

Do it right – LSIS’s house style

A top 10 tips guide



Introduction.

Every piece of writing conjures up an image in people’s minds. We want to be sure anyone reading anything written for LSIS – from internal reports through to advertising materials and web content – gets the right impression about us as an organisation. Just follow these ten top tips when producing materials and you can be happy that you are on the right lines.

1. Accessibility

It might seem obvious, but if people can’t read it then there is not much use producing it. There’s a lot you can do, including careful use of font sizes, colours, style sheets and imagery that will help make sure everyone can access your information. Remember:

- use the templates – they have been checked for accessibility;
- where possible convert Word documents to PDFs before sending them out;
- and watch out for the “Do it right – accessibility” – coming soon.

2. Acronyms

Working in public sector, acronyms become a part of life – but they don’t need to be.

- Try to avoid them unless an organisation is already commonly referred to by its acronym.
- If you have to use them, always spell out the name in full the first time it is used, followed by the acronym in brackets.

3. Capital letters

Using too many capitals can make us look old fashioned and, more importantly, makes text difficult to read.

- Avoid putting the first letter of all words in a title into capitals.
- Names of specific bodies such as the LSIS Council, or the Government should have capitals, while ‘government policy’ should not as ‘government’ is being used as an adjective.
- Similarly specific job titles such as Chief Executive or Programme Manager for Learning and Skills should be capitalised. General job titles such as manager or lecturer do not need capital letters.

4. Dates and numbers

Are you aware that LSIS has a preferred style for writing dates and numbers?

- When writing a date use only numbers – 28 February rather than 28th February.
- Single numbers from one to nine are spelt out in full, from 10 onwards, they are written numerically.

5. Emphasising text

Make your point clearly.

- Underlining text looks untidy and is difficult to read.
- Use bold to highlight a particular word or phrase. (Italics for emphasis in HTML only.)
- Never use all capitals – this is SHOUTING!

6. Equality and Diversity

When writing – always remember that people are individuals.

- Try not to stereotype people or make judgements on them based on gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, faith, social background, age or disability.
- Any language and imagery used should always reflect the diverse nature of our audiences.
- Watch out for the “Do it right – Equality and diversity” – coming soon.

7. Plain language

This is not about dumbing down, but about making sure all our writing is clear and concise with no jargon or long sentences.

- Use active verbs and short sentences.
- Use lists – bulleted or numbered – where appropriate
- Write to be understood – not to impress
- Watch out for the “Do it right – plain language” – coming soon.

8. Punctuation

- LSIS prefers open punctuation so use ie not i.e. and eg not e.g.
- Everyone’s bugbear – be careful how you use the apostrophe.
 - It should be used to denote possession, not the plural. “A basket full of cat’s” is incorrect. “The cat’s whiskers” is correct because the whiskers belong to the cat.
 - If you are talking about several cats, put an apostrophe after the s: “The cats’ whiskers”.
- LSIS style for quotation marks is to use double at either end of a quotation, and single quotes within double where necessary.

9. Spelling and commonly misused words

- Always check spelling, especially if you are not sure. Nothing annoys our audiences more than sloppy spelling. LSIS uses UK English.
- A list of some of the more commonly misused words follows – there are lots more in the full style guide so if in doubt check it out.

10. Templates

Whenever possible use the LSIS templates – they are available from the LSIS branding workroom on the Excellence Gateway, and will soon be available through the individual MS Office programmes.

- These help you follow the LSIS brand.
- They contain the correct fonts and styles to make producing documents easy.

Some commonly confused words to look out for:

<p>Adverse Unfavourable, bad</p>	<p>Averse Strongly disliking or opposed to, as in “I am not averse to him”</p>
<p>Advice Noun</p>	<p>Advise Verb</p>
<p>Affect Verb – to make a difference to</p>	<p>Effect Noun: a result Verb: to bring about a result</p>
<p>Appraise Assess</p>	<p>Apprise Inform</p>
<p>Compliment Noun: an expression of praise Verb: politely congratulate</p>	<p>Complement An enhancement or augmentation to an existing thing, a contribution of extra features</p>
<p>Complimentary Gratis, free of charge Expressing admiration or praise</p>	<p>Complementary Combining in such a way as to form a complete whole or enhance.</p>
<p>Continuous Without interruption</p>	<p>Continual Occurring repeatedly with intervals in between, as in: “The bus service has been disrupted by continual breakdowns.”</p>
<p>Council An administrative or advisory body</p>	<p>Counsel Advice or guidance</p>
<p>Definite Certain, sure</p>	<p>Definitive Decisive and with authority</p>
<p>Imply Suggest, insinuate, hint, as in “The evidence implies that the killer was Colonel Mustard.”</p>	<p>Infer Deduce, surmise, as in “I infer from the evidence that the killer was Colonel Mustard.”</p>
<p>Loose Verb: unfasten or set free Adjective: not firmly or tightly fix</p>	<p>Lose Cease to have, become unable to find.</p>
<p>Practice Noun</p>	<p>Practise Verb</p>
<p>Principal Noun: head of a college or school Adjective: first in order of importance, main</p>	<p>Principle Noun, tenet, basis of a system of thought or belief</p>
<p>Stationary Adjective: not moving or changing</p>	<p>Stationery Noun: Paper, envelopes etc</p>

See also the full LSIS house style guide available from the LSIS branding workroom on the Excellence Gateway.