

Writing style guide



Introduction

Welcome to our writing style guide.

The following pages will provide you with the guidance you need to write and produce content for APM.

These guidelines aim to demonstrate how to create effective and consistent communications, ensuring we're talking with one voice.

Our writing style guide

Introduction

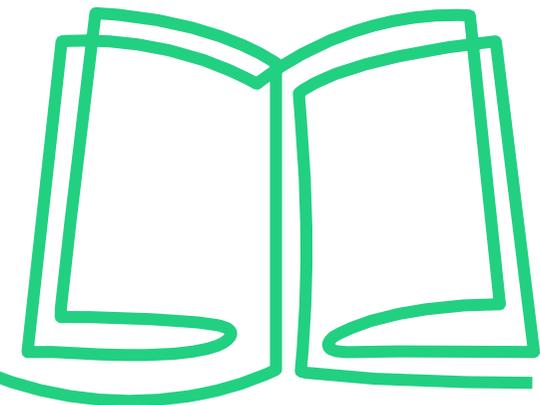
How we write is just as important as what we write. It provides a consistent experience of our brand.

This set of rules and guidance will help you to write clear and consistent content. They summarise and demonstrate good practice for the presentation, punctuation and layout of your writing. They should be used in conjunction with our tone of voice principles to ensure what we write is true to our brand and reflects our values: **Progressive, Thoughtful, Warm** and **Excellent**.

If content has been supplied for us to use or publish on our channels by a third party, as if we've written it, then it needs to reflect our writing style.

These rules are not extensive and there'll be many areas where you want further guidance. If so, use the [Guardian and Observer style guide](#). If there's a discrepancy, our guide always takes precedence. The main rule, however, is to adopt a common-sense approach and above all, be consistent.

Our official language is British English, but remember to write for a global audience. Normal grammar and punctuation rules apply unless otherwise stated. If you have any questions or need further clarification, please email the [Publishing team](#).



Our writing style guide

Text and grammar – house style

A

Abbreviations and acronyms

Where possible, try and avoid using abbreviations or acronyms. When required, always spell out the words completely first before using an abbreviation or acronym in brackets. The only exception is when the abbreviation or acronym is so familiar that it's become part of our everyday language (for example, NASA). Write in uppercase with no full stops or spaces in between.

For example:

APM Specific Interest Group (SIG), SIG thereafter and project manager, not PM.

Abbreviate measurements and currencies, such as 6kg (not six kilograms); 100m (not 100 metres); £1m (not £1 million); and £10bn (not £10 billion). See page 41 for more information on our approach to numbering.

Ampersand (&)

The ampersand symbol shouldn't be used, except if it exists in a company or brand name. It shouldn't be used in job titles or in names of boards and committees either.

APM: Association for Project Management

We refer to ourselves in the first person – it's more inclusive and warmer. When you need to use our name please consider the audience you're writing for and how well they know us. It's perfectly acceptable to simply use 'APM' for our members.

When we introduce ourselves to a new audience we should use our name in full. Place emphasis on our acronym by using it first, such as: We're APM: Association for Project Management.

However, this format may not always suit what you're writing. If needed we can write our name out in full the first time with APM in brackets at the end: Association for Project Management (APM). You should then use our acronym thereafter, although using 'we' is preferable.

APM is singular, not plural: APM is, not APM are. We, however, is plural.

Don't capitalise 'the' when using it in front of our name in full, unless it's at the start of a sentence. Within a sentence it should be written as 'the Association for Project Management' and not 'The Association for Project Management'. When using our acronym it should always be 'APM' and not 'the APM'.

For example:

According to new research from the Association for Project Management (APM), the majority of project professionals have increased their focus on net zero carbon projects.¹

We're APM, the only chartered membership organisation for the project profession.

¹ As this example is from a press release it doesn't need to be in first person.

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Text and grammar – house style (continued)

B

Bullet points

Use bullet points for lists or to break up a big block of text so it is easier to read. Select the correct punctuation to introduce your bullets, which will be dependent on the context of what you're writing.

If your bullet points are complete sentences in themselves, then start each one with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

For example:

Project journal provides project professionals with award-winning content.

- Stay up to date with innovations in project management.
- Read insightful opinion pieces on the latest trends.
- Learn about core project management processes.

For bullet points that are not complete sentences and are written as a list, they should start with a lower case letter with no punctuation at the end.

