



STYLE GUIDE

for authors and editors

AUGUST 2017

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About the Style Guide

The SA Cities Network (SACN) is an established network of South African cities and partners that encourages the exchange of information, experience and best practices on urban development and city management. Our objectives include collecting, collating, analysing, assessing, disseminating and applying the experience of large city government in a South African context.

One of the ways in which the SACN shares and disseminates information is by producing regular reports and research publications. The aim of this Style Guide is to assist writers and researchers to produce reports that are consistent in style, formatting and presentation.

All research is published on the SACN website and is therefore accessible to a broad audience, which ranges from experts in local government affairs to interested members of the public.

Our aim is to produce *readable* texts that are accessible to a broad audience. This means that authors should avoid overly complex language, unnecessary abstract nouns and meaningless jargon.

If you follow these guidelines from when you begin to write, you will spend less time formatting your text and styling your references. Please note that your paper may be returned for additional editing if it does not conform to the guidelines.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Every acronym is an abbreviation, but not every abbreviation is an acronym.

An **abbreviation** is a set of letters providing a shortened form of something like an organisation's name, such as SACN for South African Cities Network.

An **acronym** is a word formed by the first letters of the series of words and is pronounced as a word, such as NATO, from the first letters of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

At first mention in the chapter or paper, spell out the abbreviation/acronym with the abbreviation/acronym in brackets. For example: South African Cities Network (SACN). Thereafter, only use the abbreviation/acronym. Avoid abbreviating South Africa or South African to SA, unless part of a name.

NOTE: Well-known abbreviations/acronyms do not need to be written out in full at first mention, e.g. US, EU, UN, CNN, NATO.

- Don't give the abbreviation/acronym in brackets if the organisation's name appears only once in the document.
- Use capital letters for abbreviations (SACN, HSRC) but upper and lowercase for acronyms.
- If the acronym is spoken like a word (e.g. Nepad, Cosatu, Unicef), use lower case form.
- If one letter at a time is pronounced, use upper case (e.g. SACN). NOTE: exceptions to this rule include AsgiSA, dplg, UNESCO.
- Even if the abbreviation is all caps, the normal rules of spelling apply when writing the term in full. For example: GDP or gross domestic product (NOT Gross Domestic Product).
- Use full stops in abbreviations such as e.g., i.e., etc., Adm., Brig., Col., Gen.

SACN member cities

Abbreviations to be used in tables/figures:

Johannesburg	JHB	Tshwane	TSH
Cape Town	CPT	Nelson Mandela Bay	NMB
eThekweni	ETH	Mangaung	MAN
Ekurhuleni	EKU	Buffalo City	BCM
Msunduzi	MSU		

Official names

City of Johannesburg and City of Joburg (CoJ) when referring to city policies etc.

City of Cape Town.

eThekweni Municipality.

Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality

City of Tshwane

Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality

Mangaung Municipality

Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality

Msunduzi Municipality

It is also acceptable to use just the city name in the text (e.g. Nelson Mandela Bay, Johannesburg).

Bullet Points

Unless numbers are required always use solid black circles or alternative circles for bullets and sub-bullets.



The punctuation and capitalisation depend on the type of bullet points.

1. If most items in the list are complete sentences, the first word of each bullet point starts with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

The three hotspot areas represent types of neighbourhoods commonly found in South Africa:

- A low-income community that has significant levels of violent crime, including gang and gun violence.
- An inner-city slum that experiences high levels of crime.
- A densely populated township on the periphery of the city.

2. If the list consists of incomplete sentences or continuation of an introductory sentence from a preceding paragraph, use lower case and comma at the end of each bullet point, and full stop at end of the final point.

The Constitution stated that the objectives of local government were:

- to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities, and
- to ensure the provision of services to community in a sustainable manner.

A semi-colon can be used at the end of the bullet point, but a comma is generally less formal.

3. If the list consists of one- or two-word items, use lower case and no end punctuation.

The residents were complaining about the Council's handling of:

- water and sanitation
- electricity
- refuse removal

Capitals

Use lower case as far as possible (e.g. parliament, government, state, president, director-general).

