

Communication Standards

for the Ministry of Health

A style guide for written communications

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MANATŪ HAUORA



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Foreword

All New Zealanders deserve to read health information that is clear, concise and credible.

Whether we are writing for the public, our colleagues, for Ministers or for busy members of the health workforce, we use quality writing to help get our message across.

Regardless of our intended audience, good communication is easy to understand. Good writing is always clear. It is plain and communicates our message in a way that respects the needs of our audience. That means setting aside our personal habits and writing in a way that represents the style of the whole organisation.

Increasing health literacy is an important component of the New Zealand Health Strategy. We can set an example as leaders of the health sector by communicating in a way that is accessible and easy to understand.

Our organisation performs many functions and communicates in many different ways. We want the Ministry to be a high-performing organisation that effectively leads the health and disability system. To support this goal, it is important for the Ministry to speak in a consistent way, with one voice.

I encourage you to familiarise yourself with these standards. They will help you to write in plain language. They will help you ensure that your writing is consistent with the Ministry's approved style. Consistent writing contributes to the Ministry's credibility and helps ensure our information can be used with confidence and trust.

Chai Chuah
Director-General of Health

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Introduction

In any resource we produce, our fundamental aim must always be to: ‘Inform people about public and personal health services so they can be “health smart” and have greater control over their health and wellbeing.’

New Zealand Health Strategy: Roadmap of actions 2016, action area 1.

The *Communication Standards for the Ministry of Health* is the primary resource for anyone in the Ministry writing to the public, Ministers and others in the health sector. These standards will help you write clearly for your audience.

Using these communication standards consistently across the Ministry ensures that our communications are understandable and there are no inconsistencies or unusual terms that could distract and confuse our readers. They help us write in a way that consolidates trust and confidence in the information we provide.

Over the following pages, you will find information on:

- our plain language standard
- our preferred styles for spelling, punctuating and presenting your message
- useful, commonly used terms
- our style for citing and referencing other texts
- writing in ways that are appropriate for the different cultures, ethnicities and disabilities in New Zealand
- our preferred style for writing letters.

Whether you are writing content for the web or hard copy; a fact sheet, a consultation document, a letter or a report to the Minister, always refer to these *Communication Standards* to ensure your communication is clear and professional and fits to our all-of-Ministry style.

Familiarise yourself with the basic style rules we expect all Ministry staff to follow in their communications.

If you have a particular query, you can refer to the contents page for directions to the relevant section. If you don't find an answer to your query in these *Communication Standards*, contact the Web and Publications team for further advice.

How we write

We have a plain language standard. We use plain language because it is clear and easy for our audience to understand.

When we write, we should use:

- plain, familiar language
- short sentences
- the active voice (in most cases)
- inclusive language.

‘Big picture’ elements

1. The purpose of the document is clear at the start.
2. The content supports the purpose of the document.
3. The structure of the document is clear and logical to the reader.

Language elements

4. The paragraphs are mostly short and focus on one topic.
5. The sentences are mostly short and straightforward.
6. The words are precise and familiar to the reader.
7. The tone of the document is reader-friendly and accessible.

Presentation elements

8. The layout and presentation help the reader absorb the messages quickly and easily.
9. The document is error-free.
10. The document complies with the Communication Standards for the Ministry of Health.

You can download a copy of our Plain Language Standard.

We also use the following resources for aspects of spelling, grammar and punctuation that are not in these standards:

- **Oxford Dictionaries**
www.oxforddictionaries.com
- **Te Aka Māori dictionary**
<http://maoridictionary.co.nz>

Use plain, familiar writing

Use simple words. Let your ideas impress the reader, not your vocabulary.

Use	Don't use
Do	Accomplish, operationalise
Help	Assistance
About	Regarding, concerning
Now	At the present time
Provided	The provision of
Because	On the grounds that

Avoid jargon and buzz words. Phrases such as 'going forward', 'paradigm shift' and 'line of sight' might be commonly used by your team or contemporaries but do not belong to clear, plain writing for a wider audience.