For example:

During handover the project team will:

- hand over all the deliverables
- create operating procedures
- hand over formal ownership of products

There are a number of ways in which you can benefit from what we do:

- membership
- qualifications
- chartered status
- publications
- events

If your bullets contain a mix of sentences and phrases or single words, rewrite them to be consistent.

C

Capitalisation

The general rule is to use sentence case with capital letters used only where necessary. However, as with any aspect of writing there are nuances, so adopt a common-sense approach and be consistent. Here are the main principles:

- Use title case for proper nouns.
- Use title case for our products and services, for example, APM Project Fundamentals Qualification, Full member (no need to capitalise the word 'member').
- Titles for books, publications and research paper titles should be title case. Second-level headings and lower should be introduced with a colon and also be in title case. For example, *Engaging Stakeholders on Projects: How to Harness People Power*.
- Capitals should never be used in body text for EMPHASIS.
- If in doubt use lower case.

Our writing style guide

Text and grammar – house style (continued)

- Job titles should be written in title case, for example, Head of Brand and Communications.
- Department names to be written in title case, but bear in mind when a general reference is used, for example, the Marketing team use a range of marketing techniques.
- Use capitals when making a specific reference versus general reference.

Specific reference	General reference
UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson	The prime minister will be out of the country for several days
UK Government	There are a number of government departments
Chief Executive Prof. Adam Boddison	Leadership is a quality you'll see in a chief executive
Board of Trustees, APM Board, members of the Board	A recent board paper addressed hybrid working
Royal Charter and By-Laws	We were awarded chartered status in 2017
APM Project Management Qualification	We have a range of project management qualifications
APM Branches	Join your local branch

Commas

Commas are used to divide items on a list or separate adjectives in a sentence. They can help provide clarity to your writing and bring breathing space into a sentence. However, avoid overuse. Overly long sentences with lots of clauses and commas means you probably need to simplify the text.

Remove the Oxford comma before the final 'and' in a simple list. But sometimes it can help the reader for a longer, more complex list.

For example:

'apples, pears and mangoes' and not 'apples, pears, and mangoes'.

'Full members benefit from post nominals, a digital badge, preferential rates on APM qualifications and publications, and access to digital resources'.

For using commas in numbers see page 41.

Our writing style guide

Text and grammar – house style (continued)

Contractions

We use contractions to make our writing more conversational and personable, such as: we're, it's, you've. We also use professional language, so always think about your audience and the nature of what you're writing, and use common sense to adapt the formality of your tone accordingly.

As a rule, you should write as if you're speaking to someone. It should make your copy flow more easily to the reader, without making it difficult to understand or appear uneducated.

For example:

From: You will notice that

To: You'll notice that

From: I am sorry but we will need to check that

To: I'm sorry but we'll need to check that

D

Dashes and hyphens

We use the en dash (which is longer than a hyphen but smaller than an em dash) to indicate a range of numbers or space of time. There should be no space either side of the en dash when used for this purpose. Depending on the context, the en dash is read as 'to' or 'through'.

For example:

9–11 November 2022

17:00–18:30 GMT

Our part-time employees work 20–30 hours per week

By Monday, you should have read pages 79–113

Tip: To insert an en dash using Microsoft Word press Ctrl and – (minus symbol on the numeric keypad).

If you introduce a number or date range with the words 'from' or 'between', don't use an en dash.

For example:

Sir Monty Finniston was President of APM from 1984 to 1991.

We receive between 50 and 100 phone calls each day.

En dashes can also be used in pairs in place of brackets, or once in place of a colon and semicolon for emphasis. There is a space either side of the en dash in this instance. There is no universal rule on when to use en dashes, it will depend on the context of what you're writing, but in general do not overuse.

For example:

It is widely accepted that there are three building blocks of every project – time, cost and quality.

The question words – who, what, when, where, why and how – are used to retrieve information in English.

Our writing style guide

Text and grammar – house style (continued)

Tip: To insert an en dash while typing in Microsoft Word, first type a space, then a hyphen and then a second space, in between your words. The en dash will be automatically formatted.

En dashes should not be used instead of hyphens. We use hyphens, which are shorter than en dashes, to combine words.

For example:

We break up copy with call-outs and stand-firsts.

Welcome to our award-winning event.

