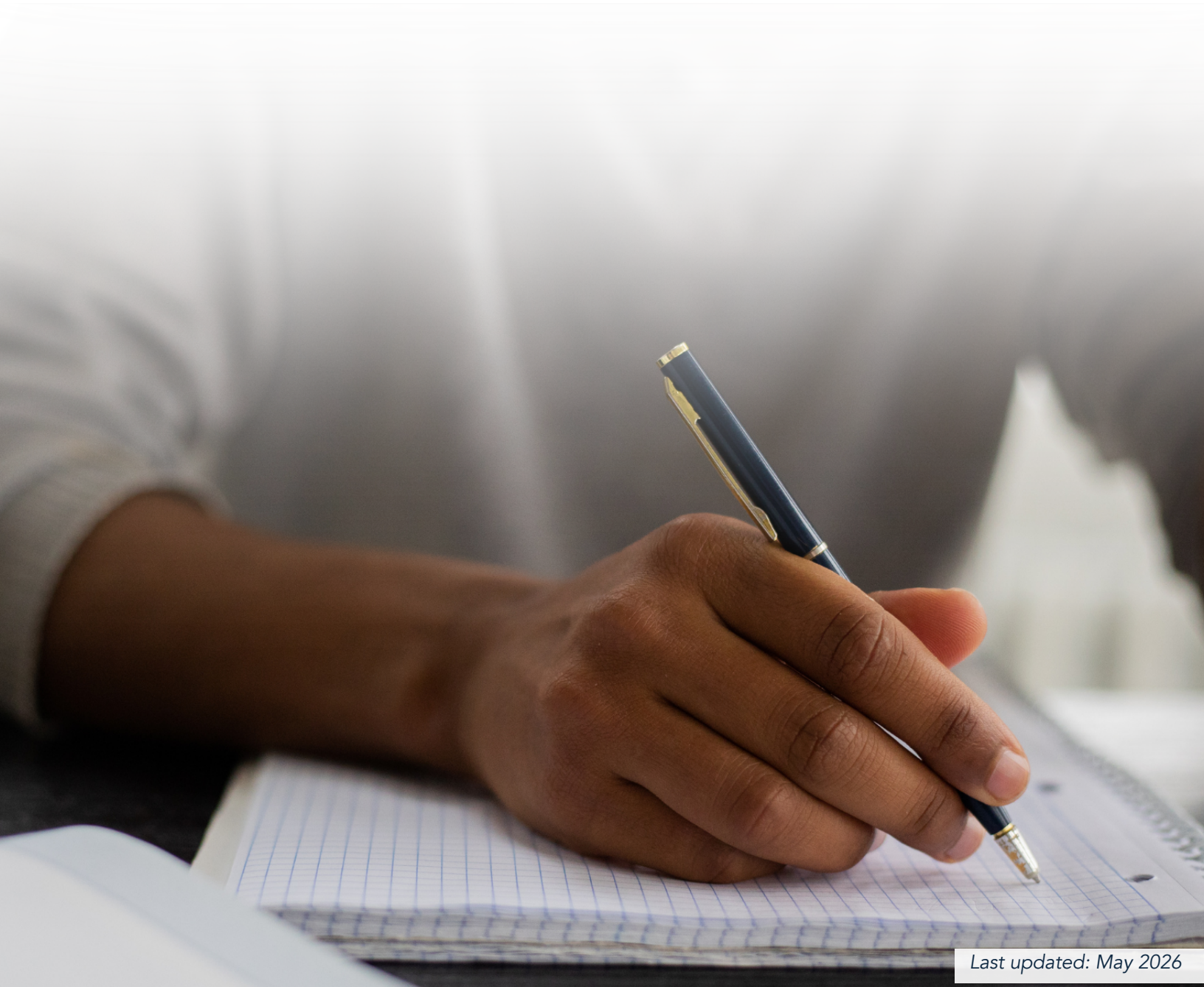


# Writing Guide

---

The standards and conventions that help create clear, consistent, and cohesive communication across Reach Alliance platforms.



# Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <i>About the Reach Alliance</i> .....             | <b>2</b>  |
| <i>About this Guide</i> .....                     | <b>3</b>  |
| When this Guide Does Not Apply .....              | <b>3</b>  |
| <i>Abbreviations and Acronyms</i> .....           | <b>4</b>  |
| Abbreviations.....                                | <b>4</b>  |
| Acronyms .....                                    | <b>4</b>  |
| <i>Capitalization</i> .....                       | <b>6</b>  |
| <i>Common Mistakes</i> .....                      | <b>8</b>  |
| <i>Dates and Times</i> .....                      | <b>10</b> |
| Dates.....  | <b>10</b> |
| Times .....                                       | <b>10</b> |
| <i>Degrees and Diplomas</i> .....                 | <b>11</b> |
| Terminology .....                                 | <b>11</b> |
| Abbreviations.....                                | <b>11</b> |
| <i>Inclusivity: Language and Practices</i> .....  | <b>13</b> |
| General Best Practices .....                      | <b>13</b> |
| Accessibility .....                               | <b>13</b> |
| Capitalization .....                              | <b>13</b> |
| Gender Inclusivity and Pronouns .....             | <b>14</b> |
| Sexual Orientation .....                          | <b>14</b> |
| <i>Numbers</i> .....                              | <b>15</b> |
| <i>Punctuation</i> .....                          | <b>16</b> |
| <i>Spelling</i> .....                             | <b>18</b> |
| <i>Titles</i> .....                               | <b>20</b> |
| <i>Reach Alliance Quirks and Miscellany</i> ..... | <b>21</b> |
| <i>Munk School Quirks and Miscellany</i> .....    | <b>21</b> |
| <i>U of T Quirks and Miscellany</i> .....         | <b>21</b> |
| <i>Writing Reach Research Reports</i> .....       | <b>22</b> |
| Small things that make a big difference .....     | <b>22</b> |
| General .....                                     | <b>22</b> |
| Notes, References.....                            | <b>23</b> |
| <i>Writing for the Web</i> .....                  | <b>24</b> |
| Voice .....                                       | <b>24</b> |
| Tone .....  | <b>25</b> |

# About the Reach Alliance

The Reach Alliance is a consortium of global universities — with partners in Australia, Canada, Ghana, Kenya Mexico, Singapore, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States — developing the leaders we need to solve urgent local challenges of the hard to reach — those underserved for geographic, administrative, or social reasons. Working in interdisciplinary teams, Reach’s globally minded students use rigorous research methods to identify innovative solutions to climate, public health, and economic challenges. Research is conducted in collaboration with local communities and with guidance from university faculty members, building capacity and skills among Reach’s student researchers. The power of the Reach Alliance stems from engaging leading universities to unleash actionable research insights for impact. These insights have been published in leading journals and taken up by policymakers and sector leaders around the world.

The Reach Alliance was created in 2015 by the University of Toronto’s Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, in partnership with the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth. It is guided by an advisory council of leaders in academia, and in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors who help to drive impact, influence and scale, and support fundraising efforts.

Our goal is for the Reach Alliance to be a leader and a prominent hub of inclusive knowledge production, creativity, and innovation — a hub that augments the impact of our research and prioritizes knowledge, knowers, and ways of knowing that have been traditionally excluded and marginalized from traditionally “legitimate” academic knowledge — and that supports the creation of an exceptional and diverse network of partners around the world.



*View overlooking food production facilities around Lake Chapala. (Source: Un Acto de Resistencia Reach Alliance research report)*

# About this Guide

Welcome to the Reach Alliance Writing Style Guide. This guide outlines the standards and conventions that support consistency, clarity, and a shared language across all communications. Applying these guidelines consistently across our channels helps strengthen and sustain a credible, recognizable brand. Wherever possible, the principles and practices described here should be applied to all Reach Alliance materials, including written, print, and digital content.

Because the Reach Alliance was founded at the University of Toronto, this guide draws heavily on a combination of standard internal and external resources, particularly the Canadian Press Stylebook, 18th Edition. If the information you are seeking can't be found in Reach's style guide, please use the Canadian Press Stylebook and its accompanying guide, the Canadian Press Caps and Spelling, 22nd Edition, as your first-resort resources. You may also refer to the Canadian Oxford Dictionary for additional guidance. We also use The Chicago Manual of Style for academic issues of documentation.

The sections in this guide are listed in alphabetical order for your convenience.

## When this Guide Does Not Apply

We recognize the nature of Reach information products and knowledge translation deliverables cannot always conform to the same writing style. The cases when this guide will not apply are:

- When a manuscript is being submitted to a peer-reviewed publication. The style of that publication will supersede this style guide.
- When a deliverable needs to be translated to a language other than English.

# Abbreviations and Acronyms

## Abbreviations

With the exception of the Reach Alliance, names of universities, faculties, programs, and organizations should be spelled out on first reference, with the abbreviation in parentheses if the organization will be mentioned again in the document. For example, The Master of Global Affairs (MGA) program includes a mandatory internship component.