Initial caps for:

- Political, economic or religious labels: Marxist, Communist (if a particular party), Parliament.
- People: Use upper case or caps for ranks and titles when written in conjunction with a name, but lower case when written on their own. For example, President Zuma opened Parliament, but the president opened Parliament.
- Political parties: Democratic Alliance, the African National Congress.
- Organisations, ministries, departments, treaties, acts etc. when the full name is used. For example: Department of Trade and Industry. However, use lower case for the department or many departments

(e.g. the departments of economic development, social development and arts and culture are working together).

- Places: Use initial caps for definite geographic places, regions, areas and countries and recognised political or geographic areas: the Middle East, South Atlantic, East Asia (not the Far East), West Asia, the West, South-East Asia, Central America, Southern Africa, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Northern and Southern Sudan, but northern and southern Zimbabwe.
- The terms North and South when they refer to the “developed” countries of the world as opposed to the “developing” ones.

No initial caps for:

- apartheid, email, the queen, the press, realpolitik, cabinet, white paper, the shah, the government, parliament, internet;
- a generic ethnic group (e.g. black, white, coloured) but upper case for the first letter of a group named according to country (e.g. Asian, Indian, Chinese, Swedish).

Formatting

The SACN will provide a template in Word for most documents. These templates follow the following formatting conventions, which also apply to all documents commissioned by the SACN:

Headings

Write informative headings and subheadings to guide your reader.

Do not number the headings and use a maximum of three levels of headings:

Level 1: **BOLD** and title case¹ (capitalise all principal words), Trebuchet MS 16 pt / left aligned, orange.

Level 2: **Bold** and sentence case² lower case, Trebuchet MS 13 pt / left aligned, dark grey.

Level 3: Normal, Trebuchet MS 12 pt / left aligned, dark grey.

Title: Trebuchet MS 28 pt / left aligned, orange

Sub Title: Arial regular 10 pt / tabbed, bold, dark grey

Intense Emphasis: Arial italic 10 pt / left aligned, orange

Quote: Arial italic 10 pt / centred

For examples and further information, see SACN’s “Brand Architecture & Corporate Identity Compliance”.

Margins

Wherever possible, the “moderate margin” setting must be applied.

Paragraphs

Paragraphs are not indented. Normal: Arial regular 10 pt / Right and Left Justified

Avoid “widows and orphans” – a short single line of text at the top or bottom of a column or page.

Tables and figures

Tables are anything set out in tabular form, with rows and columns.

Figures are everything else: maps, graphs of whatever kind, pie charts, illustrations (pictures), etc.

Preferred style for tables is banded rows.

The table and figure titles (captions) all appear above the table/figure in **bold Trebuchet 9 font**. If applicable, a source must appear beneath the figure/table and full details included in your list of references.

¹ Title case means starting all principal words with a capital letter. This means that the first word and all other words start with a capital letter except for articles (a, an, the); coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so); the words “to” and “as”; part of a proper name that is lower case (e.g. van or de); or prepositions.

² Sentence case means that only the first word and any proper noun start with a capital letter. The rest of the words are in lower case.

Figures and tables should be numbered consecutively in a research report. For example: Table 1, Table 2, Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3. In books, they should be numbered according to the chapter number. For example: in Chapter 2, Table 2.1, Table 2.2, etc.

In the text, refer to the table/figure number, not “the table above” or “the table below”, and use upper case. For example: Table 2.2 reflects the FDI figures for 2010.

If a unit (e.g. % or \$) is given in the title and applies to all the amounts given in the table/figure, do not insert it before/after each figure or amount in the figure/table.

Italics

Use italics, not double quotation marks, to emphasise a single word.

Try to use English words where possible and use Latin sparingly. Prefer “per person” to “per capita” and “per year” to “per annum”. Talk about R100 a year, not R100 per annum; R10 a head, R10 a month, but use per capita expenditure.