Use	Don't use
In the future	Going forward
Finished	Done and dusted
Draft	Straw man
Reason	Key driver

Keep it simple and concise.

Use	Don't use
It rained every day for a month.	A period of adverse weather set in.
Thank you for your reply.	We would like to acknowledge receipt of your response and we thank you for your feedback.
We accept your proposal.	We would like to inform you that your proposal has been accepted.
We used their services twice.	We utilised their organisational services twice.

Be positive and helpful

Use a positive tone and put the reader first. You can make a huge difference to the reader's experience with the words you choose.

Use	Don't use
To help with this enquiry, I need more details.	Unfortunately I'm unable to proceed with your enquiry as I do not have sufficient information.
Thank you for your input.	We consider your input to have been valuable.

Keep sentences and paragraphs short

- One idea per sentence, with an average length of between 16 and 20 words.
- A paragraph is a group of closely related sentences, usually beginning with a topic sentence that 'signposts' what will be covered in that paragraph.
- Keep subheadings between three and eight words long and do not use them to ask questions.

Use the active voice

Use the active voice as much as possible, as it is stronger and clearer. The thing doing the action should be the subject of the sentence.

Active	Passive
The Ministry implemented a pilot programme.	A pilot programme was implemented by the Ministry.
The Minister recommended additional funding.	Additional funding was recommended by the Minister.
Exception: Use passive when the thing doing the action is unknown or less important.	
Passive	Active
Some errors were made in the calculation.	Peter made errors in the calculation.
The Minister was concerned by the delay.	The delay caused concerns for the Minister.

Use verb phrases instead of noun phrases

Watch out for words ending in ‘-ion’, ‘-ment’, ‘-tion’, ‘-ance’, ‘-ence’, ‘-ancy’, ‘-ency’, ‘ism’, and ‘-ity’.

Use	Don't use
Productivity has improved [verb].	An improvement [noun] in productivity has been made.
The organisation increased funding to provide [verb] more services.	The organisation increased funding for the provision of [noun] more services.

Use the right word

affect	make a difference to (verb) ‘I was affected by the cold’
effect	(noun) a result ‘the effect was amazing’; (verb) to bring about a result ‘he wanted to effect a quick result’
complementary	combining in such a way to enhance or emphasise the qualities of each other or another
complimentary	praising and approving; free of charge
discreet	careful and circumspect
discrete	separate
disinterested	impartial
uninterested	not interested
its	possessive (its own), no apostrophe
it's	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’).
lead	guide or show the way
led	past tense of lead
less	A decreased and uncountable amount (less rain, less money, less time)
fewer	A decreased and countable number (fewer people, fewer rooms)

Use inclusive language

Use gender neutral words to describe groups that include both sexes. For example, 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’.

Use terms of equal weight for both sexes: woman/man, girl/boy. Avoid clumsy constructions such as ‘he/she’ – in most cases, it is fine to use ‘they’ for ‘he/she’ or ‘their’ for ‘his/her’.

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

For more information about accessible communication see Appendix 2.

Proofread your work

- Check the document for spelling or typing errors, grammatical errors, repetition, omission of letters and words, and word use. (Don’t rely on the spellcheck in Word; it will not distinguish mistakes like ‘form’ instead of ‘from’, ‘manger’ instead of ‘manager’ or ‘heath’ instead of ‘health’.)
- Remember to check all aspects of the document, including:
 - punctuation
 - dates
 - names and titles
 - website addresses
 - facts (including all number amounts and the facts in footnotes)
 - labels on graphs, tables and charts
 - page numbers
 - headers and footers.
- Check formatting details: and capital letters, hyphenation, word breaks, font style and size, heading styles and positioning, alignment, margins and spacing.

Our style

&

Avoid using ampersands unless it is part of a title, for example, Capital & Coast DHB.

Abbreviations and acronyms

Avoid abbreviations and acronyms unless they are familiar to your audience (eg, DHB, PHARMAC).

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.

