of the publication, under a major heading: 'References'. Note: this is not a bibliography (documents used by the author), nor is it a list of further reading. It is a list of all and only those items cited in abbreviated form in the text of the document.

For books, the essential referencing elements after the name of the author (or authors) are the:

- date of publication
- title of the publication
- place of publication
- publisher.

For example:

Ministry of Health. 2011. *Annual Report: For the year ended 30 June 2011*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

For journal articles, the essential referencing elements after the name of the author (or authors) are the:

- article title
- journal name
- volume number
- issue number (if applicable)
- page numbers.

For example:

Banks I. 2011. Annual legislative update. *The Nurse Practitioner* 17(1): 10–22.

The list should be in alphabetical order by the first author's surname (unless the numerical system is used, in which case references will be listed in the order cited in the text).

Use italics for the title of the publication or journal. Do not use quotation marks or underlining. Use only the punctuation shown in the examples given below.

## **Author**

### **Single and multiple authors**

List the first three authors by name; cover all other authors by using 'et al'. Follow each author's surname by their initial(s). There are no full stops following the initials or spaces between initials (but a full stop, followed by a space, is used to separate the final set of initials from the year of publication). There is no comma between the surname and the initials. Titles (eg, Dr) are not given. For example:

Wilson AE.

Where there are two authors, 'and' is not used; for example:

Porteous A, Davis E.

Note that where 'et al' is used, there should be a comma after the third author's initial, before 'et al'; for example:

Wilson AE, Smith JC, Jones A, et al.

### **Organisation as author and publisher**

When the organisation is author and publisher, and the name of the organisation is very long, it may be abbreviated when listed as the author but spelt out in full when listed as publisher; for example:

OECD. 1993. *OECD Health Systems*. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Do not abbreviate 'Ministry of Health'.

### **Anonymous author**

If, and only if, the work is signed 'Anonymous', begin the entry with the word 'Anonymous', alphabetised as if Anonymous were a true name. If there is no author, move the title to the author position and alphabetise the entry by the first significant word of the title.

### **Editor**

Treat editors the same as authors but put (ed) or (eds) after the name(s); for example:

Wilson AE, Smith JC (eds).

### **Date**

The year of publication follows the author. There are no brackets around the date and there is a full stop immediately after the date. Normally only the year of publication is necessary. If the publication has been reprinted, cite the date of the edition being referenced.

For example:

Porteous A, Davis E. 2007.

## **Title**

### **Books and other monographs**

Give the full title of a publication as it appears on the title page, or on the cover if there is no title page. Titles are always followed by a full stop. Italicise book titles and subtitles.

Capitalise major words (nouns and verbs) in the titles of books and monographs; for example:

*An Epidemiological History of Kidney Disease*

Separate a subtitle from the title by a colon. Use lower case for subtitle initial letters except for the first word and proper nouns; for example:

*The Silent Killer: An epidemiological history of kidney disease in New Zealand*

Direct Māori (or other language) translations in a title should also carry initial capitals.

Use lower case for chapters in books except for the first word and proper nouns. Do not italicise chapter titles.

### **Article in a journal**

Give the title of the article and the full name of the journal, not just an abbreviation; for example:

Vulnerability to childhood problems and family social background. *Journal of Child Psychiatry*

Use lower case for the first letter of words in the title of articles in journals, except for the first word in the title and proper nouns.

Do not italicise article titles. Italicise the journal name.

### **Publication details**

#### **Books and other monographs**

The place of publication and publisher follow the title of the publication. After the place of publication, insert a colon and a space, then give the publisher; for example:

*Hospital Events 2007/08*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

## Journal article

Follow the title by the:

- volume number of a book or journal (and, in journals paginated separately, the issue number for each issue)
- sequence number of a bulletin or ‘occasional’ publication
- edition, if not the original.

For example:

*Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 38: 131–48

*Journal of Child Psychiatry* 31(7): 1145–60.

List the numbers of pages referred to in a journal using as few digits as possible. For example: 240–9 (not 240–249); but note: 213–19. It is not necessary to give page numbers in books or monographs.

