

theWMI
INSPIRING WOMEN

**National Federation of Women's Institutes
House Style Guidelines**

*Sixth edition
Updated October 2018*

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Proofreading and editing

All publications, reports, brochures and promotional materials for external use must be proofread before being published online or going to print.

Credits

Updated and produced by the National Federation of Women's Institutes Communications Department using previous editions of in-house style guides.

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Introduction

The NFWI house style guide has been designed to ensure everyone takes a consistent and professional approach to written communications so we can communicate clearly with our members.

This guide has separate sections covering style issues relating to the WI itself, the terms commonly used within the organisation and a general guide to NFWI house style, grammar and spelling.

Language is living and constantly changing and while we accept that it will never be subject to final agreement by everyone, the style guide outlines the NFWI's preferences on questions that frequently arise and offers help in areas where mistakes are often made.

The guide follows the previous edition of the NFWI house style guide and addresses the issues that have arisen in producing NFWI publications.

When writing for the web, this guide should be used in conjunction with the *NFWI digital content guidelines*.

Further resources are listed in Appendix 1 but if you encounter WI style problems not dealt with here, please contact the Online Content Editor on r.bernard@nfwi.org.uk 020 7371 9300 ext. 244

NFWI preferences

Abbreviations	Singular and plural
<p>Use the WI and the NFWI internally.</p> <p>The National Federation of Women's Institutes may need spelling out first time for external use, followed by (NFWI) in brackets. Thereafter, the NFWI without brackets is fine.</p> <p>If in doubt, spell them out the first time: National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) but some can be taken as known (UK, USA) and some organisations are better known by their initials (BBC, ITV).</p>	<p>NFWI is a singular verb.</p> <p>WI = singular</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ In March 2018, Steeple Aston WI in Oxfordshire Federation will celebrate its centenary <p>Federation = singular</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Buckinghamshire Federation hosted its annual 'Pimms and Ploughmans' event <p>WIs = plural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ There are 6,500 WIs across the country. <p>WI's/ WIs' = singular/ plural possessive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ We celebrated the WI's 90th anniversary.▪ WIs' membership in this country has gone up. <p>The Board of Trustees should be singular e.g. The NFWI Board <i>is</i>...</p> <p>The members of the Board are plural e.g. NFWI Trustees <i>are</i>...</p> <p>Treat collective nouns (companies, governments and other bodies) as singular e.g. The government <i>has</i> announced plans; the BBC <i>is</i> conducting an investigation</p> <p>When talking about the <i>members</i> of an organisation, use the plural e.g. The committee members <i>have</i> agreed on the next steps</p> <p>Wherever possible, avoid using both forms in the same sentence.</p>

<p>WI publications</p> <p>Titles of WI publications should be in italics e.g. <i>WI Life</i> <i>NFWI News</i> <i>Public Affairs Digest</i> <i>The WI Guide</i> <i>The WI at 100: A century of inspiring women</i></p>	<p>Offices and titles</p> <p>Use initial capitals for titles, such as the Board of Trustees, Officers, Federation President, Vice-President, WI Advisers, Secretary, Trustees, and when referring to WI roles in general, e.g. a WI President, Federation Trustees.</p> <p>At a national level, use ‘Chair’ not ‘Chairman’; at federation level, it’s Federation Chairman (sing)/Federation Chairmen (plural).</p> <p>We say Somerset Federation (when referring to a specific federation) but WI federations (when talking about federations in general).</p> <p>Do not use Mrs, Ms, Miss or Mr unnecessarily; use Sally Smith, rather than Ms Sally Smith.</p>
<p>Projects and campaigns</p> <p>Use initial capitals for significant words, rather than quotation marks.</p> <p>Projects: WI Sports Week, Women Making a Difference, Let’s Cook Local</p> <p>Campaigns: Carers Welcome, Climate Change, SOS for Honeybees, Time to Talk</p>	<p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>Refer to the National Federation of Women’s Institutes or NFWI, not ‘National’</p> <p>The NFWI head office or 104 New Kings Road office. Denman College NFWI Unit NFWI-Wales WI members NFWI associates</p>