- Reach Alliance
  - The accepted abbreviation for the Reach Alliance is Reach, not REACH,
- Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy
  - The accepted abbreviation for the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy is Munk School, not Munk.
  - Always use an ampersand when referring to the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy.
- University of Toronto
  - The accepted abbreviation for University of Toronto is U of T with spaces between the elements; UofT is incorrect.
  - For University of Toronto Mississauga, use U of T Mississauga, not UTM.
  - For University of Toronto Scarborough, use U of T Scarborough, not UTSC.
  - For University of Toronto, St. George campus, use “downtown Toronto campus,” because external audiences won’t know St. George Street.
- Other universities
  - Names of other universities should be written out on first reference (University of Oxford), but may be referred to more casually on subsequent references (e.g., Oxford).
- Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth
  - The accepted abbreviation for the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth is Center for Inclusive Growth.
  - *Note:* this guide prefers the Canadian spelling of *centre* for most uses, but the Mastercard Center is the name of an organization so it is spelled Center.

## Acronyms

An acronym is a word that is formed from the first letter of the words it comprises (e.g., ROM for Royal Ontario Museum) or from the major words in the title.

The name of an organization should be spelled out on first reference, with the acronym placed in parentheses afterward, if the organization will be referred to again. For example, Cell and Systems Biology (CSB), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Minimize the use of acronyms because they can cause confusion or slow the reader down. For example, if you are writing about the Women and Gender Studies Institute, consider referring to it as “the institute” on second reference rather than WGSi.

Acronyms should generally be written in capital letters without periods or spaces. For example, Centre for the Study of the United States (CSUS).

### **Street Names**

- For general locations, spell out the place: University Avenue, College Street, King Street East.
- Spell out street names in numbered addresses: 1 Devonshire Place.
- Spell out first through ninth as street names: She lives at 123 First Ave.

### **Buildings**

- Capitalize the names of campus buildings. E.g., McLennan Physical Laboratories or Sidney Smith Hall.
- Colloquial names for campus buildings (e.g., Con Hall or Sid Smith for Convocation Hall and Sidney Smith Hall) should not be used.
- Use lower case when referring to a general building rather than its formal name.
- E.g., the architecture building.

# Capitalization

In keeping with Canadian Press style, follow this basic rule: capitalize all proper names, trade names, government departments and agencies of government, names of associations, companies, clubs, religions, languages, nations, races, places, and addresses. Otherwise, lowercase is favoured where a reasonable option exists.

## School

- Capitalize *School* when referring to the Munk School. E.g., The School has three locations; the School was founded in 2000.

## University

- Capitalize *University* when referring to the University of Toronto. E.g., The University will reopen after the holiday.
- The word *university* is lowercase when referring to any other university, where the word is not in reference to a proper name. E.g., Toronto Metropolitan University is developing additional land in the downtown core. The university is building new residences for students there.

## Faculties, Departments, Colleges, Centres, and Institutes

- Always use an ampersand when referring to the Faculty of Arts & Science.
- Capitalize the full proper names of centres and programs, e.g., The Asian Institute, the Master of Public Policy.
- Lowercase generic references to centres, programs, and departments. E.g., The institute has four courses of study; the program takes two years to complete.
- Capitalize the full names of chairs, fellowships, and awards but do not capitalize the word *chair*, *fellowship*, or *award* on its own. E.g., Konstanty Reynert Chair of Polish Studies; Jones, a chair of Polish Studies.

## Titles

- Capitalize titles only when they come before the person's name. For example, President Melanie Woodin; Founding Director Janice Stein.
- Titles and job descriptions are lowercase when they appear after a person's name. For example, Janice Stein, founding director of the Munk School; Joseph Wong, professor at the University of Toronto. Try, whenever possible, to include titles after a person's name, especially if they are very long. Overusing capital letters is distracting for the reader.
- Specific roles at Reach or elsewhere are not formal titles and are typically not capitalized. For example:
  - Reach researcher
  - Reach alum (singular), Reach alumni (plural)

- Reach faculty mentor
- Exception: Mastercard Foundation Scholar

### Courses

- Titles of courses should be capitalized. E.g., Introduction to Macroeconomics.
- Course titles do not need to be put in quotation marks.
  - This applies to the Reach Alliance Skills Development workshops.
- Academic subjects or disciplines should be lowercase unless they include a proper noun. E.g., history; Asian history.

### Publications/movies/television shows

- Capitalize the names of publications, except for the word *the*. E.g., the *Globe and Mail*; the *New York Times*; the *Wall Street Journal*.
- Do not capitalize the word *magazine* unless it is a part of the publication's name. E.g., *Time* magazine; *GQ* magazine; *U of T Magazine*; *W Magazine*.
- Titles of books, movies, and television shows are italicized, as are the titles of magazines and newspapers.