## Referencing electronic sources

When referring to a document or other information held on electronic media, the idea is to provide as much specific and accurate information as possible. This means providing references to specific documents rather than just home or menu pages, and providing addresses that work.

As a minimum, a reference for an internet source should provide:

- a document title
- a date (the date of the publication and/or the date of retrieval)
- an address (a uniform resource locator, or URL; eg, [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)).

However, information on the internet is prone to being moved, restructured or deleted, resulting in broken hyperlinks and URLs in the reference list that don’t work. In an attempt to resolve this problem, publishers have begun assigning a digital object identifier (DOI) to journal articles and other documents. A DOI is a ‘unique alphanumeric string assigned by a registration agency to identify content and provide a persistent link to its location on the internet’. Examples of both URL and DOI systems are provided below.

## Handling web addresses

Ensuring you get all of a URL or DOI absolutely correct is crucial. The best way to do this is to copy and paste the address (eg, from the address window of your internet browser to your document). Use Ctrl-c to cut and Ctrl-v to paste.

Some web addresses are very long and make for ugly line breaks if left intact. When breaking a URL across lines, do not insert a hyphen. Break the URL after a slash, underscore or full stop.

## General style for internet sources

Much of the style advice on the internet is based on APA (American Psychological Association) style. The Ministry of Health has always opted for a cleaner, less fussy style for referencing print sources, with less punctuation and more regard paid to New Zealand standards (eg, for giving dates), and it is sensible to follow this when citing electronic sources. There are a number of variations (including the URL/DOI one), but the recommended general style for the majority of entries you are likely to come across in reference lists is as follows.

### Journal

Smith AB, Jones CD. 2007. The best cures for warts. *Homoeopathic Monthly* 14(6). URL: [www.homoeopathy.com/items/papers.html](http://www.homoeopathy.com/items/papers.html) (accessed 3 September 2008).

### Book or other non-periodical document

Smith AB. 2007. *The Complete History of Cures for Warts*. URL: [www.warts.com/items/docs.html](http://www.warts.com/items/docs.html) (accessed 4 September 2008).

The following points should be noted.

- Many of the elements remain the same as for print sources, including the author names and date; the form of title for an article, journal and stand-alone document; and the punctuation before the URL.
- The use of 'URL' before the Internet address has been the Ministry style in the past. Many style guides are opting for more abbreviated forms (eg, just [www](http://www)), but with an increasing use of DOIs, and a number of addresses that do not use either [www](http://www) or [http](http://), inserting 'URL' is recommended.
- New Zealand style for the date of access is used: 4 May 2008 *not* May 4, 2008.
- The access date comes after the internet address and is in parentheses. This avoids the vexed issue of whether to add a full stop or some other punctuation at the end of the internet address.
- If you access a document on the internet, unless it is specifically noted as being *part* of a larger document (eg, an article in a journal, a chapter of a book), then it functions as a stand-alone document and takes the style of a book or other non-periodical given above.

### Journals and other periodicals

Internet journal articles used to be primarily duplicates of print articles, with identical citations but with a URL tacked on the end. This is changing as more and more information is only accessible on the internet.

### **Journal article: URL with print equivalent**

Baddcott R, McGovern P, Bernstein E. 2007. The evolution of psychological technique: the role of psych clinics in UK health care. *British Journal of Psychological Management* 18(1): 93–105. URL: [http://papers.tvrn.com/soh3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=965214](http://papers.tvrn.com/soh3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=965214) (accessed 4 May 2009).

### **Journal article: URL with no print equivalent**

Here the form is the same, but the page numbers are omitted.

Meister ST, Zilcher A, Damson R. 1995. Can we really teach test-taking skills? *New Horizons in Adult Education* 13(1). URL: <http://www.nova.edu/~aed/newhorizons.html> (accessed 7 February 2000).

### **Journal article: DOI with print equivalent**

Gilbert J. 2008. Against the commodification of everything. *Cultural Studies* 22: 551–66. DOI: 10.1080/09502380802245811 (accessed 25 March 2009).