Example

The New Zealand Medical Association (NZMA) has moved from Wellington to Kaitia.
The NZMA made its decision with the support of its members.

Never start a sentence with an abbreviation or acronym.

Use abbreviations such as ‘eg’, ‘ie’ and ‘NB’ sparingly and only inside brackets (ie, like this) or in references, figures and tables. Do not use in text – spell out as ‘for example,’ and ‘that is,’ respectively.

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*).

Brackets

Use round brackets (or parentheses) to enclose remarks that are not part of the main statement.

Punctuation sits outside the bracket (like this). If the brackets surround a separate sentence, put punctuation inside the brackets.

Examples

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.)

Capitals and lower case

Always use lower case unless the word is part of a name or a proper noun. It can be tempting to capitalise nouns such as general practitioner or district health board, but they should be in lower case if they are not part of a name.

Examples

Jarvis Cocker is a general practitioner and member of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners.

Northland District Health Board is the northernmost district health board.

Lower case

Use lower-case:

- for generic titles; for example, 'As you know, doctors, chief executives and managers are usually busy people'
- for the names of diseases, syndromes, signs, symptoms; for example, listeria, tuberculosis, shingles
- for generic names that are not trademarked; for example, amoxicillin, aspirin.

Upper case

Use capitals:

- for legislation specific international treaties, conventions and protocols; for example, Official Information Act 1982; Health and Disability Services (General) Standard
- for trademarked brand names; for example: Penbritin, Amoxil, Aspro.

The following are capitalised:

The Budget

Cabinet

Crown, but Crown entities

Government, when describing a specific government, but government when it is generic, for example, previous governments

Member of Parliament

Minister, Ministers (except when referring to a minister of religion), but ministerial

Parliament, but parliamentary

State

The Treasury

Vote (as in Vote Health).

For more examples of when to use upper and lower case, see 'Our preferred spelling for words'.

Dates and time

The order for dates is: day, month, year. Do not use commas.

Example

26 December 1967

Use a slash for financial years. Use '2017/18' rather than '2017/8'.

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

Use a space between the figures and the 'am' and 'pm' (written without full stops) for times.

Example

The meeting starts at 3.30 pm tomorrow.

Fonts

For internal documents, the Ministry standard font for text and headings is Arial 11 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.

Webpages have their fonts set automatically. Draft your document using default Word styles.

Hyphens

Because compound constructions can be used in many different ways (as a verb, noun, adjective etc) the rules around using hyphens are inconsistent. Use this table to help you decide whether or not to use a hyphen for these commonly used terms.

As an adjective (a _____ project)	As a noun or after a noun (the project was _____) (the project was a _____)	As a verb (We will _____ this project)
age-specific	age specific	
age-standardised	age standardised	
community-based	community based	
cost-effective	cost-effective	
decision-making	decision-making	
follow-up	follow-up	to follow up
long-term	long term	
population-based	population based	
post-operative	post-operative	
	roll-out	to roll out
	set-up	to set up
short-term	short term	
sign-off	sign off	
up-to-date	up to date	

Italics

Use italics for the:

- titles of publications, newspapers, journals and newsletters
- names of parties in the citation of law cases; for example' *Donahue vs Stevenson*
- scientific names of biological organisms (eg, *Salmonella* causes salmonella enteritis).

Lists

Bulleted lists

Always format bullet lists consistently.

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 with a full stop.

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

- The introductory sentence does not end with a colon but with a full stop.
- Each bullet point begins with a capital letter.
- If the bullet points are all complete sentences themselves, they each end with a full stop.
- If the bullet points are a list of phrases or terms rather than complete sentences, only the final bullet ends with a full stop to clearly indicate the end of the list.

For lists within a bulleted list:

- indent further
- separate the points with en dashes (–)
- distinguish any further levels by:
 - continuing to use the en dashes
 - indenting further.

Numbered lists

Follow the same style as for bulleted lists above. Do not use brackets around your numbers; use a full stop after the number.

