Montana Department of
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

EDITORIAL GUIDE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

DEQ's Editorial Guide will help you when writing any DEQ document, from emails, memos, or letters to proposals, reports, user guides, educational materials, or Web copy. Here you'll find guidance on:

- punctuation, grammar, and word usage
- capitalization and hyphenation
- abbreviations and acronyms
- numbers, units of measure, signs & symbols

The appendices contain additional guidance:

- How to refer to DEQ (**Appendix A**)
- How to use the DEQ logo (**Appendix B**)
- Formatting DEQ signature lines and etiquette tips for email (**Appendix C**)
- Tips to improve your writing (**Appendix D**)
- List of commonly misused words (**Appendix E**)
- List of troublesome words and their correct prepositions (**Appendix F**)

1.1 WHY USE AN EDITORIAL GUIDE?

Editorial guides establish rules for using language in order to promote consistency. In addition, many organizations and companies have their own styles that further clarify proper spelling of industry-specific terms and adopt preferred punctuation styles—not rules, but *styles*—which can vary. For example, some prefer the serial comma (a.k.a. the Oxford comma), while others don't.

If you consistently follow these editorial guidelines, your audience can focus on a document's content without being distracted by variations in word usage or getting confused by poor spelling and grammar. Thus, the meaning and intent of your document, whether it's a letter, email, technical report, or educational tool, can be clearly articulated.

1.2 BUT THIS ISN'T WHAT I LEARNED!

True, you may have learned different rules for using commas, or other "rules," such as you cannot end a sentence with a preposition (you can), but different types of writing require different styles. Also, industries use styles that meet the needs of their industry, yet those styles may not meet the needs of other industries. As a public agency, DEQ has a special mandate to write so that its audience (i.e., Montanans, whose range of education is broad) can readily understand. Therefore, many of the styles in this guide were chosen to achieve these goals, even if they contradict what you may have learned in the past.

The rules in this Editorial Guide were taken from ***The Chicago Manual of Style*** (CMS) and ***The Associated Press Stylebook*** (AP), two respected authorities in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and word usage in American English. In addition, ***The Gregg Reference Manual*** (Gregg) is used by the Montana Secretary of State, and DEQ may (under certain circumstances) be required to follow this style exclusively; where necessary, do so. Note that Gregg and CMS are nearly identical in their styles.

AP style is used by the newspaper industry, while CMS and Gregg more comprehensively address the rules of grammar and punctuation, as well as styles for longer-form writing. Use AP primarily as a reference for the proper way to denote titles of people; names of government branches and companies;

historical references; and terms relating to business, culture, sport, technology, foreign nations, and everyday language. Use CMS or Gregg for grammar and punctuation rules and styles not covered in this Editorial Guide.

Finally, DEQ prepares some documents that must be formulated under different style guidelines. These include (but may not be limited to) draft legislation, fiscal notes, legal pleadings or other legal documents, contracts, and Web pages. The rules of grammar and punctuation should always apply; however, when necessary use the specific guidance provided for these types of documents.

2.0 GENERAL GRAMMAR

Below find general grammar rules taken from numerous sources, including *The Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS), *The Gregg Reference Manual* (Gregg), *The Associate Press Stylebook* (AP), and *The Elements of Style*.

2.1 AGREEMENT OF PRONOUN/ANTECEDENT & SUBJECT/VERB

Pronoun/Antecedent

Pronouns must always reflect their antecedent in number. In the previous sentence, for example, "pronouns" is the antecedent and "their" is the pronoun. Because "pronouns" is plural, it takes "they," which is also plural.

> **Incorrect:** When a manager asks for the report, you should give it to them promptly.
> **Correct:** When a manager asks for the report, you should give it to her promptly.
>
> **Incorrect:** DEQ should be careful to follow their own policies.
> **Correct:** DEQ should be careful to follow its own policies.

For gender-specific pronouns: It's acceptable to use either **he** or **she** throughout a single piece of writing, and also to use both (i.e., switching back and forth); editors shun that style for various reasons. Further, using **he or she** as a single phrase, or using **s/he**, is clunky and awkward. If possible, make your subject plural to avoid gender-specific pronouns. Strive to use **it** as a pronoun for non-human entities, such as DEQ. It's also acceptable to refer to DEQ as **we**.

> **Acceptable:** Whichever project manager implements this plan, he [or use **she**] must follow it carefully.
>
> **Acceptable but clunky:** Whichever project manager implements this plan, s/he must follow it carefully.
>
> **Acceptable but clunky:** Whichever project manager implements this plan, he or she must follow it carefully.
>
> **Better:** Whoever the project managers are, they must implement this plan carefully.

Subject/Verb

Subjects and verbs must always agree with each other in number. Singular subjects connected by **or** or **nor** take a singular verb.

> **Incorrect:** Either the crew leader or the project manager are present at every meeting.

Correct: Either the crew leader or the project manager is present at every meeting.

Incorrect: Neither the crew leader nor the project manager like the findings.
Correct: Neither the crew leader nor the project manager likes the findings.

Subjects modified by **each** and **every** take singular verbs:

Each of the inspection reports has a specific purpose.
Every inspection report has a specific purpose.

When one subject is plural and the other is singular, put the singular first followed by the plural and use the plural verb.

Incorrect: Neither the ranchers nor the project manager are satisfied with the findings.
Incorrect: Neither the ranchers nor the project manager is satisfied with the findings.
Correct: Neither the project manager nor the ranchers are satisfied with the findings.