### **Journal article: DOI with no print equivalent**

Marsh HW, Trautwein U, Lüdtke O, et al. 2007. The big-fish-little-pond effect: persistent negative effects of selective high schools on self-concept after graduation. *American Educational Research Journal* 44(3). DOI: 0.3102/0002831207306728 (accessed 16 December 2007).

### **Newspaper article**

Chang K. 2008, 6 April. In study, researchers find nanotubes may pose health risks similar to asbestos. *New York Times*. URL: [www.nytimes.com/2008/05/21/science/21nano.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/21/science/21nano.html) (accessed 17 January 2009).

### **Abstract**

Isaac JD, Sansone C, Smith JL. 1999. Other people as a source of interest in an activity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 35: 239–65. Abstract from IDEAL database site. URL: [www.europe.idealibrary.com](http://www.europe.idealibrary.com) (accessed 7 July 1999).

### **Books and other non-periodical documents**

Books still tend to be in print form, but there are many non-periodical documents available on the internet. The citations remain much the same as for print sources. The main difference is that the publisher and place of publication drop out and are replaced by the internet address.

## Organisation as author

Department of Internal Affairs. 2008. *The Department's Strategic Approach to Gambling*. URL: [www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/StrategicApproachToGambling\\_Dec08/\\$file/StrategicApproachToGambling\\_Dec08.pdf](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/StrategicApproachToGambling_Dec08/$file/StrategicApproachToGambling_Dec08.pdf) (accessed 9 March 2009).

World Health Organization. 2006. *BMI Classification*.

URL: [www.who.int/bmi/index.jsp?introPage=intro\\_3.html](http://www.who.int/bmi/index.jsp?introPage=intro_3.html) (accessed 29 November 2007).

## Personal author

Pan H, Cole TJ. 2007. *ImsGrowth: A Microsoft Excel add-in to access growth references based on the LMS method*. Version 2.2. URL: [www.healthforallchildren.co.uk](http://www.healthforallchildren.co.uk) (accessed 5 November 2007).

## No author, no date

This situation can be common on the internet. As with print sources (eg, an article in a newspaper), do not use 'Anonymous'; the title of the item effectively becomes the author name. If an item has no discernible date, use 'nd' and ensure you include a date the item was accessed.

*SARS May Have Been Caused by Genetic Research*. (nd).

URL: [www.plaguewatch.com/archives/2008/papers.html](http://www.plaguewatch.com/archives/2008/papers.html) (accessed 4 January 2009).

## Online encyclopaedia

Encyclopaedia items will frequently have no date associated with them, and may have no author either. The names of the editor(s) may not be available, in which case they can be left out, but 'In:' is used to emphasise the fact that this is not an article in a journal.

Adamski BK. (nd). Lacrosse. In: *Canadian Encyclopedia Online*. URL: [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1SEC888940](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1SEC888940) (accessed 15 September 2006).

Biomedicine. (nd). In: *Wikipedia: The free encyclopedia*. URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biomedicine> (accessed 28 March 2007).

## Using a DOI with non-periodicals

This is the same as for journal articles (see above), whereby the URL address is replaced by a DOI identifier; for example:

Pan H, Cole TJ. 2007. *ImsGrowth: A Microsoft Excel add-in to access growth references based on the LMS method*. Version 2.2. DOI: 0.3102/0002831207306728 (accessed 5 November 2007).

## Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) document

ERIC provides access to bibliographic records of journal articles and other education-related materials. Journal records usually include bibliographic data (author, title, date, journal citation, publisher) and an abstract or short description of the work. A few journal publishers also make the full text of an article available at no cost, but the majority of journal articles need to be obtained through library print and electronic holdings, or directly from the publisher.

Mackey M. 1999. The changing powers of readers in a time of new technology. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL), Birmingham, AI, 1999. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 437067 ). URL: [www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/16/00/60.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/16/00/60.pdf) (accessed 3 June 2008).

