Overland Style Guide

last updated: June 2024

We generally follow the *Macquarie Dictionary* (8th edition, 2020, or access online) for spelling and hyphenation, and preference established Australian spelling styles.

For guidance on issues <u>not</u> identified below, refer to the online *Australian Government Style Manual* https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/, but make allowance for *Overland*'s literary, academic and creative context when deciding whether to apply the recommended styles in a specific piece or instance, particularly for fiction and poetry.

Clarity and readability are key, and will sometimes require variations (applied consistently in context) in a given instance or piece.

In all cases, effective creative choices may also warrant variation from these styles, if consistently applied within a piece. However, conspicuously literary or academic variants and phrasings are often best avoided.

Our general preference is for light punctuation and light capitalisation, although we use maximal capitalisation for titles used within body text. Where use of punctuation or capitals is optional, our preference is to not use them unless they significantly improve clarity of meaning and ease of reading.

For further guidance on usage, consult Pam Peters's *Cambridge Guide to Australian Style*, or Elizabeth Manning Murphy's *Working Words*. Stephen Murray-Smith's *Right Words: A Guide to English Usage in Australia* is beloved among many *Overland* aficionados, but is no longer a reliable guide to current usage.

PUNCTUATION

❖ Apostrophes (possession)

Add **'s** for any singular noun as a possessive.	➢ Charles Dickens's novels ➢ the class's assignment
Add **'s** for any irregular plural noun as a possessive.	➢ our children's education ➢ women's representation
Apostrophe *not* needed for descriptive possession.	➢ boys school ➢ farmers markets
VARIANT in formal names, follow the organisation's own style	

❖ Apostrophes (plurals)

Unlike some styles, *Overland* does not use an apostrophe to pluralise numbers or initialisms, except where vital for clarity.	➢ 1960s ➢ CDs ➢ no ifs or buts ➢ dotting i's and crossing t's

❖ Commas (serial)

Serial comma (before and/or/nor in a list) is not essential, but may be useful for emphasis or clarity	➢ The flag was red, white and blue. [not used] ➢ They served wine, beer, and gin and tonic. [used]

❖ Dashes (spanning dash)

If using a dash for a span between discrete things (as between times, places, numbers, people; to signal between x and y, or from x to y) use an en-rule.	➢ 1939–1945 war ➢ hand–eye coordination ➢ pp 103–125
Add spacing if there is an internal space in either of the terms being connected	➢ October–December **but** 28 October – 4 December ➢ Sydney–Melbourne railway **but** Sandringham – Southern Cross train

❖ Dashes (sentence dash)

If using a dash as sentence punctuation, use a spaced em-rule	➢ His opinion — she thought — was worthless. ➢ This makes no sense — but maybe that's the point

❖ Ellipses

Generally use the ellipsis character with a space either side as standard	➢ Things seemed quiet … too quiet … eerily quiet.
Don't follow ellipsis with a space if it is followed by closing quote marks.	➢ "It wasn't hard …"
Don't add additional dot for a fullstop (consider it covered by an ellipsis at the end of a sentence)	➢ It wasn't hard … She found it quite easy.
Don't precede a quote with an ellipsis unless vital for clarity (a quote starting with a lower case later is assumed not to be the start of a sentence)	➢ She found it "quite easy".
In quoted matter, where omitting material midquote from the original, place the ellipsis in square brackets. No ellipsis is needed at the beginning and end.	➢ As she tells it in her memoir, "it was, despite many challenges […], something I found quite easy".

❖ Hyphens (compound and complex words)

Follow this styleguide or refer to Macquarie dictionary for hyphenation of compound and complex words.	

❖ Hyphens (hanging)

Don't use a hanging hyphen (spell out phrases if this would likely cause confusion)	➢ dog and cat-friendly accommodation **not** dog- and cat-friendly accommodation ➢ long and medium-range weapons not long- and medium-range weapons ➢ child-safe and child-friendly accommodation **not** child-safe and friendly accommodation [ambiguous]

❖ Quotation marks

Use double quote marks " " as standard	
Use single quote marks " '…' …." inside double	➢ "Soaring: A Reading of 'The Nightingale'" ➢ "Is 'sorry' the best you can do?" he asked.

❖ Quotation marks placement (in dialogue)

This style applies to fiction, but can also be used for essays that use dialogue rather than formal quotation (such as some memoir, reflective narratives or creative nonfiction).

Comma is optional after a speech tag, if flow is clear. Where a speech tag breaks a sentence, ensure	➢ He said "I don't know." **or** He said, "I don't know."
End-of-speech punctuation generally goes inside closing quote.	➢ "I don't know," he replied. ➢ He said, "I don't know!"