One-third of 45-to-54-year-olds prefer the strategic impact on organisations as a more telling metric.

We do not use em dashes.

Date and time

Date

Write dates as day, month and year without commas and ordinals (st, nd, rd and th).

For example:

6 March 2021. Not 6th March 2021.

Only abbreviate dates if you're using them in a table, or where characters are limited.

For example:

6 Mar 2021

Time

Write time using the 24-hour clock with a colon separating hours and minutes. A leading zero should be used for single digit times. Use BST and GMT time zones accordingly.

For example:

09:00 BST, 17:30 GMT, 12:00 BST, 00:00 GMT

E

Exclamation mark

There may be some instances when an exclamation mark is needed, to bring some personality to your writing. However, use sparingly. Avoid using them altogether in formal text. If you feel that an exclamation mark is required, there should be no more than a couple in your entire piece of writing and only use one exclamation mark, for example, 'How exciting!' not 'How exciting!!!'.

I

Italics

Italics should only be used for the titles of publications such as books, journals and reports.

For example:

APM Body of Knowledge 7th edition.

Only italicise 'The' if it's part of the official name, such as *The Golden Thread*.

N

Numbers

As a general rule, spell out numbers one to nine in full with digits used for 10 and higher.

For example:

We received over 80 applications for only two vacancies.

The exception to this rule is when the number is an abbreviated unit of measurement, such as 6kg, or a percentage, such as 3%. Use the % symbol for percentages.

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Text and grammar – house style (continued)

Don't start a sentence or headline with digits, spell them out instead. Except with headlines, listicles or bullets, where using a digit may better suit the tone of the article.

For example:

Fifty-one per cent of non-members earn over £50,000, compared with 73% of Full members.

Use digits that relate to a component part of a larger whole.

For example:

Route 1, phase 2, week 3.

Use commas in numbers over 999, such as 1,000 and 5,850,000.

Fractions are written as words or, where appropriate, as a decimal. Such as three-quarters or 0.75.

Millions and billions are spelled out, except where they are used with currencies or in headlines (five million people, 10 billion grains of sand, £5m, \$10bn).

Sums of money below £1m are expressed in numbers, such as £1.50 or £10,000. Write larger amounts with an abbreviation, such as £1m, £1.1m, £100m, £1bn, £1tn.

P

Paragraphs

New paragraphs should be separated by a line space and shouldn't be indented. Try to avoid paragraphs running over two pages – start on a new page if necessary.

Punctuation

Minimal punctuation is recommended in printed text. Punctuation marks should not be used at the end of headings and subheadings, but should be used as required in body text.

Q

Quotes

Use double quote marks at the start and end for quoted speech, with single quote marks used for quotes within quotes and indirect quotes. Introduce quotes with a colon and then place full stops and commas inside the closing quote marks.

A full stop is required at the end of a pull quote.

For example:

Alex said: "My manager always said to me: 'Project management makes the world a better place.' This inspired me to become a project manager."

APM's 'groundbreaking' research offers new insights for the profession.

When quotes run over two or more paragraphs, add opening quote marks at the start of each one. Do not add a closing quote mark at the end of each paragraph. Only add a closing quote mark at the very end, as this signifies that the person has stopped talking.

For example:

Jane said: "I am a project manager based in the UK.

"I first joined the profession 10 years ago after I graduated from university.

"What I enjoy most about my work is the variety and the fact that I get to work on new things every day."

Our writing style guide

Text and grammar – house style (continued)

T

Terminology

When writing on a specific topic or referring to a technical area of project management please consider the terminology you use. The concepts, functions and activities that make up professional project management are outlined in our *APM Body of Knowledge*, so ensure the language here is reflected in your writing. However, if you are writing for the website consider the impact on search engine optimisation. If there appears to be a conflict, please discuss this with the Knowledge team.

General terminology should be written in lowercase, so it is 'agile' and not 'Agile'. For more information on letter case, go to page 38.

As a rule, we use 'project professional' as a general, collective term for people who work in project management, as it's more inclusive. We use 'project manager' when referring to a specific role. However, for search engine optimisation or pay-per-click advertising it may be necessary to use 'project manager'. However, be mindful of how many times you use the same term in a piece of text. Use valid alternatives to avoid repetition.

Consider more gender neutral and inclusive language in your writing and the content you are creating, include where appropriate.