## Cochrane Reviews

There is little consistency in formatting Cochrane Reviews. The following style is recommended.

McCarney RW, Linde K, Lasserson TJ. Homeopathy for chronic asthma. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2004, Issue 1, Art. No. CD000353. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD000353.pub2 (accessed 5 May 2009).

## Non-http transfer protocols

### FTP site

You may need to cite a file available for downloading via file transfer protocol. Note 'http' is not used in the URL.

Marks J. 1997. Preface. In: *Basic Mechanics of Conic Sections*. URL: <ftp://ftp.ntua.gr/pub/netlib/textbook/index.html> (accessed 18 August 2000).

wellington2.gif. 1993, 4 April. 535K. *Image of Wellington*. URL: <Wellington.gftp://ftp.ntua.gr/pub/images/views/sorted.by.type/Cities/wellington2.gif> (accessed 13 May 1996).

### Gopher site

The gopher search protocol was popular during the early 1990s, especially at universities, before the hypertext transfer protocol (http). Although now outdated, many documents can still be accessed via gopher.

Bodie J. 1993. Medicine and science: separation or divorce? *Journal of New Zealand Medical Research* 75(2). URL: <gopher://gopher.auck.edu.tw/00/ioe/angbull/75b.txt> (accessed 12 June 1995).

## Databases

Citations for information obtained from a database are much the same as for periodical and stand-alone documents, except that the database is given after the document name instead of a URL. Where there is no formal document name, the information should be given a brief, accurate description. The date of access should be provided as usual.

Harold RF, Baker TC. 1997. Early childhood learning in remote locations. *Journal of Early Childhood Psychology* 73(9). PsycARTICLES database (accessed 14 October 2000).

Wilkinson B. 2003. *Full data set from the Alberta State Survey of Psychiatric Institutions*. University of Alberta Database (accessed 22 July 2005).

## Citations that don't match any of the above forms

In these cases, ensure you provide as much of the basic information as possible (author, date of publication or access, internet address) and try to find the closest parallel of print or internet style and follow that. If all else fails, use a brief accurate description of the content and how to access it.

## Examples of correct forms of referencing

The following reference list contains several of the most common types of reference. If you are in doubt about how to reference something, please contact the Publications team for advice.

Baddcott R, McGovern P, Bernstein E. 2007. The evolution of psychological technique: the role of psych clinics in UK health care. *British Journal of Psychological Management* 18(1): 93–105. URL: [http://papers.tvrn.com/soh3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=965214](http://papers.tvrn.com/soh3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=965214) (accessed 4 May 2009).

ESR. 1994. *National Strategy for Surveillance of Hepatitis B: Report for the Ministry of Health and Public Health Commission*. Wellington: ESR Health, Communicable Disease Centre.

Fergusson DM, Horwood LJ, Lawton JM. 1990. Vulnerability to childhood problems and family social background. *Journal of Child Psychiatry* 31(7): 1145–60.

Fergusson DM, Horwood LJ, Lynskey MT. 1990. Childhood sexual abuse and psychiatric disorders in young adulthood: Part I: The prevalence of sexual abuse and the factors associated with sexual abuse. *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 35: 1355–64.

Fitzpatrick K. 1997. Fighting among America's youth: a risk and protective factors approach. *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour* 38: 131–48.

Hillary Commission. 1998. *Physical Activity Taskforce Report*. Wellington: Hillary Commission.

Members of the Breast Cancer Screening Policy Advisory Group. 1998. Population-based Breast Cancer Screening: policy advice for a New Zealand screening programme. *New Zealand Medical Journal* 111(3): 138–42.

Members of the Working Party on Cervical Screening. 1997. Recommendations for cervical screening. *New Zealand Medical Journal* 111(2): 94–8.