# Common Mistakes

- **Its and it's.** *Its* is a possessive: its deadline has been extended. *It's* is a contraction of *it is*: it's too late to apply for the program because the deadline has passed.
- **Affect and effect.** *Affect* is to influence or have an impact on a result: this change will affect millions. *Effect* is to bring about or accomplish: they hope that this initiative will effect change.
- **Can/could and may/might.** *Can* refers to the ability or power to do something: can the Tories bounce back from this defeat? *May/might* expresses doubt of permission to do something: what might happen if we do not get serious about climate change?
- **Complement and compliment.** *Complement* means to complete, enhance, or improve: the optional internship acts as a complement to the course. *Compliment* means to praise: the professors complimented students on their great work.
- **Defuse and diffuse.** *Defuse* is to render harmless: organizers tried to defuse tensions. *Diffuse* means to spread over a wide area or large number of people: the company wants to diffuse this technology quickly.
- **Ensure, insure, and assure.** *Ensure* is to make sure: please ensure to complete all parts of the application. *Insure* is to provide insurance: students need to insure their home if living off campus. *Assure* is to remove worry or uncertainty: we assure you that the campus will remain open during the storm.
- **Inquiry and enquiry.** These are two spellings of the same word, which means to seek information about something or conduct a formal investigation. In British English, if you enquire about someone or something, it means you're asking about them: He enquired about her health. *Inquiry* is used to indicate official investigations: Police will inquire into the incident. When in doubt, use the word *inquire* because it is more common.
- **Lay and lie.** *Lay* means to put something down: lay your keys on the table. *Lie* can mean to recline or to deceive: lie back and relax; the campaign is full of lies.
- **Fewer/less.** Use *fewer* with plural nouns: fewer students. Use *less* with singular nouns: less sugar.
- **Definitely, defiantly.** *Definitely* means without a doubt: the changes will definitely make an impact on day-to-day life. *Defiantly* means in a manner that shows resistance or disobedience: their teacher told them to stand, but they defiantly remained seated.
- **Principal and principle.** *Principal* means chief or most important: climate change is the principal issue on the agenda. *Principle* is a basic rule or truth: they stick to the principles of the religion.

- **Regimen/regiment.** A regimen is a prescribed course of treatment, way of life, routine, or diet for the promotion of health: moisturizer is part of my daily skin regimen. A regiment is a military unit: he was chaplain to the 3rd regiment of foot guards.
- **Your/You're.** *Your* is a possessive: your pencil is broken. *You're* is a contraction of *you are*: you're going to be late.

See the Canadian Press Stylebook for a more comprehensive list.

# Dates and Times

## Dates

- Do not abbreviate days of the week or the months of the year, except in tables, where they are used without a period. E.g., Mon for Monday, Feb for February.
- When referring to a month and year, but not to a specific day, no comma is necessary. E.g., July 1867.
- The academic year is written 2020–21, not 2020–2021.
- Do not include ordinal indicators when referring to a specific day of the month. E.g., October 2 and December 8, not October 2<sup>nd</sup> and December 8<sup>th</sup>.
- When writing a date use the format DD/MM/YY. E.g., 14/08/20 for August 14, 2020.

## Times

- Time is written in numerical form. E.g., The class begins at 8:05 a.m.
- Write a.m. and p.m. with periods, in lower case. Put a space between the time and a.m. or p.m. E.g., The event begins at 10:00 a.m.; the keynote begins at 1:30 p.m.
- Use 10:00 a.m. rather than 10 a.m.
- Use noon and midnight, not 12 noon or 12 midnight.
- For significant events, include both the day of the week and the date. E.g., Applications are due on Sunday, January 19, 2020.
- For countries that observe Daylight Savings Time (roughly spring through fall), ST stands for standard time and DT stands for daylight time. When writing time zones, use DT during daylight savings time (roughly early March through to early November) and ST during standard time (roughly mid-November through to the end of February). E.g., The webcast will take place on June 29, 4:30 p.m. EDT; Applications close on December 19 at 11:59 p.m. EST. You can omit the D or S altogether if you are unsure. E.g., The keynote address begins at 6:00 p.m. ET.