1. 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, do not put a full stop at the end of the sentence, 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, finish your list with a full stop.

Macrons

A short dash placed above a vowel in the Māori alphabet (eg, ā, ō, ū) to indicate a long vowel sound.

Measurements

Always use symbols and write the number in figures. Put a space between the number and the unit symbol.

Examples

Walking 10 km every day in 30°C helped Sam lose 5 kg in weight.
The temperature symbol is an exception (30°C not 30 °C).

Names and titles

When writing a person's full official title, use capital letters.

Examples

the Minister of Education
the Director of Mental Health.

Abbreviate titles of distinction and qualifications following a name and set them in small capitals without full stops; for example: Valerie June FRS, FRCNZ, FCANZ.

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

Numbers

Write one to nine as words and use numerals for numbers over nine.

Example

There were two committees and five meetings to plan the parade but only 99 of the town's original 354 settlers could attend.

Separate thousands with a comma rather than a space. For example, use '1,000', '200,000', '10,000'.

The exceptions to this rule are:

- 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 quantities that involve a unit of measurement (eg, 5 kg, 7 metres, 6 foot 2 inches, 5 percent)
- in tables and figures (never spell out).

Hyphenate the numbers twenty-one to ninety-nine when they are written in full.

Rates

Use 'per' not a slash to express rates in text and brackets. Use a slash in figures and tables.

Example

The rate for non-Māori was 56 per 100,000.

Ranges

There are two common phrases for expressing a range of numbers:

- 'between ... and'
- 'from ... to'.

Write	Don't write
It costs between five and six times more than last year.	It costs between five–six times more than last year. It costs between five to six times more than last year.
It is cheaper from the months of September to November.	It is cheaper from the months of September–November. It is cheaper from the months of September and November
Children between the ages of 5 and 16 years were more likely to succeed.	Children between the ages of 5–16 years were more likely to succeed. Children from the ages of 5 and 16 years were more likely to succeed

Use 'to', not a dash, for spelt-out numbers; for example:

Five to eight subjects drank only water

not:

Five–eight subjects drank only water.

Where a range involves measurements, percentages or ages use numerals and an en dash (–) not a hyphen (-) to indicate 'to'.

Examples

14–20 kg

2–3 percent

18–24 years.

When expressing a single age, you can use: 16-year-olds. When expressing an age range, try to avoid saying: 5- to 16-year-olds. While this is strictly correct, it is cumbersome and makes it difficult to insert a dash. To avoid the problem, rephrase wherever possible.

Examples

participants aged 5–16 years
between the ages of 5 and 16 years
from the ages of 5 to 16 years

Quotation marks

Use single quotation marks for small sections of quoted material (less than four lines). If the text is over four lines, indent it and offset it as a block quote. Do not put quotes into italics.

If the quoted text is more than one paragraph, use opening quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph and a closing quotation mark at the end of the last paragraph only.

Use quotation marks for articles and chapter or section headings for example:

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

Place punctuation that is not part of the quoted text 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.’

References

Our standard form of referencing is the author–date system of referencing.

Citations in the text should give the author’s surname (or name of organisation) followed by the year. There is no punctuation between the name and year.

(Smith 2010) and (Ministry of Health 2011)

References are formatted as: Author. Year of publication. *Title*. City of publication: Publisher.
Ministry of Health. 2016. *The Health of New Zealanders*. Wellington: Ministry of Health.

For more detailed guidance on formatting and reference style, see Appendix 1.

Spacing

Leave one space between sentences.

Telephone numbers

Follow this format:

- local: (09) 495 0345
- mobile: 021 234 4321
- international: + 64 9 495 0345
- numbers with an extension: (09) 495 0345 extn 213.

Web addresses

If you are providing a web address for the reader's information, you can put this in brackets or on a new line, depending on what works best for the text. Remove:

- 'http://' from the start
- 'www' if the address will work without it
- the forward slash from the end of the address
- any full stop at the end, unless it is inside brackets.