Minister of Health. 2000. *New Zealand Health Strategy*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

Ministry of Health. 1994. *Screening and Hepatitis B Infection in New Zealand: Report to the Director-General of Health of the Working Party on Hepatitis B*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

Ministry of Health. 2002a. *Reducing Inequalities in Health*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

Ministry of Health. 2002b. *The New Zealand Health Monitor*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

National Health Committee. 1996. *Screening for Carcinoma of the Prostate: Information for health professionals*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

National Health Committee and the Hillary Commission. 1998. *Active for Life: A call for action: The health benefits of physical activity*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

New Zealand Guidelines Group. 2002. *Increased Risk Groups for Colorectal Cancer: Guidelines for surveillance and management*. Wellington: New Zealand Guidelines Group.

Pan H, Cole TJ. 2007. *ImsGrowth: A Microsoft Excel add-in to access growth references based on the LMS method*. Version 2.2. URL: [www.healthforallchildren.co.uk](http://www.healthforallchildren.co.uk) (accessed 5 November 2007).

Pere RR. 1984. Te oranga o te whānau: the health of the family. In: *Hui Whakaoranga: Māori Health Planning Workshop Proceedings*. Wellington: Department of Health.

Pomare EW, de Boer GM. 1988. *Hauora Māori Standards of Health: A study of the years 1970–1984*. Special Report, Series 78. Wellington: Medical Research Council and Department of Health.

Ratima MM. 2001. *Kia uruuru mai a hauora: being healthy, being Māori: conceptualising Māori health promotion*. PhD thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin.

Ratima MM, Durie MH, Allan GR, et al. 1995. *He Anga Whakamana: A Framework for the Delivery of Disability Support Services for Māori: A report to the National Advisory Committee on Core Health and Disability Support Services*. Wellington: Department of Māori Studies, Te Pūmanawa Hauora.

RNZCGP. 1999. *Early Detection of Breast Cancer: Guidelines for primary care providers*. Wellington: Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners.

Salmon A, Bryan GD. 1999. Food issues for preschoolers. *WebMedicine* 49, no. 7. URL: [www.webdoctors.ac.nz](http://www.webdoctors.ac.nz) (accessed 16 May 2002).

Slattery M, Potter J, Caan B, et al. 1997. Energy balance and colon cancer: beyond physical activity. *Cancer Research* 57: 75–80.

## **Referencing Ministry of Health strategy publications**

Listed below are the correct citations for the most common Ministry of Health strategy publications. Note that the correct reference is to a Minister or Ministers, not to 'Ministry of Health'.

### **He Korowai Oranga: Māori Health Strategy**

Minister of Health and Associate Minister of Health. 2002. *He Korowai Oranga: Māori Health Strategy*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **Health of Older People Strategy**

Associate Minister of Health and Minister for Disability Issues. 2002. *Health of Older People Strategy: Health sector action to 2010 to support positive ageing*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **Healthy Eating – Healthy Action Oranga Kai – Oranga Pumau: A Strategic Framework 2003**

Minister of Health. 2003. *Healthy Eating – Healthy Action Oranga Kai – Oranga Pumau: A strategic framework 2003*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **New Zealand Disability Strategy**

Minister for Disability Issues. 2001. *New Zealand Disability Strategy: Making a world of difference – Whakanui Oranga*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **New Zealand Health Strategy**

Minister of Health. 2000. *New Zealand Health Strategy*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **New Zealand Palliative Care Strategy**

Minister of Health. 2001. *The New Zealand Palliative Care Strategy*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **New Zealand Suicide Prevention Strategy 2006–2016**

Associate Minister of Health. 2006. *New Zealand Suicide Prevention Strategy 2006–2016*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **Pacific Health and Disability Action Plan**

Minister of Health. 2002. *The Pacific Health and Disability Action Plan*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **Preventing and Minimising Gambling Harm: Strategic plan 2004–2010**

Ministry of Health. 2005. *Preventing and Minimising Gambling Harm: Strategic plan 2004–2010*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **Primary Health Care Strategy**

Minister of Health. 2001. *The Primary Health Care Strategy*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy**

Minister of Health. 2001. *Sexual and Reproductive Health Strategy*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **Te Tāhuhu – Improving Mental Health 2005–2015: The second New Zealand mental health and addiction plan**

Minister of Health. 2005. *Te Tāhuhu – Improving Mental Health 2005–2015: The second New Zealand mental health and addiction plan*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **The New Zealand Cancer Control Strategy**

Minister of Health. 2003. *The New Zealand Cancer Control Strategy*. Wellington: Ministry of Health and the New Zealand Cancer Control Trust.