Use italics for:

- Foreign words and phrases such as *intifada*, unless they are very well known, such as *de facto*, *de jure*, *perestroika*, *ad hoc*, *realpolitik*, *status quo* and *versus*.
- Newspapers and periodicals. *The Economist*, *The New York Times*, *The Sunday Independent* but the *Mail & Guardian* and the *Sunday Times*.
- Lawsuits *Roe v. Wade*; *State v. Jones*.
- Name of ships, aircraft and spacecraft. A ship is a she, a country is an it.
- *Shar'ia* as in Shar'ia law.

Don't italicise

- Non-English proper names. For example: Frente de Libertação de Moçambique.
- Common Latin and French terms. For example: *et al.*, *in situ*, *per capita*, *inter alia*, *vis-à-vis*, *laissez-faire*.

Numbers, Dates, Percentages

Never start a sentence with a figure. Write the words in full.

- Write one to nine in words
- Write 10 and above in numerals, unless the number is a decimal (eg 4.8 or 10.3) or comes before a unit of measure (e.g. 10%).

Million/billion should be written out (except in tables).

Indicate tens of thousands with spaces for anything other than sums of money (use commas for money). For example: £20,504.89 but 24 879 refugees.

For thousands, write without a space (e.g. 1000) except if space needed for the alignment in tables.

Currencies take lower-case initial when written out: dollar, rand, euro. Symbols take upper case. Do not use US in front of \$. Use US\$ only if needed for clarity or when other dollar currencies are cited.

Write dates as 20 July 2005. Not as 20th etc. (Do not use superscripts.) To avoid confusion, give dates, not “last month” or “last week” or “this year”.

Use the % sign and not “per cent” or “percent”, but write “percentage”. Use the decimal point. For example, 10.1% (not 10,1%). Fractions should be hyphenated. For example: three-quarters.

Punctuation

Apostrophes

Note that 1990s and NGOs do not take apostrophes, as they are plurals, not possessives. Do not write about the US's role. The US role is better.

Its and it's

Its is a possessive pronoun; it modifies a noun.
The pack of wolves followed *its* leader.

It's is a contraction of it is or it has.

It's a matter for the exhibition leader to consider.

Commas

Commas are used to help the reader understand. For example: According to Mr Smith, the vegetables will be ready for harvesting next week.

A comma precedes "including".

Three people, including the driver, were killed.

However, is followed by a comma, but *yet* is not.

Full stops

Use lots of full stops because they keep sentences simple and aid understanding. Do not use full stops in abbreviations.

Semi-colons

Use semi-colons to break up two statements of equal grammatical value within the same sentence:

Don't bother completing the form; come here and fill it in on the computer.

Use semi-colons to break up sentences that contain a list that is broken up into sub-items that in themselves contain commas.

The government's policy was to support the unemployed; the vulnerable, including the elderly and children; and the sick.

Quotation marks

Double quotation marks are used for direct quotations in a sentence. Single quotation marks are used for quotes within a quote.

Single quotation marks may be used for specific word/terms that are unusual or unique but not for emphasising words that are common place (use italics instead).

Readable Texts

The SACN's aim is to produce *readable* texts that are accessible to a broad audience. This means that authors should avoid overly complex language, unnecessary abstract nouns and meaningless jargon. The following guidelines are intended to assist authors in producing readable text.

"Readable. Able to be read, legible. 2. Giving pleasure or interest when read; agreeable or attractive in style" The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary

Active not passive voice

Where possible, prefer the active voice to the passive voice. The active voice results in sentences that are stronger, shorter and more precise, while the passive voice encourages vagueness. For example: A request was made ... (who requested?). Other examples:

John helped Mary, *not* Mary was helped by John.
A gang ransacked the shops, *rather than* the shops were ransacked by a gang.
DNA encodes genetic information, *not* genetic information is encoded by DNA

However, the passive voice is acceptable in some instances, such as when the doer is unknown or irrelevant, or the writer wants to be vague about who is responsible.

Deductive, not inductive, writing

While much academic writing uses an inductive style of writing, the SACN publications should be written in a **deductive style**.

