

Fonts and format

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In this guide

[Typeface](#)

[Text and number alignment](#)

[Sentence and paragraph spacing](#)

[Page breaks](#)

[Paragraphs](#)

[Lists/bullet points](#)

[Headings](#)

[Numbering paragraphs](#)

[Footnotes](#)

[Document information, headers and footers](#)

[References](#)

[Annexes](#)

[Letters and emails](#)

Typeface

[Back to top](#)

Use Arial at 12 point in documents. Never use all capitals, never use underline and only use italics for publication titles in body text.

To emphasise text within a document or letter, use italics, but sparingly. If italics isn't appropriate for the context, use single quotation marks.

Text and number alignment

[Back to top](#)

The text of all documents, including text in tables, should be left aligned. Text shouldn't be justified.

Text in tables is 12 point and left aligned. However, you should right align numbers in tables along with the headings over these columns.

Sentence and paragraph spacing

[Back to top](#)

Sentences should be separated by a single space, never a double space. Paragraphs should be separated by a single line space.

Page breaks

[Back to top](#)

When a piece of writing goes over a page, paragraphs can become broken up and headings can come adrift from the paragraphs they describe. It is usually better to move the whole paragraph onto a new page when this happens.

Paragraphs

[Back to top](#)

Ideally paragraphs should be no more than 100–150 words. Use sub-headings to break up long sections of text, if appropriate.

Lists/bullet points

[Back to top](#)

In formal papers sub-points should be numbered, rather than using bullet points. Bullet point lists can be used in informal papers. There are two types of lists we should try to use.

- One in which each point in the list is a complete sentence or paragraph. These lists are usually introduced by a complete sentence. This introductory sentence should end with a full stop (like this list). Each point should start with a capital letter and end with a full stop.
- The other type of list used is to note information that doesn't form a complete sentence. In this case, start the list with an initial lower case letter. You don't need to use semi-colons or 'and' at the end of each because the bullet point itself separates each point. Only the final bullet point should have a full stop at the end, to note the end of the sentence.

Headings

[Back to top](#)

We use the styles list in Word to choose the type of headings we need. These can be found in the 'Home' tab.

For the title of the document (at the very beginning) we use the 'Title' style.

Then for headings we use the 'Heading 1' style, for subheadings we use the 'Heading 2' style, and for subheadings under that we use 'Heading 3' then 'Heading 4' style.

Numbering paragraphs

[Back to top](#)

Avoid use of numbered paragraphs. Sometimes they're necessary in lengthy documents, but in most cases, bullet points will be fine.

In formal documents and minutes, only number the paragraphs, not the headings.

Once you've started using numbered paragraphs, you should keep doing so for all sub-paragraphs (for example 13.1, 13.2), not switch to bullets. Use the 'Numbers' option in the styles list in Word to create numbered paragraphs. (If 'Numbers' isn't an option in the main styles list, click the small expand symbol under 'Change Styles' in the 'Home' tab, then choose 'Numbers'.)

Annexes should be numbered separately from the main text. If the document is long, use a contents page.

Footnotes

[Back to top](#)

Avoid footnotes wherever possible. There are times in lengthy documents where they may be easier for the reader to access the info. If they must be used, keep them as short as possible.

Use Arial at 10 point (remember we use Arial 12 point for our regular typeface).

Footnote numbers within text should be placed after the full-stop if referencing the whole sentence, and after specific words or quotes if these are being referenced (but after any punctuation). If you're using endnotes instead of footnotes, change the 'i' to numbers using the 'Numbers' option.

Document information, headers and footers

[Back to top](#)

Documents should have information about their author and the date they were created in the footer. The format is the author's name and Trim reference (if applicable) on the left, the date in the centre, and the page numbers on the right hand side.

References

[Back to top](#)

We use the Harvard style for quotation and referencing in formal documents that require proper reference lists. See Trim: 595692.

Annexes

[Back to top](#)

An annexe must be created as a separate document from the one that refers to it. You should include the Trim reference for the annexe the first time you mention it in the main document. Please follow the template.

Letters and emails

[Back to top](#)

For letters, the font is left aligned at 12 point throughout, including headings. Don't use commas at the end of address lines, salutations (for example 'Dear Mr Smith') or sign off (for example 'Yours sincerely').

For emails, the default font (Calibri, 11pt) is fine, including for headings, which can be bold. Always left align. Use the standard Outlook settings for bullets and numbering. Consider your audience – signing off with 'Kind regards' or 'Yours sincerely' may be the most appropriate.