❖ Quotation mark splacement (nonfiction)

This style applies to nonfiction, but the fiction style can be adopted for essays that rely on dialogue rather than formal quotation (such as some memoir, reflective narratives or creative nonfiction). It is based on the Australian Style Manual.

Internal punctuation from the original quote is retained (but styles follow house style re form of ellipsis, quote marks and dashes)

End punctuation follows the Style Manual recommendations, and is generally placed outside a closing quote where the sentence includes any non-quoted matter.

Block quotes are not within quote marks. Internal quote marks will be standard double quotes. They are preceded by a colon if run on from preceding (incomplete) sentence.

CAPITALISATION

Proper names generally use maximal capitalisation including:	▪ brands/proprietory products (Hyundai, Wella Balsam) ▪ buildings (Sydney Opera House, Ripponlea, Taj Mahal) ▪ countries/languages (France, French) ▪ creative works (*2001: A Space Odyssey, "*I Am Woman") ▪ institutions/organisations (Deakin University, Overland Society) ▪ named boats and aeroplanes (*Enola Gay*, the *Minnow,* HMAS *Sydney*) ▪ people ▪ places formally named (Camberwell, Mt Kosciuszko, Port Phillip Bay, Uluru) ▪ publications (*Overland*, *The Age*, the Bible, *The Magic Pudding*)
Specific or specialist usage is often distinguished from a general or generic usage. Where both the capitalised and uncapitalised option are accurate and appropriate, we prefer the uncapitalised.	➢ the Great Depression (1930s) **but** he suffered a great depression ➢ Impressionism (specific art movement of late 19C) **but** impressionist (a general style in other works) ➢ the Intervention (a specific government policy) **but** intervention (general use)
Jobs are preferred lower case, where this is clear. If capitalising a formal title, check correct wording is used.	➢ She was appointed Curator of Asian Art . (formal) **but** As a curator of Asian art, she ... (describes job)
Generic parts of names used alone or in plural, or as a shorthand, are preferred lower case. If capitalising, check full correct wording is used.	➢ the corner of Flinders Street and Swanston Street **but** on the corner of Flinders and Swanston streets ➢ We consulted the *Encyclopedia Brittanica*. **but** We consulted the encyclopedia.

INITIALS

No full stops or spaces in initials or initialisms	➢ AD Hope ➢ CSIRO ➢ M Barnard Eldershaw ➢ USA

ITALICS

Generally used for:	▪ given titles of creative works (books, periodicals, films, artworks etc) ▪ emphasis (used sparingly) ▪ quoted passages from non-English works or translated into non-English languages ▪ unfamiliar words from non-English languages ▪ words of non-English origin not widely accepted into English

TITLES (creative works, publications)

Articles take quote marks	➢ "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold"
Artworks take italics	➢ *The Breakaway*
Books take italics	➢ *Two Years before the Mast*
Essays (book length) take italics	➢ *Politics and the English Language*
Essays (standard) take quote marks	➢ "A Fried Egg in Space"
Exhibitions just max caps, no italics of quote marks	➢ We Are Electric
Magazines and Journals take italics	➢ *Overland* ➢ *Vanity Fair*
Musical albums take italics	➢ *Hot August Night*
Musical works (major named, eg operas, musicals) are max caps and italics	➢ *Into the Woods* ➢ *The Barber of Seville*
Musical works (numbered eg sonatas, symphonies) are max caps, roman, with Arabic numerals. Any given name can be added in brackets or, if well-known, alone, using italics.	➢ Symphony No. 9 / the Choral Symphony ➢ Sonata No. 14 (the *Moonlight*) / the *Moonlight Sonata*
Newspapers take italics	➢ *The Age*
Poems (book length) take italics	➢ *The Monkey's Mask*
Poems (standard) take quote marks	➢ "Five Bells"
Projects (if not in other categories listed) take caps quote marks may be added to long titles if reading is tricky without them	➢ Colonial Frontier Massacres ➢ The "Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788–1930" project
Religious texts and equivalent (major – including parts) maximal capitalisation only	➢ the Bhagavad Gita ➢ the Bible, the New Testament ➢ the I Ching ➢ the Koran
Series (of books, artworks, music) are generally max caps, without italics or quote marks, but this is flexible depending on the relative status of the whole/parts.	➢ the Phryne Fisher stories ➢ *Remembrance of Things Past* (multi-volume book) ➢ the *Ring* cycle (opera) ➢ the *Star Wars* franchise (film) ➢ Tracey Moffatt's Something More series (art)
Songs take quote marks	➢ "Quarter Moon in a Ten Cent Town"
TV/Radio/Podcast episodes take quote marks	➢ "The Soup Nazi"
TV/Radio/Podcast programs take italics	➢ *Seinfeld*

NUMBERS

We generally use words up to a hundred and numerals from 101. We also tend toward words rather than numerals in fiction.