W

Websites and links

Write website addresses without the 'www.' prefix, such as apm.org.uk. When writing websites in body text, try to avoid them being at the end of the sentence to prevent confusion with the full stop. Don't use a full stop after call to actions in marketing collateral.

Don't use 'click here' for a hyperlink. They should be informative, actionable and SEO-friendly.

Bad: [Click here](#) to download our latest research report.

Good: For more information, [download our latest research report](#).

Email addresses should never be spelt out in full. They should be embedded as a link in the text, for example: [email the finance team](#), or within a button, unless they are used in print.

Our writing style guide

Glossary

A number of terms are written in lower case for clarity around capitalisation. If they are used at the beginning of a sentence they would start with a capital letter.

Term (as used in a sentence)	Abbreviation	Notes
annual registration		The process by which ChPP is maintained every 12 months, i.e. not “renewal”.
<i>APM Body of Knowledge</i>	APM BoK – must have a space between APM and BoK. The shorthand acronym of the <i>APM Body of Knowledge</i> should only be used if there is a legitimate reason as to why the full name cannot be used. This could be where text is limited, for example on social media or in short article headlines (but the full name is then used in the body copy). The full name should always be used as the default reference.	The <i>APM Body of Knowledge</i> is a foundational resource, providing the concepts, functions and activities that make up professional project management. It should always be written in full with ‘APM’ preceding the words ‘Body of Knowledge’ i.e. <i>APM Body of Knowledge</i> . It should be written in italics, unless there is a formatting restriction, such as in social media posts. When referring to the specific publication or the latest iteration it should be written as <i>APM Body of Knowledge 7th edition</i> . If referring to the particular edition as part of a sentence then it can be written as: “The seventh edition of the <i>APM Body of Knowledge</i> includes a comprehensive glossary of key terminology.”

Our writing style guide

Glossary (continued)

Term (as used in a sentence)	Abbreviation	Notes
<p>APM Branches</p> <p>Including:</p> <p>APM East of England Branch</p> <p>APM Hong Kong Branch</p> <p>APM London Branch</p> <p>APM Midlands Branch</p> <p>APM North East Branch</p> <p>APM North West Branch</p> <p>APM Northern Ireland Branch</p> <p>APM Scotland Branch</p> <p>APM South East Branch</p> <p>APM South Wales and West of England Branch</p> <p>APM Thames Valley Branch</p> <p>APM Wessex Branch</p> <p>APM Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire Branch</p>		<p>Offer opportunities to network and learn about the latest developments in project management across specific regions.</p> <p>When referring to them in general there is a lowercase 'b' on branch. For example: Join your local branch.</p>

Our writing style guide

Glossary (continued)

Term (as used in a sentence)	Abbreviation	Notes
APM Code of Professional Conduct		The ethical behaviour and professional standards that must be maintained to remain on the register.
<i>APM Competence Framework</i>		The <i>APM Competence Framework</i> sets out the competences required for effective project, programme, portfolio management and project management office (PMO). It should be written in italics, unless there is a formatting restriction such as in social media posts.
APM Project Fundamentals Qualification	Fundamentals Qualification	Our entry-level qualification offering a fundamental awareness of project management terminology for those wishing to gain a broad understanding of the principles of the profession.
APM Project Management Awards	APM Awards	Annual ceremony celebrating projects, individuals and organisations from the project profession.
APM Project Management Qualification	Management Qualification	Our knowledge-based qualification where candidates will be able to demonstrate an understanding of how these elements interact and how their project fits into their strategic and commercial environment.

Our writing style guide

Glossary (continued)

Term (as used in a sentence)	Abbreviation	Notes
APM Project Professional Qualification	Professional Qualification	Our examination-based qualification that assesses a candidate's capability in delivering projects, programmes and portfolios, covering the core and specific competences project professionals require across all areas of the profession.
APM Project Risk Management Single Subject Certificate	Risk Certificate	Our qualification, which has two levels, is designed to build on the knowledge gained in the APM Project Management Qualification or similar project management qualifications.
APM Registered Project Professional	RPP	RPP is our pan-sector standard which recognises the diverse paths individuals take into the profession. It is a standard not a qualification.
applicants		Describes those in the process of applying to be admitted on to the Register of Chartered Project Professionals.
application fee		Fee paid in order to have an application assessed.