### **Whakatātaka: Māori Health Action Plan**

Minister of Health and Associate Minister of Health. 2002. *Whakatātaka: Māori Health Action Plan 2002–2005*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

### **Youth Health**

Minister of Health and Minister of Youth Affairs. 2002. *Youth Health: A guide to action*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

---

## 7 Publishing a document

When you create a Ministry of Health publication, think about more than just the text. Plan your document well, taking budgets, timeframes and post-writing requirements like editing, formatting, printing and distribution into consideration. Make sure your document meets Ministry of Health standard specifications.

The Web and Publications Team will help you to produce a cost-effective and high-quality document.

It usually takes around six weeks from the Web and Publications team receiving draft copy of a document through to having printed hard copies and being published on the web. This guide aims to give you an idea of the process of working alongside the Web and Publications team.

Your document will be edited and formatted to comply with the Ministry's *Communication Standards*.

### The process and timeline (based on a 60-page document)

Advise the Minister of Health of your intention to publish via Appendix 3 of the Weekly Report (the Web and Publications team updates this) up to six months before it is due to be published.

Editing	one week
Checking edits	couple of days
Send draft to Minister via Health Report (see below)	
Desktopping	one week
Checking desktopping	couple of days
Internal sign-off (see below)	one week
Printing, web placement and distribution	one to two weeks

### What you need to do

1. Inform the Minister of Health of your intention to publish via Appendix 3 of the Weekly Report.
2. Decide on the format of the publication. Will you need hard copies or will it only be published on the web?

3. Think about the look and feel of the document. Do you want colour in the text, do you want a particular cover design? Do you want your document formatted in InDesign or kept in Word? Who is the author? Note that the text of all Ministry of Health, National Health Board (NHB), IT Health Board and Health Workforce New Zealand (HWNZ) documents follows the same standard publications template.)
4. Think about a release date and how you want to release the publication. Do you need a communications strategy, media release or a formal launch?
5. Think about the web and how your document should be reflected on the Ministry's, NHB's, IT Health Board's and/or HWNZ's website. Where do you want people to access your document from?

## **Additional steps for getting hard copies only**

1. How many copies do you want printed?
2. Do you want copies mailed out? You will need to supply a covering letter and mailing list (in Excel).
3. Organise with the Print Coordinator for print quotes and storage and distribution. Fill in the storage and distribution template.

## **Internal sign-off**

Internal sign-off happens when the publication is final and ready for release.

All Ministry of Health, NHB, IT Health Board and HWNZ publications (hard copy and web) must be signed off by your Deputy Director-General / Director and the Director-General using the Publication Audit Trail. The Web and Publications team will give you a hard copy when your publication is ready for sign-off.

All publications being published on the Ministry website or printed by the Ministry that are written by an external organisation must have Deputy Director-General sign-off.

## **Health Reports and the Weekly Report**

1. As above, your publication should appear in the Weekly Report (Appendix 3) up to six months before publishing: email Jane Adam with your entry.
2. When the document has been edited and peer reviewed, and before it is formatted, send a copy to the Minister with a Health Report. The action is that the Minister notes that the Ministry intends to release this publication and provides the approximate timeframe. Use publications Health Report template, available from MOH@WK. The document continues through the publication process (formatting and sign-off via the Publications Audit Trail) when the Health Report is sent to the Minister.

3. When the publication is ready, or nearly ready, for publication, add an item to the Weekly Report in the appropriate section (Part 1, 2 or 4), of your intention to publish. Ensure the Minister gets no less than five working days' notice.