Instead of moving from the general to the specific, state the main point at the beginning of the paragraph (the topic sentence) and then develop and support this idea throughout the paragraph.

Watch out for ...

Phrases and sentences that begin with “there is” or “it” + verb

These may be signs of unnecessary words:

Example:

There is little disagreement in political circles. *Instead:* Most politicians agree.
Major job losses have occurred in the textile sector, and there has been a massive growth in the call centre industry. *Instead:* Many jobs have been lost in the textile sector, and the call centre industry has grown massively.
It is possible that these regulations may ... *Instead:* These regulations may ...

It must be stated that ... It should be emphasised ... It should be noted that ...

You're *already* emphasising, noting, stating, etc. you don't have to say so.

Announcing what you are going to say.

Avoid phrases such as: *The purpose of this chapter is ...* and *The paper is structured as follows*

Let the writing speak for itself. Instead, make use of clear headings and logically structured paragraphs to guide the reader.

Clumsy constructions that stress specific gender words.

Where possible, rewrite. For example:

A politician knows that he is accountable to his constituencies.
Instead: Politicians are accountable to their constituencies.

Use short words instead of long words

In spite of → Despite

The majority of → Most

Documentation → Documents

Purchase → Buy

Sufficient → Enough

In addition to → Also, besides

Employment → Jobs

Transportation → Transport

Avoid wordiness/padding/repetition

According to figures released by the Department of Correctional Services, the current rate of increase of the prison population is 10% a year.

Instead: According to the Department of Correctional Services, the prison population is growing by 10% a year

Bilateral trade between the two countries

Instead: Bilateral trade

Creating the potential for conflict in the future

Instead: Creating the potential for conflict

Enclosed herein is your tax return in respect of the year 2017

Instead: Here is your tax return for 2007

Future plans for our house

Instead: The plans for our house

In addition, the president also ...

Instead: In addition, the president ...

Including among others

Instead: Including

Period of time

Instead: Period

Revert once again to ...

Instead: Revert to ...

The heritage they left behind ...

Instead: Their heritage ...

The information that we currently have at our disposal...

Instead: The information we have... or Our information...

The South African population is estimated to comprise 40.5 million people.

Instead: South Africa's population is about 40.5 million.

This could have a possible double knock-on effect

Instead: This could have a possible knock-on effect

While at the same time ...

Instead: At the same time ... or While ...

Will always remain constant ...

Instead: Will remain constant ...

Remember George Orwell

George Orwell's six elementary rules (from *Politics and the English Language*, 1946).

1. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Language Conventions

Spelling

Use SA English, not American English spelling. Use –ise, not –ize. For example: advertise, organise, emphasise, etc. Analyse and paralyse are not spelt –lyze.

Plurals

Some English words have retained their classical spellings, including plural forms, but many have acquired “modern” spellings over time. The “modern” spelling is preferred in most cases. Here are some examples:

bacterium → bacteria	bureau → bureaux
crisis → crises	director-general → directors-general
focus → focuses	formula → formulae (in science) or formulas (generally)
forum → forums	lekgotla → makgotla
phenomenon → phenomena	quorum → quorums
referendum → referendums	stadium → stadiums
stigma → stigmas or stigmata	symposium → symposiums
veto → vetoes	

- Books have *indexes*, but indicators of index numbers are *indices*.
- *Appendixes* are anatomical, but *appendices* are found in books and literary items)
- *Majority* and *a number of* are grammatically plural. For example: A number of protesters were arrested.
- *Mediums* are people who communicate between the dead and the living. *Media* are newspapers, radio, television etc. and takes the singular form: *Media* is...
- *Data* is singular. For example: The data shows that population growth is slowing.

Be aware of Americanisms

Use them with discretion or (preferably) not at all. Avoid turning nouns into verbs or adjectives.

