



ECC Style Guide

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23 November 2011

0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides guidance to introduce consistency across all Electronic Communications Committee (ECC) communications and to show you how to get to your messages across in an easy to understand way by using plain English. This will ensure your writing is not misunderstood and will help you to become more open.

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1 INTRODUCTION

It is important that the Electronic Communications Committee (ECC) has a common 'house' style to ensure its communications are clear, consistent and professional. Communicating consistently and clearly is essential in this global and fast-moving communications environment. People really do value it and have come to expect it. Information for wide distribution – annual reports, newsletters, news releases, leaflets – must be accessible and understandable to all audiences.

The aim of this guide is to introduce consistency across all your communications and to show you how to get to your messages across in an easy to understand way by using plain English. This will ensure your writing is not misunderstood and will help you to become more open.

Examples of implementation of the ECC Style are available in the ECC Templates documents available at: <http://www.cept.org/ecc/deliverables/ecc-templates>.

2 WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

2.1 COMMUNICATING MESSAGES

A key part of successful communications is using the right tone to help create a positive image. The tone should help to convey the ECC's personality, culture and purpose. Use every day spoken language and avoid formal jargon. Your tone should be friendly. Using 'you' and 'we' makes your tone more personal and sincere. This is the preferred style for items like press releases, newsletters, and some parts of the website.

2.2 FORMAL DELIVERABLES

Formal deliverables require a more formal and impersonal tone, and should follow the requirements of the ECC Working Methods. Third person ('it') is required. It will often be appropriate to use specialist technical terms in output deliverables, and it may be more difficult to avoid passive verbs (see below). However, the avoidance of undefined 'jargon' and the use of simple language is still preferred. The advice of this guide should be followed except if it is in conflict with the working methods.

2.3 WRITING CLEARLY AND CONSISTENTLY

When writing, use every day spoken language to make your communications accessible, clear and concise. Consider writing in 'plain English'. This means you keep your sentences short, avoid jargon, and use active verbs as much as possible.

Writing active sentences means putting the subject before the verb. As explained in the Plain English guide, there are almost always three main parts to every sentence:

- the **doer** or **subject** (the person, group, or thing doing the action)
- a **verb** (the action itself)
- an **object** (the person, group, or thing that the action is done to)

To make the sentence active put the three parts in the following order: doer, verb, object. Some examples are set out below. In passive sentences the order is reversed: object, verb, subject.

Table 1: Active / Passive sentences

Active sentences	Passive sentences
The ECC wrote the report.	The report was written by the ECC.
The ECC brings together 48 countries to develop common policies in electronic communications.	48 countries are brought together by the ECC to develop common policies in electronic communications.
The ECC's approach is strategic, open and forward-looking, and based on consensus between the member countries.	A strategic, open and forward-looking approach is used by the ECC which is based on consensus between the member countries.
The ECC will undertake a new study.	A new study is to be undertaken by the ECC.
The ECC carries out technical studies under a mandate from the European Commission and publishes them as CEPT reports.	CEPT reports are technical studies carried out by the ECC under a mandate from the European Commission.

Detailed information on writing in plain English is available from the Plain English Campaign website: www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf. This guide should be followed as much as possible for communications intended for a wide audience.

The Economist also publishes a Style Guide with some useful advice for writing in plain English. The guide is available at: www.economist.com/research/StyleGuide/

Microsoft Word provides a useful tool to check the readability of your written work to see how easy it is for people to understand.

To set this up, go to Microsoft Word:

- click on Review, then Spelling & Grammar
- click on Options
- tick box marked 'Show readability statistics'
- readability scores will now appear when you click the Spelling and Grammar button

Understanding the scores:

- Passive sentences: Microsoft Word will tell you the percentage of your sentences that are passive. Generally, you should make sure that no more than around 25 per cent of your sentences are passive.
- Flesch Reading Ease score: This rates text on a 100-point scale; the higher the score, the easier it is to understand the document. For most standard documents, your score must be at least 50.
- Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score: This rates text on American school grades. For example, a score of 8.0 means that an eighth grader can understand the document. For most standard documents, your score must be no higher than 10. The highest, or worst, possible score is 12.

2.4 SPELLING

Spellings should be written in British English rather than American English. Some examples are set out below. The only exception is where American English is used in the name of an organisation, for example the World Health Organization.