Language and writing style

<p>Clear language</p> <p>Write in plain English, i.e. clear, simple language</p> <p>Short words are better than long ones e.g. ‘about’ rather than ‘approximately’, ‘make’ rather than ‘manufacture’, ‘take part’ rather than ‘participate’.</p> <p>Avoid abstract language e.g. ‘jobs’ rather than ‘employment opportunities’</p> <p>See Appendix 2 for a full list of plain English words</p> <p>Watch out for redundant phrases like ‘past experience’ – experience is always in the past – and ‘very unique’ – things are either unique or they aren’t.</p>	<p>Write concisely</p> <p>Keep sentences and paragraphs short. Do not overload them with adjectives and dependent clauses.</p> <p>Avoid redundant phrases such as ‘at this moment in time’ or ‘at the end of the day’ and unnecessary words such as ‘in order to’ – just use ‘to’ – or ‘in the event of’ – just use ‘if’.</p> <p>Use only as many words as necessary – always cut out a word where you can.</p> <p>Stick to the active rather than passive voice as it’s easier to follow e.g. ‘Peter watched the television’ rather than ‘the television was watched by Peter’.</p> <p>Among/ amongst and while/ whilst ‘Among’ and ‘while’ are more common and preferable to use, however it’s fine to use ‘amongst’ and ‘whilst’ so long as you are consistent i.e. do not mix ‘amongst’ and ‘among’ in the same sentence.</p>
<p>Inclusive language</p> <p>Be sensitive in your choice of language, so prefer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ‘over-sixties’ to ‘OAPs’ or ‘pensioners’ ▪ ‘older people’ to ‘the elderly’ ▪ ‘people with disabilities/mental illness’ to ‘the disabled/the mentally ill’ <p>Where possible avoid masculine terms such as ‘he’ and ‘his’ when both sexes are implied, instead use ‘their’ and ‘theirs’.</p>	<p>Misuses</p> <p>Fewer/less: fewer refers to countable quantities; less refers to uncountable amounts e.g. fewer flowers but less flour</p> <p>Always use less when talking about measurements e.g. fewer than 20 people but less than 10% of the population</p> <p>That/ which: ‘that’ defines; ‘which’ informs e.g. ‘The meeting that was organised for Sussex Federation members was postponed’ – defines which meeting we are talking about, as</p>

<p>Use inclusive words such as 'firefighter' and 'staffed by', rather than 'fireman' and 'manned by'.</p> <p>Use feminine terms when talking only about women and masculine terms when talking only about men.</p> <p>Avoid trade names for generic terms, such as biro (Biro) for ballpoint and hoover (Hoover) for vacuum cleaners.</p>	<p>opposed to the meeting for Anglesey, Avon, Bedfordshire federations etc.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>'The meeting, which was organised for Sussex Federation members, was postponed' – where the fact that the meeting was organised for members is new information</p> <p>Who's/ whose: use who's instead of 'who is' or 'who has'. Use whose when talking about possessions, e.g. 'whose coat is this?'</p>
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Other style points

Spellings	Upper case and lower case
<p>Always use British not American spellings, e.g. realise not realize, organise not organize</p> <p>Make sure your spell checker is set to English (U.K.) but remember that spell checkers are not 100% reliable and are not a substitution for proofreading.</p> <p>Watch out for easily confused words, e.g. complement and compliment; discrete and discreet; practice and practise; meter and metre. See more easily confused words in Appendix 1.</p> <p>Use the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ adviser not advisor▪ coordinate, cooperate (but a co-operative society, the Co-op and co-opt)▪ coexist but co-education▪ online not on-line▪ email, but e-learning and e-skills▪ fundraising▪ ever-changing▪ open-ended▪ re-formed	<p>Never write whole sentences in upper case.</p> <p>Use lowercase for points of the compass (north, south etc.) but capitals for a specific region, e.g. Surrey is south of London but in South East England.</p> <p>Use upper case for specific titles: 'Minister of Defence' but 'government ministers'.</p> <p>Use lowercase for offices in general: chief executives, chairs, boards of trustees.</p> <p>For NFWI titles see 'Offices and titles' section. For NFWI projects and campaigns see 'Projects and campaigns' section.</p> <p>Use upper case for the following WI terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Annual Meeting, Autumn National Council, Special Meeting▪ Advisers Sub-committee, Organisation/Membership Sub-committee▪ Rules, Constitution▪ Gift Aid▪ Education Committee, Membership Committee, Public Affairs Committee etc. <p>Use lower case for the following WI terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ formation record, suspension record▪ federation office▪ bank account▪ resolution