# Degrees and Diplomas

## Terminology

- A graduation ceremony is called a convocation.
- Students who have completed their program but have not yet graduated are called graduands. Spell check may flag graduand as an error, but it is correct!
- Once a student crosses the stage and receives their diploma, they are called graduates.
- Graduates are also known as alumni (plural for group of males or mixed male and female group), or alumnae (a group of female graduates).
- An individual male graduate is an alumnus; an individual female graduate is an alumna.
- Alum is an acceptable gender-inclusive version of the words alumnus and alumna.
- A bachelor's or baccalaureate is an undergraduate academic degree. When referring to a bachelor's generically, keep the word lowercase and write it as a possessive. E.g., He dreamed of earning a bachelor's degree from a fancy college. When referring to a specific degree, capitalize it and drop the possessive. E.g., In 1984, she earned a Bachelor of Science from the University of Toronto.
- A master's degree is an academic degree demonstrating mastery or a high-order overview of a specific field. The same rules set out for the bachelor's degree apply to a master's degree when referring to one generically or specifically. E.g., He wanted to earn a master's degree, but worried about the costs; She earned a Master of Public Policy in Toronto, but now lives in Ottawa.
- An honorary degree is an academic degree for which a university has waived the usual requirements. There is no "u" in honorary, but there is a "u" in honour and "honourable."

## Abbreviations

- Whenever possible, avoid degree abbreviations and use a phrase instead. E.g., Jane Smith, who has a doctorate in geography.
- Abbreviations for common academic degrees generally don't include periods. Abbreviations themselves are uppercase:
  - BA, Bachelor of Arts
  - Hons. BA, Honours Bachelor of Arts
  - BCom, Bachelor of Commerce
  - BSc, Bachelor of Science
  - Hons. BSc, Honours Bachelor of Science

- BAsc, Bachelor of Applied Science
- JD, Juris Doctor
- MD, Medical Doctor
- MA, Master of Arts
- MBA, Master of Business Administration
- MGA, Master of Global Affairs
- MPH, Master of Public Health
- MPP, Master of Public Policy
- MSc, Master of Science
- MSW, Master of Social Work
- MASc, Master of Applied Science
- MEng, Master of Engineering
- PhD, Doctor of Philosophy

# Inclusivity: Language and Practices

In keeping with [U of T's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion](#), strive to use inclusive language and accessible formatting in your writing. Be mindful of biased language and assumptions related to age, race, appearance, religion, gender, ability, and other aspects of identity and experience. Because language is constantly evolving, maintaining inclusive communications requires ongoing learning, reflection, and adaptation.

## General Best Practices

- Descriptions of a person's race, colour, sexual orientation, age, ability, or national origin should be included only when pertinent to the story. The same applies to descriptions of appearance and clothing.
- Use people-first language when describing ability or health conditions. E.g., People with disabilities, not disabled people. People living with AIDS, not AIDS victims.
- Swap these common but outdated terms for updated, more inclusive language: underserved, not at-risk youth; racialized, not visible minority; transgender, not transgendered; sexual orientation, not sexual preference.
- Derogatory terms should be avoided whenever possible, even when part of a direct quotation.

## Accessibility

- Use headings to group related paragraphs and describe sections clearly. When uploading content to the web, use headings in the order they are intended.
- That is, use Heading 1 for titles and primary headings. Use Heading 2 for subheadings, etc.
- When creating links within your story, write link text so that it describes the content of the link target (we call these descriptive links). Avoid using ambiguous link text, such as "click here" or "read more." E.g., Sign up for the newsletter, not "to sign up for the newsletter, click here."
- Do not italicize large chunks of text. Italicizing the title of a book or television show is ok, but avoid italicizing intros to Q&As, quotes, and other long passages of text.

## Capitalization

- Capitalize the proper names of nationalities, ethnicities, races, and cultural groups. E.g., Dutch, South Asian, Estonian.
- Capitalize the word Black in reference to Black people, identities, communities, cultures, or experiences. E.g., The new initiative aims to attract more Black applicants to the graduate

program; The number of Black democrats who voted in the last election rose by 12 per cent; Michelle Obama was the first Black woman to serve as First Lady in America.

- Use the term Indigenous in reference to Indigenous peoples in the Canadian context. E.g., Tenille McDougall is an Indigenous youth leader from Alberta. Be aware that preferred terminology may vary across regions, nations, and cultural contexts.
- Honour individual requests for the use of lower-case letters for proper names. E.g., According to acclaimed author, bell hooks, the book is about...; Producer dream hampton spoke about the documentary.

## Gender Inclusivity and Pronouns

- Honour your subject's pronoun preferences when specified.
- If your subject's preferred pronouns aren't made explicit or clear, try to use their names or they/them when referring to people in your story.
- Use gender-inclusive terms when describing broad groups: humankind rather than mankind; folks or people instead of guys; firefighter, not fireman; police officer, not policeman, etc.
- Latinx may be used as a gender-inclusive alternative to the gendered words Latino or Latina when referring to people of Latin American descent. Use the descriptor that your subject prefers.
- Alum may be used as a gender-inclusive alternative to the gendered words alumnus and alumna when referring to a graduate.