Instead of ...	Say ...
Access	Enter
Appeal (decisions)	Appeal against (decisions)
Author	Write
Critique	Analyse critically
Host	Hold
Impact	Influence
Loan	Lend
Meet with	Meet
Outside of	Outside
Protest (a law)	Protest against (a law)

- Different **from** (not **to** or **than**).
- Convince does not mean persuade. When you are convinced, the conviction refers to a strongly held belief, whereas when you are persuaded, you have simply yielded to a request (or an argument).
- To table means to bring something forward for action in the UK but means to postpone or cancel in the US.
- In UK English, impact is a noun, not a verb.

References

Full reference details must be supplied for all sources cited either in the text or in footnotes. The exceptions are references to newspaper, magazine and online media articles, and interviews, letters, emails and telephone conversations. In these cases, provide sufficient detail in the footnote but do not include in the references

In the list of references, list the references in alphabetical order:

- If listing more than one title by an author, order chronologically. For example:
SACN. 2011. *State of City Finances Report*. Johannesburg: SACN.
SACN. 2013. *State of the City Finances*. Johannesburg: SACN.
- If more than one publication by the same author(s) in the same year, distinguish these by adding a, b, c etc. to the year of publication. For example:
National Treasury. 2012a. *Towards a new Equitable Share Formula for Local Government – Discussion Document*. Pretoria: National Treasury.
National Treasury. 2012b. *Local Government Budgets and Expenditure Review 2012*. Pretoria: National Treasury.

In-text citations

Use the author-date system, i.e. cite the author name and the year (Smith, 2010).

- Where the citation includes a direct quotation from the source, include the page number. For example: (Smith, 2010: 21).
- Where a reference has two authors, cite both authors. For example: (Smith and Jones, 2011).
- Where a reference has three or more authors, use et al. For example: (Smith et al., 2011).
- Where more than one source is cited, list them alphabetically. For example: (Brown, 2008; Smith, 2010; White, 1999).
- If no date, use n.d. For example: (Smith and Brown, n.d.).
- If not yet published, use forthcoming. For example: (Brown, forthcoming).

Acts/Bills/White and Green Papers: include name and date in full at first mention, e.g. Public Finance Management Act (No. 29 of 1999). Therefore, use an abbreviated form, e.g. the Act or the PFMA. Acts do not need to be included in the list of references.

Newspaper, magazine and online media: If article has a by-line, use the author's name and include publication's name; if no by-line, give the newspaper's name first. For example:

Steyn L, 'Is the era of parastatal paralysis over?' *Mail and Guardian*, 28 July 2017.

The Economist, 'For whom Bell Pottinger toils: The perils of lobbying in Africa', 27 July 2017.

Interviews, letters, emails and telephone conversations: For example: in text would be (van der Merwe interview, 2012), while footnote would be Interview with Piet van der Merwe, Presidential spokesperson (21 February 2012).

Plagiarism

The SACN expects you to present work that is your own and expressed in your own words. Plagiarism is to be avoided. Plagiarism means using someone else's words or ideas without giving credit to that person. You must give credit even if you revise, summarise or paraphrase someone else's words. The main forms of citing references are:

Direct quotes

The words are exactly as they appear in the original and enclosed in quotation marks. This tells the readers that what they see is exactly what they would see in the original text. The in-text reference should include the page number.

However, public participation is "reduced to spectator politics, where ordinary people have [...] mostly become endorsees of pre-designed planning programmes" (Williams, 2006:19).

- Use double inverted commas for quotations; single inverted commas for quotes within quotes.
- Include the entire quote, including punctuation, within the marks: My motto is “seize the day”.
- Keep punctuation that belongs to the quote within the quote marks: “When we get home,” he shouted, “I will sort you out.”

Quotes that are longer than 40 words go into a separate paragraph, Arial Italic 9 pt, centred and without quotation marks (unless quotations marks are part of the quotation). Add the reference (or foot/endnote number) to the phrase that precedes the long quote.

Paraphrase: you put into your own words the idea that the writer conveys in the text. You are not interpreting the writer’s ideas but simply stating the idea in your own way. Quotation marks are not used. The in-text reference appears as part of the paraphrase.

They are seen as land invaders, a perceived security threat and the cause of depreciating land market values to neighbouring land owners, and are therefore not considered to be rights-bearing citizens (Chatterjee, 2004).