Follow this template for the Weekly Report:

[Title of publication or subject of publication]

The [Ministry of Health/NHB/National Health IT Board/HWNZ] intends to release the [report/brochure/section of website], [title of report/publication], on [date of release] online [and in hard copy]. [The report is to be tabled on xx date (*if relevant*).] Refer to [Health Report reference].

Provide a short summary of the publication, with two contacts.

## Printing

The Print Coordinator in the Web and Publications team will help you decide on the right format for your document. Print quotes will be sought, and the Print Coordinator will advise you on who is best to print your document, based on cost and who can deliver within the timeframes.

Once the document has been completely signed off, if you are producing hard copies, the Print Coordinator will send the work to the chosen printer, either for offset printing or digital printing. The printer will supply proofs of the document. These ensure that what the printer proposes to print/copy is an exact replica of the copy that was signed off. Any other changes that are made at this stage (these are called author's corrections) generally incur further costs.

Once the proofs have been signed off, the printer will start printing. Handbound samples of the printed pages and cover are provided for you to check before all the copies of the publication are put together.

## Web publishing

Generally, all Ministry publications are placed on the Ministry's website. You will need to work with a web publisher to create meaningful web pages, with relevant links and good explanatory text.

Publications and consultation documents published on the Ministry website follow the same sign-off and editing process as printed documents. The Web and Publications team will provide you with either a publications web template or a consultation web template for you to complete. Jane will pass the files and final complete request through to the web team.

There are some additional requirements for publications that go on the web.

Let the Web and Publications team know if your document replaces another document or relates to another document on the website so they can remove out-of-date information, or provide links to related information.

Also, let the Web and Publications team know when your document needs to be removed from the site. Please notify the team of who your replacement might be for handing over responsibility for any web documents, should you leave the Ministry. You can email [webteam@moh.govt.nz](mailto:webteam@moh.govt.nz) for any web-related matters.

If your publication is going to go on the web and it contains graphs, images and/or figures, you will need to provide a brief description of each of them. (See the subsection 'Alt text' in section 5, 'Formatting documents, graphs and tables'.) Using alt text helps the Ministry to comply with the New Zealand Government Web Standards, which are Cabinet-mandated.

Accept or reject any tracked changes before you send your document for publication on the web.

## **Mail outs**

Before your document is printed you need to provide a mailing list, preferably as an Excel file. It is usual for a covering letter to accompany the publication. For more information on the cost of mail outs, statements of accuracy, please talk to the Web and Publications team.

## **Storage and distribution**

The Ministry has a storage and distribution contract with Wickliffe. Wickliffe processes requests for publications on your behalf. Distribution costs are charged back to your section. Please note there is no facility for storage of publications within the Ministry's premises. To lodge a publication at Wickliffe, talk to the Print Coordinator, who will arrange this for you. You will need to complete a storage and deposit form.

## **Other requirements**

The Publications Team ensures that your document fulfils the Ministry's publishing obligations. Each document is allocated an International Standard Book Number (ISBN) or, if it is part of a regular series, an International Standard Series Number (ISSN). The Publications Team sends two copies of your publication to the National Library for legal deposit, two copies to the Parliamentary Library, and two to our library.

Your document will also be assigned a Ministry of Health 'HP' number, which is used to track Ministry publications, both in hard copy and on the web.

To order copies of your publication once it is in storage, call extn 2277 (04 496 2277) or email [moh@wickliffe.co.nz](mailto:moh@wickliffe.co.nz) and if, possible, quote the publication's HP number (you can find this on the imprint page).

---

# 8 Web publishing

## Writing for the web

Writing for the web is very different from writing for print.

- Around 80 percent of users scan the page instead of reading word-for-word.
- Reading from computer screens is 25 percent slower than from paper.
- Web content should have 50 percent of the word count of its paper equivalent.

In print, your document forms a whole and the user is focused on the entire set of information. A document written for the web will be split into multiple hyperlinked pages. These pages will be short, as users do not like to scroll down to read long pages.

Put the most important information at the top of each page. Start the page with the conclusion as well as a short summary of the remaining contents ('inverted pyramid' style).