Single ideas or expressions take singular verbs; plural ideas or expressions take plural verbs.

Incorrect: The manager's friend and advisor recommend he implement the plan carefully.
Correct: The manager's friend and advisor recommends he implement the plan carefully.
(**Friend and advisor** refers to the same person; therefore, it is singular. If it referred to two different people, the verb would be plural.)

Incorrect: The list of water protection violations are long and disturbing.
Correct: The list of water protection violations is long and disturbing.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns name a group of persons, things, or animals. Depending on how they are used, collective nouns are either singular or plural: singular if the noun denotes the group acting as an individual; plural if the noun denotes individuals that make up the group.

A: The committee has agreed to approve the new style manual. (as a whole they've agreed)
B: The committee have disagreed on some of their own inclusions for the manual. (they disagree among themselves about what should be included)

A: When the field crew has finished its work, it will prepare a report. (as a whole they're finished and will prepare a report)
B: The field crew were not satisfied with their work, so their report will be delayed. (at least some members of the crew are dissatisfied; therefore, they must resolve the issues before preparing their report)

2.2 DANGLING PARTICIPLES

Present participles are words that end in the verb form **–ing** (**–ing** words are called gerunds when used as nouns). Participles can function as adverbs and adjectives. A participle "dangles" when it is attached to the wrong subject. Both participles and gerunds are subject to dangling, rendering a sentence illogical, ambiguous, or incoherent.

Incorrect: By consistently following these editorial style guidelines, your audience can focus on your document's content. (**following** does not modify the closest noun: **your audience**; it modifies a missing noun: **you**)

Recast the sentence so that the misplaced modifier is associated with the correct noun. [see next page]

Correct: If you consistently follow these editorial style guidelines, your audience can focus on the document's content.

Avoid using **it** or **there** as the subject of the independent clause after a participle phrase because it produces a dangler without a logical subject.

Incorrect: As owner of the point-source discharge, it is ultimately your responsibility to ensure compliance with all applicable regulations.
Correct: As owner of the point-source discharge, you are ultimately responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable regulations.

See also **Section 2.5** on participle prepositions.

2.3 WHO VS. WHOM

Who is a pronoun and takes a verb (it does the action). **Whom** is an object of the verb (it receives the action). Test it by substituting *him*/*her*/*them* (whom) or *he*/*she*/*they* (who).

Whom do you recommend for the job? (Test: I recommend her for the job.)
Who is the best candidate for the job? (Test: She is the best candidate for the job.)
Who, in your opinion, is the best person for the job? (Test: He is the best person for the job.)
Whom did you hire for the job? (Test: I hired them for the job.)

2.4 ADVERBS

Adverbs describe, qualify, limit, or modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs (examples include really, very, only, quickly, rudely, sooner, hardly, etc.). Many adverbs are easily recognized because they end in **–ly**; but not all do.

The placement of an adverb can entirely change the meaning of a sentence. Place it as near as possible to the word it modifies. Compare the following two sentences:

A: The field crew nearly lost all of the equipment. (they almost lost it but didn't lose any)
B: The field crew lost nearly all of the equipment. (they lost most of it but not all of it)

What does the adverb **immediately** modify in the example below?

Confusing: We sent a letter to the violator to fix the problems immediately. (You sent a letter immediately or you've asked the violator to immediately fix the problems?)

Clear: We sent a letter immediately to the violator asking him to fix the problems. (The letter was sent right away)

Clear: We sent a letter to the violator asking him to immediately fix the problems. (The letter asked the violator to fix the problems now)

It is acceptable to put adverbial modifiers between the parts of a verb phrase.

> The company had seriously threatened the city's water supply by dumping untreated chemicals down the drain.

And yes, it's okay to split an infinitive verb with an adverb.

> The bureau expects to more than double its inspections by next year.

One of the most common writing errors is putting the adverb **only** in the wrong place.

> **Incorrect:** We only have three days left to finish the project.
> **Correct:** We have only three days left to finish the project.

However, note CMS states: In idiomatic spoken English, **only** is placed before the verb, regardless of what it modifies: **I only bought tomatoes at the market.** This may be acceptable in speech because the speaker can use intonation to make the meaning clear. But since in writing there is no guidance from intonation, precise placement of **only** is preferable to aid the reader's comprehension.

In writing, the example sentence is unclear: Did you buy tomatoes only at the market and nowhere else? Or did you buy only tomatoes at the market and nothing else? When spoken, the speaker's intonation would make clear what she means about buying tomatoes and where.

2.5 PREPOSITIONS

A preposition links an object to other words or phrases to show the relationship between them. Most people know prepositions as "placement" words (e.g., on, over, above, below, inside, outside, etc.). The list is much longer and includes words such as with/without, by, as, of, since, despite, except, etc.

As with adverbs, prepositions should be placed as near as possible to the words they modify.

A participial preposition is a participial form (e.g., ending in **–ing**) that functions as a preposition (or sometimes as a subordinating conjunction). Examples include *assuming*, *barring*, *concerning*, *considering*, *during*, *notwithstanding*, *owing to*, *provided*, *regarding*, *respecting*, and *speaking*. Unlike other participles, these words do not create danglers when they have no subject (see **Section 2.2**). Both examples below are correct.

> Considering the road conditions, the trip went quickly.
> Regarding the water quality violations, he had nothing to say to the judge.