Summary: you use only a few sentences to convey an idea that the writer may develop over a page, or an idea that is expressed in different ways by various writers. Quotation marks are not used. You use considerably fewer words to convey the idea than the writer does. The in-text reference appears as part of the paraphrase.

Two recommendations are generally suggested: the first is to redesign participatory bodies (Fung 2004) and the second is to mobilise social actors (Gaventa, 2006; Cornwall, 2007).

Attribution: If you use part of someone else’s work, for example a figure or table, you must acknowledge and obtain permission to use the work from the copyright holder.

Sample references

Books

Moseneke D. 2016. *My Own Liberator*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa.
 Farvacque-Vitkovic C and Kopanyi M. (eds.). 2014. *Municipal Finances: A Handbook for Local Governments*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

Chapter in a book

John PE. 1981. The challenge of increased energy demands. In Black I (ed.) *Climate Change is for Real*. New York: Sage Publishers.

Journal article

Smith AP. 2005. HIV rates among university students in Cape Town, *Journal of Public Health*, 10: 20–30.

Reports

DAG (Development Action Group). 2007. *Voices of the Poor: Synthesis and Recommendations*. Report for Urban LandMark. Available online: www.urbanlandmark.org.za/downloads/VoP_synthesis_report.pdf (accessed 10 March 2013).
 DoCS (Department of Community Safety). 2009. *10 Safety Audits: Final Report on Philippi East Police Station*. Cape Town: DoCS.

Working/occasional/discussion paper/document

Lin W and Wong C. 2010. Does decentralising spending hurt fiscal performance? *IMF Working Paper*.
 Berrisford S. 2013. How to make planning law work for Africa. Africa Research Institute. Available online: <http://www.africaresearchinstitute.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/ARI-Counterpoint-How-to-make-planning-law-work-for-Africa.pdf> (accessed 8 April 2014).
 Charlton S. 2012. The state of land use management in South Africa. Paper for Urban Landmark. Available online: http://www.tips.org.za/files/u65/land_use_management_-_charlton.pdf (accessed 12 May 2015).

Conference proceedings

Biermann S and Van Ryneveld M. 2007. Improving the location of low income housing delivery in South African urban areas. Paper presented at *Computers in Urban Planning and Urban Management*, 10th International Conference, Iguassu Falls, Brazil, 11–13 July 2007.

Presentation

Rust K and Steedley A. 2013. Affordable housing in South Africa: how is the market doing? Presentation for the *International Housing Industry Conference 2013*. Johannesburg, 19 September 2013.

Acts (and Bills)

South Africa. 2013. Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA) 16 of 2013. Pretoria: Republic of South Africa.

Thesis

Benjamin MA. 2008. Analysing urban flood risk in low-cost settlements of George Western Cape South Africa: investigating physical and social dimensions. A thesis submitted to the University of Cape Town in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Social Science in the Faculty of Humanities, Department of Environmental and Geographical Science.

Blog post

Rust K. 2013. FLISP housing subsidy extends to resale market! Blog post 16 May 2013. <http://housingfinanceafrica.org/flisp-housing-subsidy-extends-to-resale-market/> (accessed 9 April 2014).

Where the author is an organisation or government department

If an organisation has a standard abbreviation, enter the abbreviation first, with the full name in brackets immediately afterwards. In subsequent references, use only abbreviation.

StatsSA (Statistics South Africa). 2002. General Household Survey. Pretoria: StatsSA.

StatsSA. 2003. General Household Survey. Pretoria: StatsSA.

SACN (South African Cities Network) and WITS (University of the Witwatersrand). 2017. *BRICS Cities: Facts and Analysis 2016*. Johannesburg: SACN.

If no date

Use n.d. + square brackets

Smith, AJ. [n.d.] Planning for future energy needs in Africa. Cape Town: Africa Research Association.

If not yet published

Use forthcoming + square brackets

Smith AJ, Jones KP and White EF. [forthcoming] *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*. Paris: Lafitte-Tours.