<p>Dates</p> <p>Use the following style: 18 August 1982 (not 18th Aug. '82).</p> <p>Give months and years in full in running text, e.g. The next AGM will be held on Wednesday 8 June 2011.</p>	<p>Italics</p> <p>Words to put in italics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ titles of books, plays, films, operas and radio and TV programmes▪ titles of newspapers, magazines and journals▪ foreign words not in common use▪ WI publications – see 'WI publications' section
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Punctuation

<p>Abbreviations (punctuation)</p> <p>No stops after abbreviated titles such as Mr, Mrs and Dr</p> <p>Use approximately rather than approx.</p> <p>NB (note well - no stops, <i>not</i> N.B.)</p> <p>‘e.g.’ precedes an example or examples ‘i.e.’ precedes an explanation</p>	<p>Apostrophes</p> <p>Use ‘its’ for pronouns and ‘it’s’ for ‘it is’ e.g. ‘This cat is yours; its fur is long’ Compared to, ‘It’s not my cat.’</p> <p>Apostrophes are used to indicate possession, e.g. ‘the children’s nanny’, ‘the emperor’s new clothes’.</p> <p>Dates do not require apostrophes (e.g. 1990s) unless the century is omitted (e.g. the year of ’66 was a great one).</p> <p>Apostrophes aren’t needed for plurals (e.g. MPs, Saturdays) unless you’re pluralising letters of the alphabet (e.g. ‘dot the i’s and cross the t’s’).</p> <p>For names, use the possessive 's whenever possible e.g. Jones’s, Charles’s, James’s, Dickens’s, Phillips’s But be guided by how the last syllable of the name is pronounced e.g. Wales’, Bridges’, Moses’, Hodges’, Griffiths’, Walters’</p> <p>Contractions</p> <p>It’s, don’t etc. are generally acceptable in informal texts and online but use them sparingly and avoid them in formal documents.</p>
<p>Commas</p> <p>Use them to indicate a pause, to separate a dependent clause or words in a list, or for clarity when necessary. e.g. ‘In 1990 we moved to our new office’, not ‘In 1990, we moved to our new office’ as no pause is needed there. Only use a comma after an opening phrase if you think it reads more clearly.</p>	<p>Dashes and brackets</p> <p>For parentheses use short dashes (en rules) with spaces – this is an example – or use round brackets ()</p> <p>Dashes (en rules) can sometimes replace colons e.g. ‘There are several ways to get here: you can walk, cycle, drive or</p>

<p>Avoid the American Oxford comma when writing lists e.g. ‘eggs, flour, sugar, and baking powder’ – the comma after ‘sugar’ is redundant and can just be written as ‘eggs, flour, sugar and baking powder’</p> <p>Do not use commas in addresses, unless within a sentence: e.g. Our address is: 104 New Kings Road London SW6 4LY</p>	<p>catch a bus.’ Or ‘There are several ways to get here – you can walk, cycle, drive or catch a bus.’</p> <p>However using too many dashes in the same paragraph can confuse the reader.</p>
<p>Full stops</p> <p>Use plenty of them to keep sentences short, especially when writing online, but do not use them after personal titles (Mr, Ms) and abbreviations.</p> <p>Colons</p> <p>Colons indicate that what comes next expands, qualifies, defines or exemplifies what went before.</p> <p>They can also be used to divide balancing or contrasting clauses.</p> <p>Use a colon to introduce a list – see ‘Bullet points’ section</p> <p>Semi-colons</p> <p>Semi-colons are useful for separating items in running text lists, usually introduced by a colon, or for linking two related main clauses in place of a conjunction or a full stop.</p> <p>When writing lists, it is preferable to use commas to separate items.</p>	<p>Hyphens</p> <p>Use hyphens in compound adjectival phrases, e.g. hard-working woman, up-to-date records. Be careful where you place hyphens, so as not to change the meaning e.g. ‘a little-used car’ (the car is not often used) is different to ‘a little used-car’ (the car is small and second hand)</p> <p>No hyphen needed after adverbs that end in -ly, e.g. perfectly formed</p> <p>Use ‘to’ instead of hyphens between date ranges when writing online, as it’s easier to read e.g. March to September (rather than March – September) See the <i>NFWI digital content guidelines</i></p>