Ignore the rule you learned in school that ending a sentence with a preposition is wrong. *The Chicago Manual of Style* calls that rule "an ill-founded superstition." Winston Churchill more eloquently stated his feelings about it: "That is the type of arrant pedantry up with which I will not put." So go ahead, end sentences with prepositions when appropriate.

Many words often cause writers trouble because we don't know which preposition to use; e.g., is it "abide with" or "abide by"? It actually depends on the context since both are correct but mean different things. **Appendix F** includes a list of the most troublesome words and their appropriate prepositions.

3.0 GENERAL PUNCTUATION

This section covers some of the more common rules of punctuation. CMS and Gregg are closely aligned, while AP differs somewhat in certain styles. When in doubt, or when not specified in this guide, follow CMS or Gregg.

3.1 APOSTROPHES

Use apostrophes to indicate possession or contraction but, with a few exceptions noted below, not to denote a plural.

> **Incorrect:** Some of DEQ's reports include SOP's, QAPP's, and SAP's.
> **Correct:** Some of DEQ's reports include SOPs, QAPPs, and SAPs.

> **Incorrect:** During the 1990's our research team uncovered many errors.
> **Correct:** During the 1990s our research team uncovered many errors.
> **Correct:** DEQ filed that report in '96, but nobody read it.

In some cases (where its omission might confuse, or with single letters) an apostrophe is used with a plural.

> **Incorrect:** Students who earn As and Bs will do well on the test. (**As** is also a word and can trip up readers in this case.)
> **Correct:** Students who earn A's and B's will do well on the test.

> **Incorrect:** Some people would do well to mind their ps and qs. (In this case, **ps** and **qs** just look funny and can trip up readers.)
> **Correct:** Some people would do well to mind their p's and q's.

Its, without the apostrophe, denotes the possessive. **It's** is a contraction of **it is** or **it has**.

> **Incorrect:** The dog chased it's tail.
> **Correct:** When the dog chases its tail, it's a funny sight to behold.

Other examples of the possessive:

> a month's notice (1 month is singular; hence, the apostrophe comes before the *s*)
> four months' notice (4 months is plural; hence, the apostrophe comes after the *s*)
> a day's pay
> four days' pay
> twenty years' experience

CMS and Gregg differ slightly in their styles for using apostrophes to denote possessives for nouns ending in "s." The rules are noted below. Whichever style you choose, use it consistently within a document.

Chicago Rule:
All nouns ending in "s": use an apostrophe with additional "s" to denote possessives (e.g., Davy Jones's locker; Jesus's parables, Euripides's tragedies, Ganges's source).

Exceptions: If a proper noun ends in "s" in a plural form but its meaning is singular, simply use an apostrophe to denote possessive (e.g., United States' role in international law; Hidden Gardens' opening hours; Helena Heights' streets).

Gregg Rule:
Nouns ending in a silent "s": use an apostrophe with additional "s" to denote possessives (e.g., Illinois's governor; the corps's leader; Des Plaines's mayor).

Nouns ending in a pronounced "s": use the sound to guide whether to use an apostrophe only or to add an additional "s" to denote possessive. For example, if adding another syllable (i.e., the "s") would make the word hard to pronounce, add only an apostrophe.

boss's approval
witness's reply
St. Louis's airport
Peter Jennings' broadcasts
Los Angeles' freeways

Compared with Chicago, Gregg contains more complex rules for forming possessives with words ending in "s." Refer to Gregg for additional style usage.

3.2 COLONS

A colon tells a reader that something more is coming. Use it to introduce lists or quoted text, or to denote emphasis. When a colon is used within a sentence, the first word following the colon is usually lowercase unless it is a proper name.

> Three primary factors affected our ability to collect the data: the weather, access to the property, and the number of beers we drank the night before.
>
> Only one thing interests my cat: sleeping.
>
> *Example from* Gregg: "Essential and non-essential elements require different punctuation: the latter should be set off by commas; the former should not." (**the** is lowercase)

When a colon introduces two or more sentences, introduces a speech in dialogue or an extract, or introduces a direct question, the first word following it is capitalized.

> The project manager had a problem: He had promised everyone a raise when they finished the task. Unfortunately, the agency decided later that no raises would be awarded to anyone.

Colons are used to denote time and elapsed time (as in stopwatch readings).

Colons fall outside of quotation marks unless they are part of the quotation itself (see entry on Quotation Marks).

3.3 COMMAS

To avoid confusing your readers, always use the serial comma in technical writing. The serial comma (a.k.a. the Oxford comma) is what follows immediately before a conjunction in a series of three or more items.

The field crew needed clipboards, GPS units, and measuring tapes. (the serial comma is the one after **units**)

But: I had orange juice, toast, and ham and eggs for breakfast. (**Ham and eggs** in this case reads as a unit, so the punctuation is correct. It would also be correct to omit the first **and** and put a comma after **ham**.)

Omit the serial comma before an ampersand (&). Reserve ampersands for titles, headers, etc., and avoid using them in text unless part of a proper noun.

The company Johnson, Melville & Anderson provides the best service. (ampersand necessary because it's part of a proper noun)

Avoid: The report included sections on grammar, spelling & punctuation.
Instead use: The report included sections on grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Use commas to set off unnecessary asides, words, phrases, or clauses. In both examples below, the phrase between commas is not necessary to the meaning of the sentence.

The project manager, who was ready to walk out, decided to see the plan through.
The style manual's success, the editor suggested, will depend on how useful it is for the staff.