Use reader-focused language. Label sections and categories according to the value they hold for the reader, not according to what they mean for you.

Web users are impatient and critical. They will not stay on your page for long if they cannot find the information they need quickly. Bulleted and numbered lists slow down the scanning eye and can draw attention to important points, but avoid using single-item lists.

Ensure text used for hyperlinks is self-explanatory; that is, use 'View information on the Australia New Zealand Therapeutic Products Authority Project' instead of 'click here' or 'more information'. This helps visually impaired visitors (using screen reader software) and sighted visitors who scan the page to quickly know where the hyperlink goes to.

Each paragraph should contain one main idea; use a second paragraph for a second idea, since users tend to skip any second point as they scan over the paragraph. Use simple sentence structures. Convoluting writing and complex words are even harder to understand online. Do not use clever phrases and jargon that make people work too hard to understand what you mean.

Use consistent style standards, as laid out in chapter 2. The Ministry's websites are as much a part of our public image as our printed documents are.

For more detailed information about writing web content for the Ministry's website go to the *Web Content Style Guide* on MOH@WK.

More information on writing for the web can be found on Rachel McAlpine's website:  
[www.webpagecontent.com/arc\\_archive/177/5/](http://www.webpagecontent.com/arc_archive/177/5/)

## **Standards for the web**

The Ministry of Health is committed to following the New Zealand Government Web Standards. These standards are mandatory for all public sector organisations that use the internet to publish information and provide services to citizens and businesses.

The standards are largely about the more technical aspects of website design and maintenance, but they also deal with content issues, such as how forms should be presented, the legal implications of publishing on the web and accessibility of information.

The Web and Publications team are familiar with the standards, and can advise you of any implications they have on the publication of your web document. The standards can be viewed on the web at:

[www.e-government.govt.nz/docs/web-guidelines-v1/index.html](http://www.e-government.govt.nz/docs/web-guidelines-v1/index.html)

You can contact the Ministry of Health web team by emailing [webteam@moh.govt.nz](mailto:webteam@moh.govt.nz)

---

## 9 Top tips for writing well

The Ministry's *Communication Standards* are designed to help you develop a clear, concise and consistent writing style. Use the *Communication Standards* for all your writing.

### Language

- Write in plain English.
- Keep sentences short.
- Choose short or familiar words (eg, 'to' instead of 'in order to' and 'help' instead of 'assistance').
- Use the active voice.

#### Write:

The Minister of Health announced a bowel screening pilot.

The contractor has made three changes to the project schedule.

#### Not:

A bowel screening pilot was announced by the Minister of Health.

Three changes were made to the project schedule.

Use the *Communication Standards* for the Ministry's preferred spelling and usage.

### Style

- Avoid using abbreviations. If a term is used frequently in a document, write it in full the first time it is used, and then abbreviate it; for example, write 'District Health Board (DHB)' the first time, then 'DHB' thereafter).
- Avoid over capitalising (eg, use 'general practitioner' not 'General Practitioner').
- Use the word 'percent' in text (and the symbol % in brackets and tables), unless it is a technical report.
- Write '23 March 2010', not '23rd of March 2010'.
- Write 'eg' and 'ie' without full stops; use within brackets only, with a comma following (eg, like this). Spell out in full in text, for example, like this.
- Write numbers under 10 in words (eg, there are two blood tests). However, when a number begins a sentence spell it out. See the subsection 'Numbers' in section 3, 'Ministry preferred style of language' of these *Communication Standards* for other exceptions to the rule.
- Write numbers of four digits or fewer without a comma; for example, '4000'. Write money amounts with a comma; for example, '\$4,000'.

## Abbreviations

Write:

the Ministry, the Ministry of Health or Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health)

not:

the Health Ministry, the Min of Health, MOH or MoH.

## Bullet points

When introducing bullet points with a phrase or clause:

- the phrase ends with a colon
- each bullet point begins with a lower-case letter
- there is no end-of-line punctuation, however, the last point ends with a full stop.