Our preferred spelling for words

This list has commonly used acronyms, terms and preferred spelling we use in our writing.

ACART	Advisory Committee on Assisted Reproductive Technology
acknowledgement	spell with an ‘e’
Act	the Act, initial capital. The first mention of a named Act must be followed by its date (eg, the Privacy Act 1993)
advisor	and advisory; do not use ‘adviser’
age group	two words
ageing	spell with an ‘e’
AIDS	capitals, no full stops; note: this is the abbreviation for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, which is caused by the HIV virus
airborne	one word
antenatal	one word
Associate Minister	note capitals
audiovisual	one word
Auckland Wide healthy Homes Initiative	The acronym is AWHI and the word ‘healthy’ is not capitalised.
B4 School Check	initial capitals
bacteria	plural; the singular is ‘bacterium’
benefited, benefiting	one ‘t’ only
bilateral	one word
birthweight	one word
breast milk	two words
breastfeed	one word
caesarean	lower case
caregiver	one word
chapter	usually lower case (eg, ‘see chapter 3’); if the chapter is actually labelled ‘Chapter 3’, use upper case (eg, ‘see Chapter 3’)
chart book	two words
checklist	one word
chickenpox	lower case, one word
childbearing	one word

Community Services Card	initial caps
cooperation	not hyphenated
coordinate	not hyphenated
coordinator	not hyphenated
criteria	plural; the singular is ‘criterion’
CYMRC	Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee
data	In modern non-scientific use, data is treated as a mass noun (like information) that takes a singular verb: ‘Data was collected over a number of years’; ‘The data shows an increase of 5 percent.’ This is widely accepted in standard English and is the Ministry’s preference.
data set	two words
database	one word
Deaf	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
DHB	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’
diarrhoea	note spelling: not diarrhea
Director-General	hyphenated
Directors-General	hyphenated (plural ‘s’ on ‘Director’)
district health boards	lower case, unless part of a specific DHB’s title
Down syndrome	note: not Down’s
drinking-water	hyphenated
ECART	Ethics Committee on Assisted Reproductive Technology
e-government	lower case, hyphen, but capital E in the E-government strategy
e-prescribing	lower case, hyphen
e-therapy	lower case, hyphen
eMedicines Programme	Note the capital M and no hyphen
eg	no full stops; avoid in text (use ‘such as’, ‘for example’ or ‘for instance’); use within brackets only, with comma following (eg, like this)
elderly	do not use; use older people
ELT	the Ministry’s Executive Leadership Team
emergency department	lower case
et al	no full stops; abbreviation of <i>et alii</i> or <i>et aliae</i> (and others)

etc	no full stop; avoid in text (if unavoidable, use ‘and so on’)
ex-smoker	hyphenated
factsheet	one word
fetus	plural: fetuses
Figure	in the text, use initial capital (eg, see Figure 23)
focuses, focused	only one ‘s’
foodborne	one word
formula	‘formulas’ is the plural in general usage (‘formulae’ is used for mathematics and statistics)
framework	one word
freephone	one word
freepost	one word
Funding Agreement	initial capitals only when a specific funding agreement is being referred to (eg, MidCentral Health Funding Agreement)
fundraising	one word
Gardasil	proper noun
gender	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.
government department	lower case
government policy	lower case
Governor-General	hyphenated, initial capitals
gram	not ‘gramme’
graph	lower case (eg, ‘see graph 1’); see separate entries for ‘Figure’ and ‘Table’
haemoglobin	use British-style spelling (not hemoglobin)
haemophiliac	use British-style spelling (not hemophiliac)
hapū	groups of whānau with common ancestral links; note macron
Hawke’s Bay	apostrophe (but note that Healthcare Hawkes Bay does not use an apostrophe)
health care	two words
health protection officer	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)
health targets	lower case
helpdesk	one word
helpline	one word