<p>Reporting speech/ quotation marks</p> <p>Introduce reported speech either:</p> <p>With a colon, followed by double quotation marks e.g. NFWI Chair Lynne Stubbings said: “The Care not Custody campaign has been very close to the hearts of many WI members.” The first word of the quote starts with a capital letter and punctuation stays inside the quotation marks.</p> <p>Or As part of a sentence e.g. NFWI Chair Lynne Stubbings described the Care not Custody campaign as “very close to the hearts of many WI members”. The first word does not take a capital letter and punctuation falls outside the quote marks.</p> <p>You can also break up a quote, as follows: “The Care not Custody campaign is important,” said NFWI Chair Lynne Stubbings, “it has been very close to the hearts of many WI members.”</p> <p>Keep single quotation marks for quotations within a quotation e.g. Sarah said: “She told me, ‘go to reception and ask for Jill’.”</p> <p>In news stories and press releases the speaker always ‘said’ the quote, never ‘says’.</p> <p>Use single quotation marks when writing about non-italicised titles such as book chapters and sections, essays and magazine articles e.g. the ‘Conclusion and recommendations’ of the ‘Food’ section of the <i>The WI at 100</i> report.</p>	<p>Time</p> <p>Use am/pm and insert minutes only when needed: 10am (no space), 3.30pm; for opening hours: 12noon to 4.45pm (12noon but 12.10pm; midday is neither am nor pm).</p> <p>Telephone numbers and emails</p> <p>If you are including a telephone number in a sentence, use the following format: Please contact the Communications team on 020 7971 9300.</p> <p>If you are including an email address in a sentence, please use the following format: For more information, please contact the Online Content Editor: r.bernard@nfw.org.uk</p>
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Numbers and lists

Bullet points

These are useful for listing items (preferable to lists of items running on within the same paragraph) and breaking up text.

When each bullet point is a separate sentence you should:

End your introductory sentence with a full stop.

- Then start with a capital letter.
- Put a full stop on the end of each point.

Where each bullet point makes up a continuous sentence you should:

- start with a colon as above;
- use lower case;
- end each item with a semi-colon;
- close with a full stop.

If bullet points do not make up a proper sentence – for example when writing a list – you start with a lower case and omit any closing punctuation.

E.g. This section of the website contains:

- essential membership information
- committee roles and responsibilities
- key WI policy information
- a copy of the WI Guide

Make sure all the points contained in a bulleted list actually belong together and create a logical whole.

Don't mix fragments with full sentences in the same list.

See the *NFWI digital content guidelines* for more on using bullet points.

Numbered lists

For lists of short items or titles, start with capitals – there's no need to end with a full stop, e.g.

Ramblers need four items of kit:

1. Stout boots
2. Rainproof jacket
3. Backpack
4. Walking stick

Numbers	Percentages
<p>When writing for printed publications or online spell out one to nine as words and write 10 upwards as figures. Be flexible, for example you can write 'nine and ten' or '9 and 10' in the same sentence.</p> <p>Avoid starting a sentence with a figure but if you have to, always spell out the number, e.g. 'Ten people thought...' rather than '10 people thought...'</p> <p>Spell million and billion in full when using words, e.g. £3 million. Under NFWI house style guidelines, a billion is the equivalent a thousand million.</p> <p>When writing out telephone numbers, separate area codes and groups of more than six numbers, e.g. 020 7731 5777, 01793 43265, 07381 853407</p>	<p>Use % with figures (1%, 9.5%) rather than writing out 'per cent' with words (one per cent) – it reads more easily.</p>

Appendix 1: Further Resources

BBC news style guide <http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/journalism/news-style-guide/article/art20130702112133530>