Use a comma after the year in American-style complete dates (month, day, year) within a sentence. It may look funny, but it's correct. Don't use a comma to separate months and years. Don't use a comma in military (European-style) complete dates (day, month, year).

The effects of the drought, from September 13, 1993, through June 12, 1994, lasted well beyond anyone's imagination.

The field season began in March 2008 and ended in mid-July 2009.

The 10 February 2008 deadline passed.

In most cases use a comma before a conjunction (and, or, but, for, nor, yet, so) that joins two independent clauses (i.e., phrases that can stand alone as complete sentences). Do not use a comma when one clause is dependent (cannot stand alone).

We took our case to Washington, and our senator greeted us personally.
We took our case to Washington and had planned to see our senator.

The comma can be omitted if the subject is the same in both clauses and the clauses are short or otherwise related.

I was tired and I went to bed.

Use a comma after a dependent clause when it precedes an independent, or main, clause.

When I first set out to create this editorial guide, I thought the job would be simple.

Do not use a comma in the above example if the sentence begins with the independent clause and the dependent clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence (first example below). If, however, the dependent clause is non-essential, or is meant as an aside, use a comma (second example below).

> I thought the job would be simple when I first set out to create this style guide.
> The city finally addressed the water quality violations, when half its residents fell ill.

It is acceptable to omit a comma from a short introductory clause (four or fewer words) and when doing so doesn't create ambiguity. All examples below are correct. Whichever style you choose, be consistent throughout the document. It is not acceptable to mix and match within a document.

> During the 1990s our research team uncovered many errors. **OR** During the 1990s, our research team uncovered many errors.

> In 2009 we generated fewer reports. **OR** In 2009, we generated fewer reports.

Use a comma in cases where ambiguity, or funny rendering, can result.

> Before eating, the field inspectors decided to discuss the sites they needed to visit.

Do not use commas to set off parentheses except where a comma would normally follow an introductory clause.

> **Incorrect:** Be sure to bring your field equipment, (measuring tape, flagging, compass), to the training session.
> **Correct:** Be sure to bring your field equipment (measuring tape, flagging, compass) to the training session.

> **Incorrect:** If it had not been for the quick-witted manager, (or her assistant), we would all be in trouble.
> **Correct:** If it had not been for the quick-witted manager (or her assistant), we would all be in trouble.

Use a comma after the state in complete city–state references within a sentence. It may look funny, but it's correct.

> Helena, Montana, is where DEQ has its headquarters.

Use a comma to separate the thousands in figures larger than 999, unless the figures are addresses or dates. Convention has gravitated toward dropping the comma, but this can confuse readers in technical writing.

> **Incorrect:** DEQ found more than 1200 public water supply violations last year.
> **Correct:** DEQ found more than 1,200 public water supply violations last year.

Commas **ALWAYS** fall within quotation marks in American English (see entry on Quotation Marks). There are no exceptions to this rule.

> Although she said I was "skating on thin ice," the boss agreed to my request for a raise.
> Though the report, titled "How to Make a Good Impression," was poorly written, its meaning was clear.

3.4 EXCLAMATION POINTS

Use these sparingly, if at all, so readers don't think you are shouting at them… or that you're just super excited about writing your report!!! If you want your readers to be enthused—or appalled—try to evoke those emotions using words and ideas, not punctuation marks.

Exclamation marks fall within quotations only if they are part of the quoted matter (see entry on Quotation Marks).

3.5 PERIODS

Use only one space, not two, between sentences that end with a period—or any other closing punctuation marks. In the typewriter days, two spaces between sentences was necessary because of the spacing of typewriter keys. In the computer age, this practice is unnecessary and no longer a "rule." Using a single space between sentences also saves space and paper. If you just can't train your thumbs to type a single space, perform a search-and-replace in Word as the final editorial change to your document.

It is acceptable to close the space following a period in initials (e.g., Washington, D.C., rather than Washington, D. C.).

Use a period for abbreviations of single words. If the word is a unit of measure, however, omit the period.

> no. (number)
> fig. (figure)
> **But** lb (pound), yd (yard), mi (mile)

The period goes outside the closing parenthesis within a sentence. Use a period within the closing parenthesis if the parenthetical phrase is a complete sentence.

> We filed the report with the full results (see Fig. 8).
> We filed the report with the full results. (See Figure 8 for more details.)

When **etc.** or **et al.** fall at the end of a sentence, never use an additional period *unless* **etc.** or **et al.** is within parentheses. The same rule applies for all abbreviated words that use a period.

> All the report's elements were included (date, time, violation, compliance requirement, etc.).
> The report was written by Smith et al. **Not:** The report was written by Smith et al..

Periods **ALWAYS** fall within quotation marks in American English (see entry on Quotation Marks). There are no exceptions to this rule.

> We decided to call the report "The Best of Montana's Recreational Waters."

3.6 QUOTATION MARKS

Use quotation marks when quoting others or brief passages in publications. For longer passages, separate the quoted material from the main text—below the main text—indent, and omit the quotes.

Periods and commas go inside quotation marks—always, always, always. The British (and their Commonwealth cousins, including Canada) put punctuation outside of the quotes in most cases.

> The manager referred me to the report "Water Quality Measurement Standards."
>
> To drive my point home, I included the words "incompetent," "dyspeptic," and "selfish" in his personnel evaluation.