hep B	accepted abbreviation for hepatitis B
HIV	abbreviation for human immunodeficiency virus, the virus that causes AIDS
Hodgkin's disease	always spell with the apostrophe
HQSC	Health Quality & Safety Commission (note the ampersand)
HWNZ	Health Workforce New Zealand
ie	no full stops; avoid in text (use that is); use within brackets only, with comma following (ie, like this)
immunisation	spell with an 's', not a 'z'
industry	singular (the industry is interested)
inpatient	one word
interagency	one word
intersectoral	one word
intranet	lower case
-ise	not '-ize'; thus 'realise', 'organise' (but note: World Health Organization is an exception)
iwi	tribe; note lower case
-ize	do not use; see -ise
judgement	spell with an 'e' (note: the legal spelling is 'judgment', without an 'e')
kaumātua	adult, older person, elder
kilogram	not 'kilogramme'
Lead Maternity Carer (LMC)	initial caps
lifetime	one word
live-born	hyphenated
manager	lower case, but use a capital when writing the full title of a particular manager (eg, the Manager, Communications)
Māori	initial capital; use a macron over the 'a' to indicate the long vowel sound, rather than the 'aa' convention
Māori health	'health' is lower case
marae	lower case
matua/mātua	parent/parents; note macron for plural
media	plural (eg, the media have taken a keen interest in this issue)
medical officer of health	lower case unless referring to a specific office holder; do not abbreviate to MOH, to avoid confusion with Ministry of Health
Medsafe	a business group of the Ministry of Health
memorandum	plural is memoranda
MeNZB™	term used for meningococcal B vaccine
micro-organism	hyphenated

midday	one word
multidisciplinary	one word
multifaceted	one word
NASC	Needs Assessment Service Coordination (NASC) organisation
nationwide	one word
NB	no full stops; abbreviation for <i>nota bene</i> (ie, note well); avoid in text; usually followed by a colon
NEAC	National Ethics Advisory Committee, short for National Advisory Committee on Health and Disability Support Services Ethics
NGO	no punctuation; abbreviation for non-governmental organisation
non-governmental organisation	lower case (note ‘al’)
non-Māori	hyphenated
non-smoking	hyphenated
non-violent	hyphenated
NSU	National Screening Unit
nurse practitioner	lower case
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
older people	not ‘the elderly’
ongoing	one word
online	one word
organise, organisation	spell with an ‘s’ (the World Health Organization is an exception)
outpatient	one word
overcrowded	one word
override	one word, two r’s
Pacific peoples	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’).
page	lower case when referring to a page number (eg, see page 6)
Pākehā	initial capital (an initial capital is the style when referring to any ethnic group); two macrons
Parliament	initial capital
per annum	two words; avoid in text (use per year)
percent	one word; use in narrative text; use ‘%’ in highly technical text, and always in tables and figures
person	the preferred plural is people (not persons)

PHARMAC	Pharmaceutical Management Agency Ltd
PHO	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
policy maker	two words
postnatal	one word
postpartum	one word
post-test	hyphenated (but pretest)
prenatal	one word
preschool	one word
pretest	one word (but post-test)
preventive	do not use preventative
programme	not 'program' (unless referring to a computer program)
public health unit	lower case when used generically, but use initial capitals if referring to a named public health unit
radioactive	one word
rangatahi	Māori youths and young adults aged 13–24 years (no macron)
rest home	two words
roadshow	one word
schoolchildren	one word
section	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
sector	lower case, eg, health and disability sector
self-harm	hyphenated
sex	male or female; see gender
smokefree	one word (but note: the Smoke-free Environments Act 1990)
sociodemographic	one word
socioeconomic	one word
STI	capitals, no full stops; only to be used after first written in full with abbreviation following in brackets: 'a sexually transmitted infection (STI)'
stillborn	one word
strategy	lower case, unless referring to a specific named strategy
sunbed	one word
sunscreen	one word
Table	in the text, use initial capital (eg, see Table 45)
tangata/tāngata	person/people; note macron for plural

