

Dictionary of Sydney – Guidelines for contributors

This guide is in two parts:

- Part 1 is a general guide for writing online
- Part 2 is a general guide to the Dictionary of Sydney style

Guide for writing online

Thank you for considering contributing to the Dictionary of Sydney. The most important thing about your entry is its content, as well as its clear, tight prose and lively, vivid style.

All contributions are reviewed and edited. During this process you may be asked to make amendments or additions to your entry. Final copy is signed off by you and your name appears as the author of the article online.

Before your work can be published, you need to sign our license documents and provide a short, two to three line description of yourself for your contributor page.

Features of online writing

Online writing is subtly different from printed text, although many of the features of good writing remain the same. The main differences arise from the way online readers interact with text.

Screen text is harder to read than printed text and many people find reading onscreen to be tiring. Screen text can be up to 25 per cent slower to read than text from a printed page. Because of this, it is important to keep the following principles in mind when writing your entry.

Be concise

Online text needs to be concise, without being terse or oversimplified. Avoid lengthy restatements of argument and overly long sentences and paragraphs.

Be clear and engaging

If text is ambiguous or boring, online readers will leave the page they are reading in search of something clearer. When an entry is engaging, however, they will read at great length.

Online reading involves scrolling through text. The main point should be at the beginning of the paragraph, as the end of any paragraph may not be on screen at the same time as the beginning. Similarly, avoid long inverted sentences where the point is at the end.

Make it easy to read on screen

Long paragraphs are difficult to scan and will lose many online readers. Break up text with clear, meaningful subheadings and frequent paragraphs. Indent quotes from primary sources to break up long blocks of text.

Be consistent and minimise errors

Inconsistency annoys and confuses readers, especially when they are reading more than one entry on the site. Maintaining the tone, format and style described in this document helps us to make our content as consistent as possible. During our editing and linking process, every entity named in your text is researched and cross-referenced to other mentions in the Dictionary. This means that we have to investigate and resolve any contradictions or disagreements between articles, so your accuracy helps us a lot.

Use the strengths of hypertext

Hypertext links allow us to move tangential or supplementary material to other pages where it is still easily accessible. If you have interesting material that is not quite relevant to the entry itself, talk to us about including it as another short entry or description.

Hypertext also means that websites are rarely read sequentially. Readers may not have visited 'earlier' pages on the site so your entry needs provide as much context as necessary for a reader to understand it. This does not mean repetition, as links to other pages are used to provide readers with definitions or further information.

References and further reading

Dictionary articles have endnotes which need to be complete and accurate. Your entry must be referenced, especially any quoted material. Please read the referencing guide in Part 2 and double-check authors' names, titles and dates. If your endnotes are close to our preferred form, it saves us a lot of time.

Please provide a select list of recommend further reading. This appears at the end of your entry for visitors who want to read more. You can include websites which will appear as live links in the list of references.

Related material

Your primary task is to write the entry. Each finished entry may include images, sound grabs, maps, documents, poems or anything else that is relevant. If you know of any related material that is relevant to your entry, please tell us.

Don't embed images, documents or other items in the text. Provide these separately, ideally in electronic format. A description, reference or URL helps us with our multimedia research.

Clearing copyright and reproduction fees for supporting material is the responsibility of the Dictionary but information you have about ownership and the location of sources is helpful. We may not be able to follow up or afford to use all the materials you suggest.

Formatting

Minimise unnecessary formatting as it can interfere with the editing process. To see the formatting in use in your document, click on Word's formatting symbol ¶ on the 'Home' tab toolbar.

Avoid the use of columns, indents, tabs, line or paragraph numbering, justified or centred text and any other formatting devices.

Use Word's preset Heading 1, 2 and 3 styles for your headings, and the Normal style for your text. Avoid using multiple fonts, smart tags, fields from referencing programs such as EndNote, or other non-text materials.

Dictionary of Sydney Style Guide

The following guidelines are a general guide to the Dictionary style. Please keep these in mind when revising your entry and don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Usage

Be sensitive to issues such as gender, ethnicity, Indigenous protocols and regional differences.

Refer to Indigenous peoples of Australia as: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Aboriginal people(s), Torres Strait Islander(s), or Indigenous Australians. Avoid the use of 'Aborigine(s)'.

Punctuation

Keep punctuation to the minimum necessary for clarity and readability.

Full stops

Full stops mark the end of sentences that are statements or commands. Do not use full stops to end headings or subheadings or in abbreviations.

See also *Abbreviations* in this document.

Commas

Use commas sparingly to:

- mark both sides of a parenthetical clause in a sentence:
Timber-cutting was the first industry in the Cherrybrook area and, after the land was cleared of trees and scrub, orchards were established in the 1850s.
- separate a series of words or phrases in a list:
Similar races were held in Melbourne, Canberra, Brisbane and Hobart.
- indicate a pause:
Cherrybrook is the newest of Hornsby Shire's suburbs, created out of the area known as West Pennant Hills.