Question marks and exclamation points go outside of quotation marks *unless* they are a part of the quoted material.

> Who said, "A joke is a very serious thing"? (Winston Churchill, by the way. A period after **thing** in the quote is incorrect because you cannot have double punctuation.)
> **But:** The project manager said, "When will that report be finished?"
>
> "Stop!" he yelled.
> **But:** I can't believe he told me to "get a life"! (implies that **he** did not say **get a life** emphatically but rather the person he said it to is being emphatic in repeating the quote)

Colons go outside of quotation marks except when they are part of the quote itself—a rare case.

Semicolons and dashes go outside of quotation marks unless they are part of the quoted matter.

> The report's sections are titled: "Who Moved My Cheese?"; "Where was it Moved To?"; and "Never Mind, I Don't Want it after All."

In the above example, commas could also be used in place of semicolons, but they would have to be placed inside the quotes and following the question marks, which would look messy.

Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotations.

> She said, "I can't believe he told me to 'get a life'!"
> **But without the exclamation:** She said, "I can't believe he told me to 'get a life.'"

Use for Emphasis, New Terms, Colloquial Terms

Use quotation marks sparingly for emphasis. Use quotes to indicate irony, to introduce colloquial terms or phrases (first reference only), and to introduce new words (first reference only).

> **Avoid:** This "independent evidence" may not cover all aspects of the beneficial use. (quotes not necessary here unless indicating irony, which doesn't really have a place in technical writing)
>
> They called their field truck "Big Red." Able to climb steep tracks with no trouble, Big Red took the crew to some of the most difficult-to-reach places.
>
> A "hertz" is a unit of frequency defined as the number of cycles per second of a periodic phenomenon. The hertz is named after the German physicist Heinrich Hertz.

Use to Enclose Titles of Works

Some styles put titles of books, newspapers, and magazines in italics. AP style uses quotation marks rather than italics because italics do funny things to the spacing in newspaper columns. Likewise, the use of italics for titles of works in technical writing can look funny; thus, DEQ prefers to use quotes.

For more information on when to use italics, see **Section 4.2**.

3.7 SEMICOLONS

Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses when a comma isn't quite enough and a period is too much.

> She completed the inspection; it didn't look good for the city.
>
> A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty. (Winston Churchill)

Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses when the second clause begins with a conjunctive adverb (e.g., however, therefore, moreover, furthermore, thus, meanwhile, nonetheless, otherwise) or a transition (e.g., in fact, for example, that is, for instance, in addition, in other words, on the other hand, even so).

> Inspectors enjoy their job; however, they don't like encountering belligerent property owners.

Use a semicolon to join elements of a series when each item in the series includes internal punctuation, such as commas.

> Olympic Games have been held in Beijing, China; Athens, Greece; Salt Lake City, Utah; Sydney, Australia; and Nagano, Japan.

Avoid using a semicolon when a period will do nicely.

Semicolons fall within quotations only if they are part of the quoted matter (see entry on Quotation Marks).

3.8 PUNCTUATING BULLETED & NUMBERED LISTS

There are many different ways to punctuate bulleted/numbered lists; *The Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS), *The Associated Press Stylebook* (AP), and *The Gregg Reference Manual* (Gregg) all differ in their recommended styles. However, all of them recommend **avoiding** the old-school way of putting semicolons at the end of each list item, a period at the end of the last item, and the conjunction "and" at the end of the second-to-last item.

If you prefer one style guide over the others, use either Gregg, CMS, or AP for guidance. If you don't have a preference, use the recommended guidelines below, which come from CMS.

In addition:

- Use bullets when list order is unimportant.
- Use numbers when list order is important or for sequential items.
- Avoid special characters, such as arrows or pictures, for bullets.

Short lists of a few items can be included in the main body of text (this is called a "run-in" list). Below, note the use of parentheses in run-in lists. Lowercase letters may be substituted for numbers unless the numbers are important (see entry below).

> The report includes four sections: (1) an introduction, (2) arguments against prosecuting permit violators, (3) arguments in favor of prosecuting permit violators, and (4) a conclusion.

Run-in lists are punctuated in the same way as sentences. If the phrase in each number has internal commas, use a semicolon to separate each number in the list, rather than a comma.

> The report includes four sections: (1) an introduction; (2) how to recognize, document, and report violations; (3) how to follow-up with violators; and (4) a conclusion.

Longer lists should be set vertically, not run in (see next section). Use numerals for lists in which order is important (e.g., steps to performing a task or to suggest chronology or relative importance of the listed items). Use bullets where numerical order is not important.

All list items, whether run in or set vertically, should be congruent, that is, syntactically alike (e.g., noun forms or phrases or full sentences, etc.). In the first example below, item 3 is incongruent with the rest.

Incongruent: Requirements:

1. The permittee must meet the effluent limitations of the permit.
2. The RSF must be operated as designed.
3. The person signing the DMRs and correspondence with the Department is not the authorized signatory for the site.
4. Records for the facility must be maintained on-site.

Congruent: Requirements:

1. The permittee must meet the effluent limitations of the permit.
2. The RSF must be operated as designed.
3. The person signing the DMRs and correspondence with the Department must be the authorized signatory for the site.
4. Records for the facility must be maintained on-site.

Introduce a list with a complete sentence followed by a colon. In some cases, you can omit the colon.

If the list is numbered, use a period after each number and capitalize the first letter (but see exception below).

For items that run more than a line, use hanging indents for the second and subsequent lines. Word automatically formats for bullets and numbers.