Numerals generally used for:	▪ numbers including and above 101 ▪ numbers shown with a symbol of measurement or currency ▪ statistics and numeric comparisons (when a main focus) ▪ mathematical uses ▪ addresses ▪ nominals (part of names) or similar eg Year 9, Top 20, the 86 tram, Route 66.
Words generally used for:	▪ numbers up to and including one hundred ▪ larger (usually rounded) numbers as approximations or general expressions ▪ when used in passing, especially in fiction

Standard format is day month year, without commas	➢ 23 February 2000
If specifying day of the week, add with comma	➢ Friday, 21 April / Friday, 21 April 2023
Centuries can be spelt out if the number is a single word used in passing, but don't mix words and numerals within a sentence or section. If using numerals, don't use superscript. The word "century" is not capitalised.	➢ nineteenth century / 19th century ➢ the transformations of the late 20th and early 21st centuries
Decades may either be expressed in either words or numerals but this should remain consistent within a phrase. One or more shortened forms can be used if clear in context.	➢ 1970s, 1980s ➢ the 1880s and '90s ➢ the '70s and '80s ➢ the Seventies and Eighties

Times are generally shown in numerals. No stops are added in "am" and "pm", which are spaced as shown.	➢ 9 am ➢ 11 pm
Digital times use a colon and do not use a 24-hour clock. Ensure day/night is clear in context, adding am or pm to clarify if needed.	➢ The clock showed 11:47. ➢ The plane was due at 7:12 that evening.
Full and/or rounded hours can be written in words.	➢ She was running late for her four o'clock meeting.
Fractions of hours used in passing can be written in words.	➢ It was already quarter to four. ➢ He was expecting her at half past three.

GRAMMATICAL ISSUES

We aim for writing to be clear, precise, engaging, effective and expressive, as suitable to the genre and author's intentions, rather than applying prescriptive grammar rules. In particular, we are flexible on some often-contentious issues of grammatical correctness, particularly in fiction or in nonfiction with a strong voice.

❖ conjunctions to start a sentence

These are often effective, or indeed expected. Unless overused, there is no need to reduce these.	➢ <u>And</u> then she saw it. ➢ <u>But</u> the situation became more difficult as time went on. ➢ <u>Because</u> time was tight, they had rushed the job.

❖ gerunds (with possessives or not)

The choice of a possessive with a gerund is optional, generally being a matter of emphasis and author preference.	➢ <u>His</u> going to university was a matter of great pride to the family. (uses possessive "his" effectively) ➢ They didn't mind <u>him</u> being at school so far from home. (doesn't use possessive – "him" is fine)

❖ prepositions to end sentences/clauses

These can be effective, though a final preposition can sometimes be omitted without losing clarity or flow. Never revise if creating an awkward or contrived sentence.	➢ A preposition can be OK to end a sentence <u>with</u>. ➢ This is a grammatical issue worth being aware <u>of</u>. ➢ Where were they heading ~~to~~? ➢ She couldn't image where they were off <u>to</u>!

❖ restrictive/nonrestrictive clauses (choosing which/that)

We strongly prefer "which" to introduce nonrestrictive clauses and "that" to introduce restrictive clauses. Note that nonrestrictive clauses are also separated by comma/s.	➢ Of all the issues <u>that</u> arose, this was the trickiest. ➢ This issue, <u>which</u> arose quite often, was tricky.

❖ split infinitives (avoided or not)

Split infinitives annoy some readers but may be effective in establishing voice or emphasis. In more formal writing, it is worth avoiding them if this can be done easily without creating awkwardness, being conspicuously contrived, or introducing ambiguity.

➢ She claimed <u>to</u> never <u>need</u> help. (OK split)
➢ He was about <u>to</u> rudely <u>interrupt</u> them. (OK split)

❖ objective pronouns (choosing who/whom)

We prefer "whom", especially in set phrases, when needing the objective pronoun, but make allowance for voice and readability, as in an informal or conversational style "who" is acceptable too.

➢ She addressed the letter "to whom it may concern".
➢ The recipient, whom he had never met, was sure to be impressed.
➢ I never knew who to ask! (using objective "who" OK, given casual tone)