Table 2: British English / American English

British English	American English
Harmonise	Harmonize
Emphasise	Emphasize
Prioritise	Prioritize
Licence (noun only – verb: license)	License (noun and verb)
Practice (noun only – verb: practise)	Practice (noun and verb)
Realise	Realize
Organisation	Organization
Centre	Center
Metre	Meter
Analyse	Analyze
Programme	Program

2.5 ABBREVIATIONS

Always write abbreviations out in full at first use and include the abbreviation in brackets. The exception here is if the abbreviation is so familiar that it is more often written as an abbreviation rather than out in full (for example MHz, GHz, Wi-Fi).

2.6 ACRONYMS

Acronyms are formed from the initial letters of a series of words and are pronounceable as a word. Initialisms that refer to organisations are also formed from the initial letters of a series of words but are not pronounceable.

In general, acronyms are not preceded by the definite article: 'the'. However, initialisms usually do take the definite article. Some examples are set out below. Use uppercase letters for acronyms and initialisms unless the organisation concerned particularly prefers lowercase.

Table 3: Acronyms / Initialisms

Acronyms	Initialisms
CEPT	the ECC
ECO	the EC
ETSI	the ITU
NATO	the ECC

2.7 DATE AND TIME

Dates should be written in the format 23 November 2011. For timing, use the 24 hour clock format: 08:00 and 14:00.

2.8 FIGURES/NUMBERS

Write numbers 'one' to 'nine' and 'first' to 'ninth' in full. 10 and above should appear as figures. Use preferably the following convention for numbers.

1.00
10.00
100.00
1000.00
100000.00
1000000.00

2.9 TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Telephone numbers should include the country code (preceded by '+') followed by the subscriber number. It is recommended to use the format which the number holder is using, e.g. +45 33 89 63 00.

2.10 PERCENTAGES

When writing percentages, the word 'per cent' needs to be used. However, the symbol '%' can be used in tables and in formal output deliverables.

3 VISUAL IDENTITY

A logo is the main means by which an organisation is recognised. Therefore, it is important that your logo is applied consistently across all published material and is not altered in any way.

It is noted that the CEPT presidency may decide to apply a corporate style across all groups within its structure in order to present a more coherent and unified body. However, this style guide currently focuses on the ECC.

4 DOCUMENT LAYOUT

4.1 TYPEFACE

The typeface used for most documents should be Arial, font size 10.

Output deliverables are generally in Times New Roman, font size 10pt.

4.2 LAYOUT

Text should be justified.

4.3 HEADINGS AND SUB-HEADINGS

Main headings should be written in upper case. Sub-headings should be written with an initial capital letter then in lower case. The only exception is if there is a name in the heading.

4.4 LONG DOCUMENTS

Longer documents should start with a contents page and where possible should include an executive summary. Pages should be numbered and the document should be broken up into sections with appropriate headings. Each paragraph within a section should be numbered: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 etc. Output deliverables have specific templates which are annexed to the Working Methods.

4.5 PARAGRAPHS

Paragraphs should be short to make text easier to read.

4.6 SPACING IN ECC DELIVERABLES

Please apply the ECC Styles available in this document and in ECC deliverables in order to make sure that there is sufficient space between the different paragraphs.

4.7 BOLD, ITALICS AND UNDERLINING

Bold, italics and underlining should be used sparingly to avoid making the text difficult to read. Bold should be used for headings. Italics should be used when referring to specific documents or papers. Italics can also be used for emphasis. Do not use bold, coloured, capitalised or underlined text to emphasise a point.

4.8 COLOUR

Writing main headings in colour can make a longer document look more interesting. However, the colours must match the corporate style.

4.9 BULLET POINTS

Do not use single bullet points. If you only have one point under a heading, write it as a normal sentence. Keep punctuation within a bulleted list to a minimum. The first letter of each bullet point should be lower case.

Example of bulleted list lists:

1. Numbered/bulleted list level 1 (style: ECC Numbered Bullets)
 - Numbered /bulleted list level 2
 - Level 3

4.10 IMAGES

Relevant photographs and illustrations can be used to break up text and make it more interesting.

5 PUNCTUATION

5.1 FULL STOPS AND COMMAS

Use one space after full stops and a comma. Do not use full stops in abbreviations.

5.2 INVERTED COMMAS

Use “x” double inverted commas for direct quotes. Use ‘x’ single inverted commas for emphasis or a quote within a quote. For quoted speech, the quotes go at the beginning of each paragraph and close at the end of the quote.

5.3 HYPHENS AND DASHES

A hyphen (-) is half the length of a dash (–). Dashes can be used to show a pause in a sentence but try not to over use them.

5.4 HYPHENATION

Do not hyphenate ‘e’ words, for example email.