Avoid the use of commas before conjunctions such as 'and' or 'but'.

See also *Numbers* in this document.

Colons and semicolons

Avoid colons and semicolons. It is generally better to rewrite or divide the sentence, or to use a spaced en-dash (–). See *Dashes* in this document.

Hyphens

Hyphens are the shortest dashes in typed text. Use them:

- without spaces to connect words in compound adjectives and adverbs
- to link prefixes to words that describe another word:
four-wheel-drive vehicle, cross-country run, half-hour shower, three-quarter-length sleeves
- with prefixes, such as neo-conservative:
semi-conductor, sub-standard

Rules for hyphenation change over time. Refer to the *Macquarie Dictionary* if in doubt.

Dashes

An en-dash '-' (so called because it is the same width as an 'n' character in the font) is longer than a hyphen and used in preference to colons and semi-colons (with a space on either side) to:

- mark both sides of parenthetical material in a sentence, such as
The new aviation standards – which were released in April 1930 – greatly changed the situation.
- indicate a pause, or an abrupt change in the subject matter of the sentence, such as
The scenery sped past the windows, the music played on the radio – what was that fireball in the sky?

En-dashes are also used to indicate a range in numbers or words (with no spaces):

- connect words or numbers which set up a span between them, such as
Melbourne–Sydney flights, 9 am–5 pm, 1914–18, pp 21–34, August–September 2001.

The longest dash, the em-dash (so called because it is the same width as an 'm' character in the font), is not used in the Dictionary of Sydney.

Use the 'Find' command to check hyphens in your entry and make sure they are correctly used along with en-dashes.

Tip: To insert an en-dash, hold down [Ctrl] or [⌘] plus the minus key [-] on your keyboard.

Parentheses

Use parentheses, or round brackets, to enclose:

- material which is not essential to the sentence but provides amplification, an aside or a point of interest to it
Ranger James French (after whom Frenchs Forest is named), started the first local timber industry around 1856.
- metric conversions following the use of imperial:
It was an area of 5,050 acres (2,044 hectares) to the north and east of the farms.

For a full sentence inside parentheses, use a full stop.

See also *Commas* and *Dashes* in this document.

Quotation marks

Use single quotation marks within the body of your text. For quotations within a quotation, use double quotes marks inside single. Quotes longer than two sentences should be indented and begin on a new line to break up text .

Use single quotation marks to indicate concepts or terms that are newly coined or unfamiliar to most readers:

- In 1868, the owners opened 'pleasure grounds' on the site.
- Analysts call this the 'price-to-earnings ratio'.

Apostrophes

Use apostrophes to indicate:

- missing letters in a contraction, such as can't (cannot) or she's (she is), and
- possession as in 'the company's reputation' (singular) and 'the customers' preferences' (plural).

All proper nouns take an apostrophe and an 's' regardless of their sound (Judge Isaacs's ruling).

If there is joint ownership, only the last name has an apostrophe, as in 'Shirley Fitzgerald and Stewart Wallace's report'. If the ownership is not joint, each name has an apostrophe, as in 'Microsoft's and Apple's software'.

Do not use apostrophes for:

- place names, such as Watsons Bay, St Marys
- possessive pronouns, such as its, ours, hers
- expressions of time, such as three years jail, two nights stay, or
- groups of letters, dates or numbers, such as 747s, 1990s

Spelling

Use Australian spelling (*colour, flavour*) with 'ise' endings (*familiarise, realise*). You can set your document's language to English (AUS). Refer to your program help files to locate this setting in your version of Word.

Refer to *The Macquarie Dictionary* for spelling.

Italic text

Titles of publications and other works referred to in the body of your text should appear in italics. For journal (and other) articles, short poems, songs and other single musical pieces, use single quotation marks:

In her novel *Aunts Up the Cross*, Dalton describes
Lawson's poem 'Sydney-Side' describes...

Use italics for non-English words and phrases not in common usage such as *fin-de-siecle* but not entrepreneur.

Ship names should be set in italic text. For example:

The family arrived in 1868 on the *Coromandel* and settled at Earlwood.

Latin scientific names for species should be set in italic text, with the Genus term capitalised:

As well as *Eucalyptus grandiflora*, other plants such as downy wattle and grevillea thrived.

Capital letters

Keep capitalisation to a minimum.

For institutions, office bearers, official movements, enactments, places and so on, only use capital letters when the word is part of an official title:

Governor Bligh was one of the most unfairly maligned of all New South Wales governors.

Residents lobbied for the establishment of a post office, and in 1898, Smallville Post Office was opened by the local member.

Do not use capitals for plurals.

Common names of plants and animals should be lower case, even when derived from Latin terms.

When directions are spelt out, use lower case: west, south-east, east-north-east:

As well as *Eucalyptus grandiflora*, other plants such as downy wattle, ironbark and grevillea thrived.