## Sexual Orientation

- Use the acronym 2SLGBTQI+ when referring to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit community.
- Use the terms gay or lesbian, not homosexual, to refer to people attracted to the same sex.

# Numbers

In general, spell out numbers zero through nine and use digits for number 10 and higher. E.g., Two minutes, six times, 12 students, 14 days.

## Always use numerals when writing:

- Currency: \$6
- Addresses: 1 Devonshire Place
- Dates and years: December 8, the 2000s, May 1
- Ages, standing alone after a name: Joe Smith, 2
- Temperatures, when Celsius or Fahrenheit is specified: 3 C, 45 F
- Times: 3:00 p.m., 10:00 a.m.

## Spell out the number if:

- You use a number to start a sentence. E.g., Twenty years ago, the Jones family immigrated to Canada.
- It is a figure of speech or the title of a film/book/publication: Seven Years in Tibet, The Sixty-Eight Rooms
- It is used informally: Hundreds of people attended the film's first screening.
- A fraction of less than one. It stands alone: one-half, five-eighths

## Money

- Do not use decimals when listing monetary units unless the precision is pertinent to the story. E.g., \$25, not \$25.00.
- Use either a symbol or a word to connote monetary value, but not both at the same time. E.g., \$2 or two dollars, not \$2 dollars. \$1 million in funding, \$2- billion project, or one million dollars in funding, two-billion-dollar project.

## Roman Numerals

- Roman numerals are used in proper names and to indicate sequence: King Henry VIII, Pope John XXIII, John D. Rockefeller IV; Rocky V

# Punctuation

Punctuation brings order and clarity to your text, but using too much punctuation can confuse the reader. While a more robust set of punctuation rules can be found in the Canadian Press Stylebook, some guidelines, the most common scenarios — and all instances where we break conventions found in the guide — can be found below.

- **Apostrophes:** apostrophes are used to mark possession.
  - In most cases, make names or other singular nouns that end in “s” possessive by adding’s. E.g., Chris’s coat, the witness’s statement, Kansas’s legislature.
  - Plural nouns not ending in “s” also take an ’s to make them possessive. E.g., women’s health, men’s salaries, alumni’s donations.
  - Plural nouns ending in “s” require just an apostrophe to make them possessive. E.g., teachers’ apples, the two sisters’ history, the Joneses’ daughter.
- **Parentheses:** use parentheses sparingly.
  - Use parentheses to enclose equivalents and translations. E.g., The temperature was 25 C (80 F) today; the Knesset (Israel’s Parliament) votes on the bill tomorrow.
  - Put your period outside of your closing bracket if it applies to the entire sentence. E.g., He was finding it easier to get along with his belle-mère (mother-in-law).
  - If the period applies only to the words inside the parentheses, put it inside the closing bracket. E.g., The Reach Project began as a single case study. (Wong and his students looked at the success of the Bolsa Familia program in Brazil.)
  - Use parentheses to enclose a nickname within a proper name. E.g., John (Skip) Bayless left First Take in 2016.
- **Commas**
  - Use Oxford commas (the comma used after the final item in a list of three or more items). E.g., Hundreds of parents, teachers, and students gathered for the keynote. He campaigned on key issues like climate change, education, and prison reform.
  - Use a comma to separate independent clauses introduced by but, and, for, or, nor and yet. E.g., He comes from New Brunswick, and he likes to sew. She is a brilliant student, and she has seven cats.
  - Use a comma to set off a person’s age, degrees, awards, and affiliations. E.g., Ron Deibert, director of the Munk School’s Citizen Lab, commented on the recent developments. John Smith, 21, is a first-year biology major.
- **Quotation marks**

- Always use double quotation marks, except for headlines and quotes within a quote.
- Quotes within a quote use single quotation marks.
- Place quotation marks inside commas and periods, but outside semicolons and colons.
- Question marks and exclamation points are placed inside quotation marks if they are part of the quote, and outside if they are not.
- Place article titles, direct quotes, parts of books (but not the title of the book itself), and short poems inside quotation marks.
- Do not use quotation marks around single letters. E.g., She got an A on the exam.
- Em dashes and en dashes
  - Use en dashes (a mid-sized dash that longer than a hyphen but shorter than an em dash) to show ranges in numbers and dates. E.g., The years 2007–2009 were a time of financial woe for many. Most work study students work 10–15 hours per week.
  - Use em dashes to emphasize or interrupt a sentence. Put spaces before and after your dashes. E.g., Miller — whose brother was the only person to accomplish the same feat — beat the record in September.