Reuters style guide [http://handbook.reuters.com/?title=The Reuters Style Guide](http://handbook.reuters.com/?title=The_Reuters_Style_Guide)

Plain English free guides <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html>

Oxford Dictionaries (for word meanings and spellings) <https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>

Commonly confused words <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/usage/commonly-confused-words>

Appendix 2: Plain English words

(an) absence of	no, none	for the reason that	because
accordingly	in line with this, so	further to	after, following
acquaint yourself with	find out about, read	furthermore	then, also, and
Aforesaid	this, earlier in the document	give consideration to	consider, think about
as a consequence of	because	henceforth	from now on, from today
as of the date of	from	hereby	now, by this (or edit out)
as regards	about, on the subject of	herein	here (or edit out)
at the moment	now (or edit out)	hereof	of this
at the present time	now (or edit out)	hitherto	until now
by means of	by	if and when	if, when (but not both)
cease	finish, stop, end	in a number of cases	some (or say how many)
commence	start, begin	in accordance with	as under, in line with, because of
comprises	is made up of, includes	in addition (to)	and, as well as, also
consequently	so	in advance	before
contrary to	against, despite	in case of	if
costs the sum of	costs	in conjunction with	and, with
deem to be	treat as	in connection with	for, about
denote/ depict	show	in consequence	because, as a result
despite the fact that	though, although	in excess of	more than
due to the fact that	because, as	in lieu of	instead of
during which time	while	in order that	so that
for the duration of	during, while	in receipt of	get, have, receive
for the purpose of	to, for	in relation to	about
in the absence of	without	the question as to	
in the course of	while, during	whether	whether
in the event of/that	if	thereafter	then, afterwards
in the near future	soon	thereby	by that, because of that
		therein	in that, there

irrespective of	despite, even if	thereof	of that
(it is) mandatory	(you) must	thereto	to that
may in the future	may, might, could	thus	so, therefore
moreover	and, also, as well	undertake	agree, promise, do
nevertheless	but, however, even so	until such time	until
notwithstanding	even if, despite, still, yet	utilise	use
(it is) obligatory	(you) must	ways and means	ways
on behalf of	for	whatsoever	whatever, what, any
on numerous occasions	often	whenever	when
on the occasion that	when, if	whether or not	whether
owing to	because of	with a view to	to, so that
per annum	a year	with effect from	from
personnel	people, staff	with reference to	about
provided that	if, as long as	with regard to	about, for
referred to as	called	with respect to	about, for
relating to	about	with the minimum of	
subject to	depending on, under, keeping to	delay	delay quickly (or say when)
subsequently	later	you are requested	please
that being the case	if so	your attention is drawn	
		to	please see, please note

See the full A-Z of plain English alternative words <<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/the-a-z-of-alternative-words.html>>

Appendix 3: List of federations

Anglesey/Sir Fôn	Gwynedd-Meirionnydd	Powys-Brecknock
Avon	Hampshire	Powys-Montgomery
Bedfordshire	Herefordshire	Powys-Radnor
Berkshire	Hertfordshire	Shropshire
Buckinghamshire	Huntingdon and Peterborough	Sir Gâr Carmarthenshire
Cambridge	Isle of Ely	Somerset
Ceredigion	Isle of Man	Staffordshire
Cheshire	Isle of Wight	Suffolk East
Clwyd-Denbigh	Jersey	Suffolk West
Clwyd-Flint	Kent East Kent	Surrey
Cornwall	Kent West Kent	Sussex East
Cumbria Cumberland	Lancashire	Sussex West
Cumbria Westmorland	Leicestershire and Rutland	Teesside
Derbyshire	Lincolnshire Humber	Tyne and Wear South
Devon	Lincolnshire North	Warwickshire
Dorset	Lincolnshire South	West Midlands
Durham	Middlesex	Wiltshire
Essex	Norfolk	Worcestershire
Glamorgan	Northamptonshire	Yorkshire East
Gloucestershire	Northumberland	Yorkshire North East
Guernsey	Nottinghamshire	Yorkshire North West
Gwent	Oxfordshire	Yorkshire South
Gwynedd-Caernarfon	Pembrokeshire	Yorkshire West