tangata whaiora	two words, not tangata whai ora
tāngata whenua	‘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.
targeted, targeting	use single ‘t’, not double
taskforce	one word
taxpayer	one word
TB	capitals, no full stops; abbreviation for tuberculosis
Te Puni Kōkiri	use this, not Ministry for Māori Development
timeframe	one word
timeline	one word
tollfree	one word
trialled/trialling	two ‘l’s
uncooperative	no hyphen
uncoordinated	no hyphen
under-report	hyphenated
under-represent	hyphenated
under way	two words (originally a nautical term, ‘under weigh’)
universities	The University of Auckland Auckland University of Technology (AUT University) The University of Waikato Massey University Victoria University of Wellington University of Canterbury Lincoln University University of Otago
waterborne	one word
web	lower case when short for World Wide Web
webpage	one word, lower case
website	one word, lower case
well child care	no hyphens; note: use Well Child when referring to the Well Child programme
Well Child / Tamariki Ora	initial capitals, Well Child is two words
wellbeing	one word
whānau	extended family; note macron
whānau ora	lower case; but Whānau Ora when referring to the Whānau Ora programme
WHO	capitals, no full stops; abbreviation for World Health Organization
workplace	one word

World Health Organization	initial capitals (note the ‘z’ spelling)
X-ray	preferred spelling; note initial capital and hyphen
year-end	hyphenated

District health boards

North Island

Auckland District Health Board (www.adhb.govt.nz)
 Bay of Plenty District Health Board (www.bopdhb.govt.nz)
 Capital & Coast District Health Board (www.ccdhb.org.nz) (note ‘&’)
 Counties Manukau District Health Board (www.cmdhb.org.nz)
 Hawke’s Bay District Health Board (www.hawkesbay.health.nz) (note apostrophe)
 Hutt Valley District Health Board (www.huttvalleydhb.org.nz)
 Lakes District Health Board (www.lakesdhb.govt.nz)
 MidCentral District Health Board (www.midcentraldhb.govt.nz)
 Northland District Health Board (www.northlanddhb.org.nz)
 Tairāwhiti District Health (www.tdh.org.nz)
 Taranaki District Health Board (www.tdhb.org.nz)
 Waikato District Health Board (www.waikatodhb.govt.nz)
 Wairarapa District Health Board (www.wairarapa.dhb.org.nz)
 Waitemata District Health Board (www.waitematadhb.govt.nz)
 Whanganui District Health Board (www.wdhb.org.nz)

South Island

Canterbury District Health Board (www.cdhb.govt.nz)
 Nelson Marlborough District Health Board (www.nmdhb.govt.nz)
 South Canterbury District Health Board (www.scdhb.health.nz)
 Southern District Health Board (www.southerndhb.govt.nz)
 West Coast District Health Board (www.westcoastdhb.org.nz)

Ministry of Health

Say	Don’t say
the Ministry (note the capital ‘M’)	the Health Ministry
the Ministry of Health	Min of Health
Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health)	MOH or MoH.

Appendix 1: References

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 2016).

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 2016; 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 2014).

Reference three or more authors as:

(Attenborough et al 1978).

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 2015a; 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 2015).

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.

New Zealand Gazette Notices

Cite New Zealand Gazette Notices in the text or in footnotes. There is no need to include them in the reference list.

‘Criteria for the Assessment of Proposals for Capability in Independent Research Organisations Funding by the Science Board’. *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 February 2013, 15: 493.

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).

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 2014 the number has dropped to 150 per year (BD Black, Department of Gerontology, Otago University, personal communication, 2 April 2012).

Blogs

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 2015) ...

In the references we will have:

Ulcer-Wars Blog, comment posted 6 April 2007, www.ulcer-wars.com/archives/2006/ulcer.html (accessed 4 June 2015).

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. Honey or the money? *The Beekeepers' Business Buzz* 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. 2010. *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:

New Zealand Health System Opportunities. 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).

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 (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 (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), but with an increasing use of DOIs, and a number of addresses that do not use either www or 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 (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 (accessed 17 January 2014).