Closing punctuation after each item is unnecessary unless the items are complete sentences. In the example below, the items are complete sentences but they follow from the introductory sentence (to complete the thought of the 3 things), so punctuation isn't necessary. Also, sometimes end punctuation in lists causes clutter, as does the word **and** before the last list item.

> The project manager reported three things:
>
> 1. a new committee will be established to study the needs
> 2. the committee shall report their findings within 1 month
> 3. if necessary, the findings will be published

Exception: Items first introduced in text and consisting of phrases that would normally be punctuated if the list were part of the run-in should be punctuated as follows:

The project manager reported that

1. a new committee will be established to study the needs;
2. the committee shall report their findings within 1 month;
3. if necessary, the findings will be published.

If bullets were used instead of numbers in the above example, the punctuation and capitalization would remain the same.

4.0 General Treatment of Words

This section discusses general rules on capitalization and the use of italics, abbreviations, acronyms, and hyphens and dashes. The styles come from *The Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS), *The Gregg Reference Manual* (Gregg), and *The Associated Press Stylebook* (AP).

4.1 Capitalization Rules

Styles regarding capitalization can vary widely for certain terms, and most of the differences center around whether a word is considered part of a proper noun. Dictionaries are useful for determining some of these situations, and AP is especially useful. Otherwise consult CMS or Gregg and be consistent in your style throughout a document. In general, avoid excessive capitalization, which is distracting.

Proper Nouns

Capitalize a common noun or adjective that is part of a proper name. Do not capitalize the common noun or adjective when used alone as a substitute for the name of a place or thing.

Flathead River **but** the river in subsequent references; same for lakes, streams, valleys, mountains, bays, and other topographical references.

In plural uses, both CMS and Gregg capitalize the plural form of the common noun, but AP does not. Follow CMS/Gregg.

Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks
Flathead and Bitterroot Rivers
Scapegoat and Big Baldy Mountains; **or** Mounts Scapegoat and Big Baldy

Basin is generally not capitalized (e.g., Flathead basin) nor is **watershed** (Flathead River watershed).

Valley is typically not capitalized unless it is part of the proper name (e.g., Flathead Valley) **but** Flathead River valley.

National parks and **national forests** are generic terms and lowercase unless referring to a specific national park or forest (e.g., Yellowstone National Park); **but** the National Park Service or the National Forest Service.

Regions, "State of" References

Directional names denoting a region are lowercase, with a few exceptions.

> western Montana **but** Southern California

Refer to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (http://geonames.usgs.gov) for more information.

City is always lowercase unless part of the official name. **State** is lowercase when preceding the state name but uppercase when following it (in certain situations; see below).

Never use **State of Montana** (where the "s" is capitalized) unless it's part of a title (e.g., a report title, department agency title, etc.). **Exception:** When distinguishing Montana in legal documents, "the State" is acceptable in the same way "Contractor" is capitalized to refer to the entity specifically contracted to do the work. In these situations, the terms are acting as proper nouns.

> the city of Helena; **but** Miles City
> the state of Montana; **but** Montana State
> Montana state law (lowercase "state" when used as an adjective in this way)
> the state's Integrated Water Quality Report

Personnel & Job Titles

In general, capitalize formal titles only when used *directly before* that person's name. Lowercase and spell out titles when used without an individual's name. However, see occupational titles below.

> The president will give his State of the Union address in January. (**State of the Union** is capitalized because it's the proper noun of a specific speech)
>
> Once a peanut farmer, former President Jimmy Carter came from humble roots.
>
> The governor of Montana, Brian Schweitzer, declared every Friday a holiday for all state employees.
>
> **But:** I wish Governor Schweitzer would declare every Friday a holiday for all state employees.

Titles can also be capitalized when used to directly address the person with that title.

> I would have done it, Captain, but the ship was sinking.
> **But:** I told the captain I would have done it had the ship not been sinking.

Occupational titles are not formal titles and are not capitalized.

> **Incorrect:** The Project Manager will assign duties to team members next week.
> **Correct:** The project manager will assign duties to team members next week.

As a courtesy, capitalize titles of known persons even when their title follows the name.

> Richard Opper, Director of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality…

If the title is far removed from the name, or used independently of the name, do not capitalize it.

In an interview today, the director of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality said that he had discussed the governor's plans to increase the number of department employees.

Scientific Names

Always capitalize the first letter of a genus but lowercase the species. Capitalize the genus when abbreviating it.

Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) is the predominant species of this habitat type.
We discovered high levels of *E. coli* in the water.

Miscellaneous

Do not capitalize seasons unless they are part of a proper noun (rare cases).

Field monitoring begins in the spring.

Capitalize items such as Table 4, Appendix B, Section 3.2, Figure 10, etc.

4.2 ITALICS

If using italics for emphasis, do so sparingly. Reserve italics for scientific names, legal citations (when style dictates), and for foreign words not commonly recognized in the English language.

Internet websites and email addresses should be set in regular typeface and not italics.

Latin Terms

In non-legal work *ante*, *post*, *infra*, and *supra* are italicized only when part of a legal citation. Otherwise these terms, as well as the abbreviations id., ibid., op. cit., et seq., etc., are printed in regular typeface.

Scientific Names

The scientific names of genera, subgenera, species, and subspecies (or plant varieties) are italicized but set in regular typeface within italic matter. The names of groups of higher rank than genera (phyla, classes, orders, families, tribes, etc.) are printed in regular typeface. Also, genus is always capitalized, while species is always lowercase.