Numbers

Commas make large numbers easier to understand. Use commas, with no spaces, in numbers of four digits or more (1,000).

In text, write out numbers up to nine and use numerals for numbers from 10 onwards with the exception of all numbers at the beginning of a sentence. Use 'percent' in non-technical contexts.

- percentages and decimals, however small (use numerals for this)

Dates

For all dates in the body of the text use the format 23 May 2007.

For a range of dates, use 1992–93 rather than 1992–1993 and 1906–07 rather than 1906–7.

Spell out centuries (eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first).

Currency

Use accepted currency symbols (£, \$). Use commas in amounts greater than three digits. Million and billion should be spelt out on the first instance then abbreviated to m and b:

The cost was £1,260.

The company made a \$20 million bid for its major rival, including a \$2m shareholder benefits offer.

Tip: To get a pound symbol '£', go to the 'Insert' menu, select 'Symbol' and choose the symbol OR hold down the **Alt** or **Option** key on your keyboard while you type **0163** (the symbol appears when you release the Alt/Option key).

Measurements

Where measurements involve numbers less than 10, spell out both the number and the unit of measurement (three pounds, five feet, six acres).

Where measurements involve numbers greater than nine, spell out units and use numerals for the measurement (233 pounds, 400 yards, 29 acres) except at the beginning of a sentence where units and measurements must be spelt out:

Thirty kilograms of paper was saved in one week.

Provide metric conversions in parentheses in a form that fits the syntax of the sentence. Round numbers to one decimal place:

In the district of Toongabbee, 60 acres (24 hectares) was granted to John Redmond.

The Fagans' 240-acre (97-hectare) farm produced 300 cases of fruit in a season.

You can find conversion utilities online.

For temperatures in degrees Celsius, include a space after the number before the degree symbol:

31 °C

Tip: To get a degrees symbol, hold down the **Alt** or **Option** key on your keyboard while you type **0176** (the symbol appears when you release the Alt/Option key).

Fractions

In text, fractions should be spelt out and hyphenated, such as three-fifths, three-quarters of an hour. In tables, use numerals.

Abbreviations

Do not use full stops in abbreviations (AJC, STC, ABC) or between initials (JC Williamson, JT Lang).

Abbreviated words should be spelt out in full on their first appearance.

New South Wales is spelt out in full.

Words such as creek, street, mountain should also be spelt in full when part of a specific name (George Street, Eddy Avenue, Whites Creek).

Endnotes and references

Please provide accurate and complete citations for all your source material. This includes references to secondary, as well as primary, sources and for direct quotes. The purpose of endnotes is to provide easy access to information for further reading. Missing, incomplete or inaccurate source material also significantly slows down the editing process.

The Dictionary displays endnote text in a pop up window when readers roll their mouse over the reference marker in the text. Because online readers may only look at one or two endnotes in an entry, each endnote must be complete in itself.

For this reason, we do not use short titles or the Latin terms such as *op cit* and *Ibid*. While it may look repetitive in your document it makes it easier for readers who otherwise have to hunt back through hyperlinked footnotes for the full details of a reference.

Refer to *Trove* (<http://trove.nla.gov.au/>) and the State Library of New South Wales online catalogues (<http://library.sl.nsw.gov.au/search/>). The Trove catalogue has a 'cite' button – if you click on this you will get the full citation with URL for your reference.

Automatic numbering

The Dictionary uses endnotes rather than footnotes. Please make sure your endnotes are properly inserted in your document using automatic numbering. Use Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3...) not Roman (i, ii, iii...). Insert the endnote reference marker *at the end of the sentence*, directly following the fullstop. Please refer to 'Help' for instructions on how to do this in your version of Word:

She was mauled horribly and died in his arms as he took her from the water.¹⁵

Citations

The Dictionary uses the *Chicago Manual of Style* for endnotes and referencing. You can download the *Chicago Style Citation Quick Guide* from their website:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

You don't need to be an expert on the Chicago Style Guide – your writing will be edited, after all – however, it is important to understand how we use this style.

We have adopted the Chicago style some exceptions. Please refer to the summary at the end of this document.

References

References appear at the end of your entry as further reading for interested users. Choose a few key texts as further reading. Order your references alphabetically by author surname. A full bibliography is not required.

Dictionary of Sydney – exceptions to the Chicago Style Guide

We will continue to use:

- **minimal punctuation** in the body text and endnotes:
 - no full stops between or after abbreviations or author initials
 - no full stops at the end of an endnote
- **single quotation marks** for:
 - chapter titles in books
 - journal articles
 - unpublished papers
 - web pages
- **date format** of 29 March 2014, not March 29, 2014
- **URLs followed by date viewed:** 'viewed 27 February 2014'
- **Repeated, full citations** rather than 'op cit', 'ibid' or shortened references.*

If you have any questions about this guide, please do not hesitate to contact us:

<http://trust.dictionaryofsydney.org/participate/contact-form/>