Our writing style guide

Glossary (continued)

Term (as used in a sentence)	Abbreviation	Notes
Associate member		Aimed at anybody with an interest in project management, have just joined the profession or already working in a project related role. Always a capital 'A' for Associate and lower case 'm' for member.
chartered membership organisation		Generic description of APM.
Chartered Project Professional	ChPP	Describes an individual on the Register of Chartered Project Professionals. ChPP is the initialism and post nominals a Chartered Project Professional can use after their name. Member grade postnominals follow. For example, ChPP MAPM.
chartered standard		The level at which chartered status is set.
chartered status		Describes what the applicant has achieved – not the chartered standard.
continuing professional development	CPD	Continuing professional development is a personal commitment made by an individual to keep their professional knowledge up to date and improve their capability.

Our writing style guide

Glossary (continued)

Term (as used in a sentence)	Abbreviation	Notes
Earned Value Management Certificate	EVM	EVM is a qualification delivered by APM Group.
elective competences		Competences within the chartered standard that applicants must choose from before submitting their evidence.
Fellow member	FAPM	Aimed at those who have been a Full member of APM for five years or are able to demonstrate an equivalent level of experience. Always a capital 'F' for Fellow and lower case 'm' for member.
Festival of Education and Research		Our educational event incorporates both a careers fair and awards ceremony.
Full member	MAPM	Aimed at those with five years of experience in a project related role or three years of experience with an accepted qualification (e.g. Management Qualification). Always a capital 'F' for Full and lower case 'm' for member.
Honorary Fellow	HonFAPM	Honorary Fellowship recognises and celebrates those who have made an exceptional contribution to project management or the project profession.

Our writing style guide

Glossary (continued)

Term (as used in a sentence)	Abbreviation	Notes
interview		Peer review as part of the assessment for the chartered standard.
maintain		What individuals must do to remain on the register, i.e. not subscribe, renew.
mandatory competences		Competences within the chartered standard that all applicants must provide evidence for.
Power of Projects		Our flagship virtual conference providing stimulating debate, valuable insight and new connections.
professional practice requirements		The components of the chartered standard that allow an applicant to demonstrate their experience and practical competence.
professionally active criteria		The components of the chartered standard that allow an applicant to demonstrate their active status.
Project Planning and Control™	PPC	Project Planning and Control, a qualification delivered by APM Group, is based on our <i>Planning, Scheduling, Monitoring and Control</i> guide.

Our writing style guide

Glossary (continued)

Term (as used in a sentence)	Abbreviation	Notes
proposers		Individuals named in support of someone's application.
recognised assessment		An assessment formally recognised by us as meeting the technical knowledge requirements or the technical knowledge and professional practice requirements.
register		When not referring to the Register of Chartered Project Professionals in full.
Register of Chartered Project Professionals		The list of Chartered Project Professionals who have met the standard by demonstrating a defined level of technical knowledge, professional practice and ethical behaviour. Only those who have given their consent will be listed on our website.
registration fee		Fee paid in order to join and remain on the register.
routes		Pathways individuals can follow to be admitted on to the Register of Chartered Project Professionals and to Full membership (MAPM).

Our writing style guide

Glossary (continued)

Term (as used in a sentence)	Abbreviation	Notes
<p>Specific Interest Group</p> <p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> APM Assurance SIG APM Benefits and Value SIG APM Contracts and Procurement SIG APM Enabling Change SIG APM Governance SIG APM Knowledge SIG APM People SIG APM PMO SIG APM Planning, Monitoring and Control SIG APM Portfolio Management SIG APM Programme Management SIG APM Risk SIG APM Systems Thinking SIG APM Women in Project Management SIG 	<p>SIG</p>	<p>Discuss particular aspects of project management to further understanding and good practice.</p>

Our writing style guide

Glossary (continued)

Term (as used in a sentence)	Abbreviation	Notes
Student member		Aimed at full or part time students aged 16 or over with an interest in project management. Always a capital 'S' for Student and lower case 'm' for member.
technical knowledge requirements		The components of the chartered standard that allow an applicant to demonstrate breadth of knowledge.
Think Differently		A week-long virtual event incorporating the Women in Project Management Conference.
Women in Project Management Conference		One of our most popular conferences that features as part of Think Differently.
written submission		General description for the materials required by an applicant to show that they meet the requirements of the chartered standard.



**We are the only chartered membership
organisation for the project profession**