Black bears (*Ursus americanus*) are prevalent in the Bitterroot National Forest.

See the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (http://ibot.sav.sk/icbn/main.htm) and the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (http://www.nhm.ac.uk/hosted-sites/iczn/code/) for details on convention and the proper scientific names of plants and animals, respectively.

Letter Designations

Letter designations in mathematical and scientific matter, except chemical symbols, are usually italicized.

Letters (a), (b), (c), etc., and a, b, c, etc., used to indicate sections or paragraphs do not need to be in italics, but if italics are used, make sure you do so consistently within a document.

4.3 ABBREVIATIONS

Always spell out **United States** when it appears as a noun. Use **U.S.** as an adjective. When using **US** in an acronym, the periods are unnecessary.

The United States comprises 50 states and the District of Columbia.
The U.S. Forest Service manages all national forest lands.
Following guidance from USFS, the Helena National Forest upholds water rights. (not **U.S. FS**)

Always abbreviate proper names according to each entity's preferred style; AP is a good source for information as is the entity's own website. If there is no guidance, refer to the GPO Style Manual online: http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=2008_style_manual&docid=f:chapter9.pdf.

Abbreviate compass points in uppercase letters when they stand alone (no periods) or when used in conjunction with numbers. Otherwise, compound compass points are closed (i.e., not hyphenated).

southwest
south-southwest
4th Street SW or Fourth Street SW

4.4 ACRONYMS

In general use acronyms sparingly, if possible, to avoid turning your document into alphabet soup.

Upon first reference, spell out the whole term and put the acronym in parentheses immediately following the term.

In long documents it helps your readers if you periodically spell out the term again, even if you have already done so earlier in the document. As a general rule, spell out terms and reintroduce their acronyms upon first reference in all major section headings (e.g., Section 1.0, Section 2.0, etc.). This benefits readers who may read only certain sections of that report.

If the acronym is *commonly known* to your audience, spell it out on first reference then use the acronym on subsequent references throughout the document (e.g., USGS, EPA, DEQ, GIS, etc.).

Take care when using acronyms because they often cross industry boundaries. For example, a quick Internet search provided the following for the acronym ICIS, which for DEQ stands for Integrated Compliance Information System; for others we have:

International Chemical Information System
Integrated Clinical Information System
International Crop Information System
International Construction Information Society
Imperial College Information System
Information & Contract Intelligence System

After spelling out a term on first reference, there is no need to use an acronym if the term will not be used again in the document or in that section.

A preceding article (e.g., **the** or **a**) is usually unnecessary with acronyms of entities unless the acronym is used as an adjective (last example below).

DEQ issued 42 violation letters in the first half of the year. (not **the DEQ**)
When you submit your report to EPA, be sure to include the attachments. (not **the EPA**)

USGS had a monitoring site near the ranch. **But:** We located a USGS monitoring site near the ranch.

A preceding article may or may not be necessary with acronyms of non-entities. Use your own judgment; however, leave the article out if the sentence makes sense without it.

GIS data helped us locate the site. **OR** The GIS data helped us locate the site.
We measured DO in three treatment pools. **OR** We measured the DO in three treatment pools.

Use a lowercase "s" without an apostrophe to denote the plural form of an acronym.

RFPs
MP3s
JPEGs
But: WQS (for Water Quality Standards because **Standards** is already plural)

4.5 HYPHENS

Hyphens help to reduce ambiguity. If two words together are used to describe a noun, and those words come immediately before the noun they describe, the first two words (called a compound modifier) are usually hyphenated. If absolutely no ambiguity exists without the hyphen, leave it out.

Section 4 discusses the status of Montana's water-related programs.
We took our child to the health care center for an exam. (omitting the hyphen between **health** and **care** would not confuse a reader)

When compound modifiers follow nouns, hyphens are unnecessary except when confusion could result following **to be** constructions.

The up-to-date report was comprehensive.
But: The report was up to date. **Similarly:** Keep me up to date on the report's status.

The field technician was little-known until she discovered gold in her water samples. (the hyphen is necessary to avoid confusing the reader about the field technician's status vs. her stature)

Use a hyphen at the end of all words in a list that would normally be hyphenated if standing alone. Use a space to separate words not part of that compound modifier.

Incorrect: Verifying water protection violations is a one-to-two-person job. (**to** is not part of the modifier)
Correct: Verifying water protection violations is a one- to two-person job.

Do not use hyphens to join adverbs that end in **–ly** or words like **very**.

Incorrect: The quickly-running fox jumped over the brown dog.
Correct: The quickly running fox jumped over the brown dog.

But: The publicly-disputed results made headlines. (**publicly** is not an adverb; incidentally, **publically** can also be spelled like that)

Don't hyphenate chemicals, diseases, scientific terms, or plant and animal names when used as modifiers if their original forms are not hyphenated.

sulfur dioxide emissions
swine flu epidemic
apple tree grove

Our evolving English language tends to favor closing two words (i.e., making them one word) that have become part of popular speech, rather than hyphenating them (e.g., **e-mail** has become **email** and **data base** has become **database**).

4.6 M DASHES (EM) & N DASHES (EN)

En and em dashes are so named because of their lengths: an en dash is the length of a typeset *N*; an em dash, a typeset *M*. They differ from hyphens.