# Spelling

General spelling rules follow here, but when in doubt, please consult the Canadian Press Caps and Spelling, or the Canadian Oxford Dictionary. This means using -our, rather than the American -or in words of more than one syllable where the u is silent (as in neighbour, colour, favourite, and honour). Note that the word honorary is spelled without the u. E.g., Stevens will receive an honorary degree at this Saturday's convocation ceremony.

- **Use the American pattern of -ize/zye**, rather than -se. E.g., criticize, not criticise.
- **Use -ce endings for nouns, rather than -se**. For example: defence, pretence.
- **Like the British, Canadians double the L when adding a suffix to a word:**
  - compel, compelled, compelling
  - counsel, counsellor, counselling
  - enrol, enrolled
  - fulfil, fulfilled, fulfilling
  - marvel, marvelled, marvelous
  - signal, signalled, signalling
  - travel, traveller, travelling
  - tranquil, tranquillize
- **Use a single L when adding the suffix -ment:**
  - install, instalment
  - fulfil, fulfilment
  - enrol, enrolment
- **Do not use the diphthong (ae or oe) for common words; use an "e"**. E.g., encyclopedia, not encyclopaedia; fetus, not foetus.
- **Use the style favoured by the subject with respect to geographical places, organizations, and other titles**. E.g., Mastercard Center, not Centre; Bar Harbor, Maine, not Bar Harbour.
- **Common Munk School or U of T terms:**
  - Advisor, not adviser
  - Catalogue, not catalog
  - Counsellor, not counselor
  - Cybersecurity, not cyber-security
  - Enrolment, not enrollment
  - Full-time (a.); full time (n.)
  - Fundraising, not fund-raising
  - Part-time (a.); part time (n.)
  - Policymaker, not policy-maker

- Program, not programme
- Vice-president and vice-provost, not vice president and vice provost
- **Other spelling quirks:**
  - Per cent, not percent
  - Grey (colour), not gray
  - Centre, centred, centring, not centered, etc.
  - Theatre, not theater
  - Use, not utilize

# Titles

Use titles on first reference, but seldom after that. E.g., Founding Director Janice Stein of the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy will give the keynote speech. Sabia will discuss the value of good municipal policy teaching at the university level.

- Honorifics and courtesy titles: In general, do not use honorifics in your writing: Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss, Professor, Dr., etc.
- Doctors and doctorates:
  - Use Dr. for licensed health-care professionals only.
  - Do not use Dr. for people with doctorates outside of the health-care field. If pertinent, mention that they have an earned or honorary degree and the name and discipline. E.g., Brown, who has a doctorate in sociology, spoke to *CTV News*.
- Capitalize formal and professional titles only when they immediately precede a person's name. In all other instances, they are lowercase. E.g., Founding Director Janice Stein; Janice Stein, founding director, Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy.
  - For faculty, provide a proper academic title whenever possible and do not assume that everyone who teaches here is a professor. E.g., assistant professor, associate professor, professor, lecturer.
  - Always spell out the word *professor*, rather than using *Prof.*

## Reach Alliance Quirks and Miscellany

*The Reach Project* is the predecessor of *the Reach Alliance* and was active from 2015 to 2019. Use *the Reach Project* only when referring to Reach activities from that time frame.

## Munk School Quirks and Miscellany

- Put the Munk School first when referring to our experts, students, grads, centres, and programs. E.g., the Munk School’s Citizen Lab; the Munk School’s Master of Public Policy program; Munk School expert Peter Loewen; Munk School students
- Munk School is the appropriate abbreviation for Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy, do not use “Munk” on its own.

## U of T Quirks and Miscellany

- Capitalize *University* when referring to the University of Toronto. E.g., the University will be closed for two weeks during the winter.
- Always hyphenate vice-president and vice-provost.
- Never abbreviate the word *Professor*.

# Writing Reach Research Reports

Reach research reports tackle complex challenges in collaboration with local communities and cross-sector partners to identify actionable research insights. They should also be reader friendly — as accessible as possible, free of academic and technical jargon. The ideal report has a narrative hook or even journalistic style.