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 (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. 2011. *Community Access to Digital Technologies: A literature review*. URL: https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Resource-material-Our-Research-and-Reports-Index?OpenDocument (accessed 27 September 2016).

World Health Organization. 2006. *BMI Classification*.

URL: 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 (accessed 5 November 2015).

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 (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 (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, Al, 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 (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:

<ftp://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.

Appendix 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’ – in most cases, it is fine to use ‘they’ for ‘he/she’ or ‘their’ for ‘his/her’.

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 at the Ministry of Health 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 United Nations 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 by gently tapping them on the shoulder.
- Make sure that they can see your lips. 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. A deaf or hearing impaired person will not understand you if you are talking with your back to them or shouting from another room. 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 difficulty.
- Pronounce each word clearly. Make sure you don't miss the ends of 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/site_resources/library/Fact_Sheets/Living_with_Hearing_Loss.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), you should:

- plan well in advance if you need New Zealand Sign Language interpreters and book in 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 event so that they can familiarise themselves with the information (particularly if it has a highly technical or specialised content).

The Office for Disability Issues website includes advice on how to communicate effectively 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/

Accessible formatting

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

Keep in mind the following points 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 the top of 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 that the words are spaced evenly.

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

Appendix 3: Writing letters

Forms of address

Present and former Ministers of the Crown are usually referred to as ‘Hon’.

Current and former Members of Parliament who have been made members of the Privy Council are always addressed as ‘Rt Hon’, for example; the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Helen Clark; the former Minister of Health, Rt Hon Wyatt Creech.

When the writer is a woman and you are unsure of the proper form of address, you should generally use Ms. For example, for Diane Smith use ‘Dear Ms Smith’. Please see the Government Relations Group for information on Ministers’ preferences.

When you are not sure whether the writer is male or female use their initials, for example, for D Smith use ‘Dear D Smith’.

Māori forms of address

If the writer has used a Māori greeting or sign-off it is appropriate to respond in the same way.

Greetings

Dear Sir: Tēnā koe

Dear Ms Smith: Tēnā koe, Ms Smith

Dear Mark: Kia ora, e Mark

Dear Miriama: Kia ora, Miriama

Note that names that have one or two vowels are preceded by the word ‘e’ (eg, Peter, Mary, Hiko) while longer names are used without it (eg, Miriama, Jonathan, Katherine).

Tēnā koe is a formal address to a single person and can be used to address either a man or a woman. The equivalent when addressing two people is tēnā kōrua, and for three or more is tēnā koutou.

Like tēnā koe, the greeting kia ora does not specify the gender of the person being addressed. Kia ora can be used to address any number of people and is less formal than tēnā koe.

Māori words should not be italicised to distinguish them from English or have an s added to them in the plural.

Signing off

Yours sincerely: Nāku noa, nā

Before two signatures write: Nā māua noa, nā
and before three or more, write: Nā mātou noa, nā

When a letter has been written in Māori it is appropriate to respond in Māori.

Format of a Ministry of Health letter

(6 spaces from top margin; this can be less if the letter goes over one or two lines)

[Date]

(2 spaces)

Sam Smith
4 Tilden Ave
Mandeville
WELLINGTON 6011
(3 spaces)

Dear Sam

(1 space)

Subject heading if required

(1 space)

Thank you for your letter of 30 September 2016 concerning the new style guide developed by the Web and Publications team at the Ministry of Health. The standard font for Ministry letters and other correspondence is Arial 12 point. The Ministry standard for page set up in Microsoft Word is to have the top and bottom margins set at 2.5 cm. Left and right margins are set and 2.5 cm and the gutter at 0 cm.

The text is always left justified, so the sentences are ragged right. There is only ever one space after full stops.

If the letter goes over the page by one or two lines, you can change the spacing; do not change the font size.

(2 spaces)

Yours sincerely,

(6 spaces; this can be less if the letter goes over one or two lines)

Nancy Spencer
Deputy-Director General
Audit and Compliance
(1 space)

cc Warren Burrows, Chief Executive, Ministry of Finance and Savings