

Salford City Council

Grammar guidelines
Corporate specifications

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Capitalisation

Many people use far more capitals than are necessary. As a general rule, capitals should only be used for **proper nouns** – names and titles. You don't need to use them for general nouns.

Don't need capitalisation:

- seasons – spring, summer, autumn, winter
- points on the compass – north, east, south, west (unless used in a place name – Northwest England, North Korea)
- school subjects – biology, maths (unless it is a language - French, English, German etc)

Do need capitalisation:

- names – Sarah, James
- places – England, France, London
- first word of a sentence
- titles/formal names – President George Bush, Royal Mail, University of Salford
- calendar dates – New Year's Eve, Valentine's Day

Important: The council's name is **Salford City Council**. Therefore all references to the **council** should use Salford City Council, but references to the **city** should use 'city of Salford'.

Remember: Salford City Council, **but** city of Salford - never City of Salford

Job titles/directorates:

Local governments are often guilty of using too many capital letters when referring to divisions, job title and initiatives, which can be off-putting for readers.

Only proper names and titles should have capital letters. For example, Salford City Council and Greater Manchester Police should be capitalised, but city council or police should not.

Do use capitals when referring to names of specific directorates or divisions: Children's Services, Chief Executive's, Marketing and Communications

Do not use capitals when referring to directorates or divisions in general: each directorate elected a representative

Do not use capitals on job titles: Cllr David Lancaster, deputy leader of the council; Gina Smith, finance officer

Do not use capitals on headlines, report titles and subtitles and do not underline them.

Apostrophes

Basic rule: Only use an apostrophe to indicate either possession (i.e. John's pen) or a contraction of two words (i.e. do not = don't)

Possession

If referring to one person or object, the apostrophe goes **before** the s. If referring to more than one person or object, the apostrophe goes **after** the s (to show that the word is plural).

The **boy's** book – one boy
The **boys'** book – more than one boy

One **week's** notice (notice of one week)
Two **weeks'** notice (notice of two weeks)

Be careful with plural words not ending in s – women, men, children. As these words are **already** plural the apostrophe should be **before** the s.

The women's football team
Men's changing rooms
Children's toys.

As there is no such word as **childrens** the apostrophe **must** go before the s for it to make sense.

Never use an apostrophe when you are just referring to plurals – book's, cd's, flower's. There is no need for an apostrophe here as you are not indicating either possession or contraction. **Plurals do not need apostrophes.**

Its/It's

The exception to the rule. **It's** always means **it is**. To show that you are referring to the possessive you must use **its**. This is to avoid confusing which meaning you are referring to.

Its - (possessive)	the dog ate its bone
It's - (contraction of it is)	It's likely that they will win

If you are confused about which form of **its/it's** to use, simply read out the sentence replacing the **its/it's** with **it is** and see if it makes sense.

The dog ate it's bone – this would mean **the dog ate it is bone** and so doesn't make sense. You now know to use **its** instead.

Other apostrophe rules:

Words ending in ss or ce take an apostrophe after the ss or ce – for goodness' sake

Compound nouns take the apostrophe after the last word – his father-in-law's house (not his father's-in-law house)

Names ending in s can either be written as Mr Jones's or Mr Jones' (not Mr Jone's)

Dates and numbers do not need apostrophes – i.e. 1980s not 1980's

Punctuation

Exclamation marks

Use exclamation marks sparingly! They should only be used to indicate something surprising or a joke (if its meaning is unclear). Too many exclamation marks makes your writing sound overexcited. Try to use the words themselves to convey your meaning.

... (ellipsis)

These three dots should only be used to indicate either **words missing from a quote:**

John Smith said: “The council improved...over the last three years”.

Or **end a sentence with ambiguity:**

The couple walked off into the sunset...

They **should not** be used in place of hyphens, commas or dashes.

Quotes/speech marks

If the quote is part of an ongoing sentence, then the full stop should be at the end of that sentence (and outside the final speech mark if appropriate)

John asked Harry if he had “lost his senses”.

“Come back” said Claire.

If the quote is a complete sentence in itself then the full stop should go within the final speech mark.

John said: “Harry has lost his senses.”

Speech marks “ should only be used for direct quotes – i.e. something someone has actually said.

Single quotation marks ‘ should be used for highlighting words or for sayings.

Users will be transferred to what is known as a ‘thick’ client.

Lists and bullet points

When listing a number of items, bullet points are often a good way of making things clearer and easier for the reader.

If your list is part of a sentence, introduce with a colon. No further punctuation is then needed and each entry should be in lower case.

The shopping list consisted of:

- jam
- cabbage
- bananas

If your list is a series of stand alone sentences, then each entry should begin with a capital letter and end in a full stop (i.e. punctuated as normal).

- Read the instructions carefully.
- Check you have all the correct pieces.
- Begin constructing the furniture.

Alternatively, if you choose to list within the normal body of text, use an introductory colon and then semi-colons after each entry.

The day included: a raffle, with a range of prizes; a funfair; dance routines from local schools; and live music.

Remember – be consistent. Choose a format and stick with it throughout your document.

Standard formats

Numbers under ten should be written out - **one, two, three...ten.**

Numbers over ten should be written as numbers - **11, 32, 45**

Dates should be written as **Friday 15 January.** (do not write 23rd, 4th etc)

Times should be written as 10.00am/5.00pm. Do not use the 24 hour clock

12 noon can be written as 12.00pm or 12 noon

Midnight is 12.00am. Midday is 12.00pm

Common mistakes

Your and you're

The rules are the same as for apostrophes. If you mean the possessive (is that your pen?) then use **your**. If you mean **you are** (you're joking!) then use **you're**. Read out the sentence using **you are** if unsure of which to use.

They're/their/there

There refers to a location – The pen is over **there**

Their indicates possession – Is that **their** pen?

They're is a contraction of they are – **They're** off on holiday next week

Borrow and lend

You borrow **from** people and lend **to** people.

borrow

Gavin asked if he could borrow Helen's car

lend

Helen agreed to lend the car to Gavin

(**Not** Gavin borrowed Helen the car/Can you borrow me a pen?)

And finally...

Do not rely on the spell checker or grammar checker on Word. The spell checker can often be set to US English and will not pick up words that are spelt correctly but which are the wrong context.