## Small things that make a big difference

- Use active voice, not passive. As Josh Bernoff explains in *Writing Without Bullshit*: “In a passive voice sentence, the subject of the sentence is not the actor performing the action. The sentence starts instead with the noun that the action is done to.”
  - In professional writing, examples of passive voice are all too common: “investigations were conducted,” “recommendations were made,” “reports were submitted,” “feasibility studies were initiated,” “the policy is designed to,” “achievements are celebrated.” And of course, we’ve all seen this big responsibility ducker: “mistakes were made.” So instead of “interviews were conducted,” try “We interviewed dozens of people, from NGOs workers to street vendors, to find out XXXXX.”
- Shorter sentences are easier to read. The same goes for words. You don’t need to use polysyllabic words like *polysyllabic*.
- Begin with the important stuff and stick with it! Remember: Who, What, When, Where, How. You want to try to hook your reader by putting your main point up front.

## General

- Your draft will be edited to make it reader friendly and ensure it conforms to Reach style.
- “That” will be used with a restrictive clause; “which” will be used with a non-restrictive clause and set off by commas:
  - He stopped the first car that contained two people.
  - He stopped the first car, which contained two people.
  - or
  - He proposed the only amendment that concerned wage rates. He proposed the only amendment, which concerned wage rates.
- The use of the feminine pronoun will be avoided in reference to ships, countries, etc.: France, its people

## Notes, References

- Please aim for minimum references. Reach research reports aim for accessibility and readability rather than heavy documentation. If a reference is crucial, it appears in a footnote. Generally, references are needed when introducing, using, or referring to someone else's work or idea.
- Provide author full first names, not initials.
- All references to articles from journals or chapters from books should contain inclusive page numbers. If they are missing, the author will be asked to supply them when reviewing the copyedited manuscript.
- URLs also need authors and item cited, not just a URL.

# Writing for the Web

People read differently online than they do when reading print — when viewing a webpage, they scan for information rather than reading paragraphs word for word. Although some users will engage with your content more closely, most will read only 20 to 28 per cent of the words on your web page. Therefore, it is important to make your content scannable, simple, and easy to read.

## Voice

If your lab, centre, or program were a person, how would they speak? Would they be serious and refined? Would they be less formal and more conversational? The best way to determine your department's voice is to keep your primary audience in mind. Who are you trying to reach? Do you speak primarily to current and prospective students? Does your research speak primarily to policymakers or councillors at City Hall? Think about your primary audience and let your department's voice speak to them on a peer-to-peer level.

We understand that our various deliverables (i.e., research reports, newsletters, social media content) may have slightly different primary audiences and goals. We are making the following recommendations regarding voice but overall advise that whatever voice you choose remains consistent throughout all content.

- **Use the first-person plural voice in research reports.** This means using the personal pronouns we and our. E.g., We travelled in June 2026. After our preliminary research we interviewed 30 women.
- **Use the active voice.** Active voice is when the subject of your sentence is acting out the verb. Passive voice is the opposite, where the subject of the sentence is being acted upon by the verb. Use active voice whenever possible as it is clear, concise and direct. E.g., The government introduced the policy (active). The policy was introduced by the government (passive).
- **Be clear and concise.** Whenever possible, opt for clear, simple words. Avoid complicated, flowery language — though elaborate speech may give the illusion of being more formal or intelligent, grandiloquence can obfuscate your point and serve as an impediment to comprehension. (See?) If a word or phrase can be replaced by a clearer equivalent, opt for the clearer language.

See the chart below for examples.

| Word                             | Replace with... |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Aid in                           | Help            |
| Acquire, obtain                  | Get             |
| Commence                         | Start           |
| With regards to, with respect to | About           |

## Tone

Tone is the mood or sentiment behind your writing. It is how you come across to your reader. Think of your speaking voice and how it changes when you are happy, sad, angry, or confused. While tone changes depending on the situation, voice remains consistent.

For the most part, the Munk School aims to keep a neutral tone in our writing — that is, writing that is factual, informational, and not emotionally charged. However, there are some instances where a different tone is appropriate.

See the following sample chart for guidance on choosing tone.

| Content Type         | Purpose   | Tone   |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Recruitment post     | To inform about an initiative or new research             | Neutral (inform your audience, but let the subjects in your story inject sentiment, if there is any) |
| Recruitment post     | To attract prospective students to apply for your program | Warm, friendly   |
| Application deadline | To inform about important deadlines                       | Firm   |
| Event invitation     | To attract potential attendees to your event              | Warm, enticing (use your language to build excitement/anticipation)                                  |

For more information about the Reach Alliance, visit: [reachalliance.org](https://reachalliance.org)

For questions regarding Reach Alliance's Writing Style Guide, please contact:

Reach Communications

[reachalliance.munk@utoronto.ca](mailto:reachalliance.munk@utoronto.ca)



---

This document was updated by the Reach Alliance in May 2026.