En Dashes

The rules for en dashes can be complex; refer to CMS or Gregg if your questions aren't addressed below. For DEQ purposes, use an en dash with numbers (dates, figures) to signify **up to and including**. In both CMS and Gregg styles there is no space between a word and the en or em dash (barring one exception noted below for N dashes used in lists).

Use an en dash, not a hyphen, with:

figures with capital letters (I–90; 4–H Club)
ranges and time spans (2006–2008; Monday–Friday; $38–$56; pp. 192–215)

But: ACF-Brill Motors Co. (hyphen with capital letters and a word)
loran-C (hyphen with lowercase word and capital letter)
MiG-25 (hyphen with mixed letters with figure)

For the sake of parallel construction, do not use an en dash if using the words **from** or **between** to signify a range.

Incorrect: The holiday season is typically considered from December 24–January 1.
Correct: The holiday season is typically considered from December 24 to January 1.
Correct: The holiday season is typically considered December 24–January 1.

When using en dashes in a list, leave the space open between words and the dash.

- Columbia – all Montana's waters west of the Continental Divide, including the Clark Fork, Flathead, and Kootenai rivers
- Upper Missouri – the Missouri River basin from its headwaters downstream to the confluence with the Marias River

In Microsoft Word the shortcut key for en dashes is *Ctrl+Num-* (where - is the dash on the number keypad on the right-hand side of the keyboard).

Em Dashes

Use an em dash to mark an aside or in place of commas or parentheses when a meaning is clarified or a list given. It can also be used to set off a final clause. Though AP style leaves a space between em dashes, DEQ closes that space, as in the examples below.

> If violations are reported—and indeed they should be—field personnel must follow protocols.
> These are shore deposits—gravel, sand, and clay—but marine sediments underlie them.
> I must work 12 hours a day to make ends meet—alas!

In Microsoft Word the shortcut key for em dashes is *Alt+Ctrl+Num-* (where - is the dash on the number keypad on the right-hand side of the keyboard).

5.0 Numbers, Units of Measure, Signs & Symbols

This section discusses the treatment of numbers and the use of scientific notations (e.g., signs and symbols). Because each discipline may treat the use of scientific notation differently, the following was derived for general guidance based on the types of documents DEQ produces. For more information on style and convention, refer to the International System of Units' (SI) checklist (http://physics.nist.gov/cuu/Units/checklist.html) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) briefing on SI (http://physics.nist.gov/cuu/Units/index.html).

5.1 General Rules

Write out whole numbers below 10 (including *zero*, not *0*) and use figures for numbers 10 and higher. Write out numbers that begin sentences.

> Twelve program officers and 11 regional officers think grammar and spelling rules are a pain in the wazoo.

Exceptions: Always use numerals for:

- units of measure (feet, miles, inches, pounds, etc.)
- page numbers
- money
- proportions
- dates
- time
- age

October 27, 2010
$5 (not $5.00); $0.75 or 75 cents
8 pounds
1 yard
24 hours
50%
6 p.m. (not 6:00 p.m.); 11:58 p.m. is written 2358 in military time
100:1 (but 100-to-1 chance)
Page 2
10 years old (but 10-year-old management plan)

When two or more numbers appear in the same sentence, and at least one of them is 10 or higher, use numerals for all numbers in that sentence. But if none of the numbers is higher than 10, write out all the numbers.

> The field crew needed 15 clipboards, 10 GPS units, 4 measuring tapes, and 1 case of beer.
> The field crew needed nine clipboards, eight GPS units, four measuring tapes, and one case of beer.
> A team of four women ran the 1-mile relay in 3 minutes 20 seconds. (note: no *and* is required after *minutes*)
> The contractor, three engineers, and one surveyor inspected the 3-mile road. (numeral "3" because it's a unit of measure)

Hyphenate compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine (when used to start a sentence) and in compound adjectives. Use numerals for these numbers if they don't start a sentence.

> Twenty-one municipal water supplies were sampled, and all 21 were severely polluted.
> The 7-year-old management plan was out of date.

Do not hyphenate number modifiers with a possessive noun.

> 1 week's pay (use an *'s* because it is 1 week)
> 2 hours' work (use an *s'* because it is more than 1)
> 1 minute's delay (**but:** a 1-minute delay)

Hyphenate a unit modifier following, but referring back to, the modified word(s) and use the singular.

> motor, alternating-current, 3-phase, 60-cycle, 115-volt
> glass jars, 5-gallon, 2-gallon, 1-quart
> belts, 1 1/4-inch, 1/2-inch, 1/4-inch, 2-inch

Write out large numbers in a way that your audience will most easily grasp.

> 12 million not 12,000,000
> 1.5 million, not a million and a half

However, take care with figures if your audience extends beyond Americans. In the States, *billion* means a thousand million. In some European countries, *billion* means a million million. (**Note:** Great Britain has adopted the American way but other European countries have not.) For international audiences, it's best to use figures for numbers in the millions and higher.

Write out one of the numbers (usually the shorter one) when two appear consecutively in a phrase, but never write out years. Write out the first number when it modifies a unit of measure, even if that number is shorter in written form. Always use numerals for year (and it's grammatically correct to start a sentence with a year, but it looks awkward; e.g. *2011 was a big year for destructive weather patterns*).

> The plan called for 52 two-part training modules over 3 years.
> In 2006 seventy-five municipal water supplies were inspected.
> The technician used ten 3-inch pipes. (contrary to AP style, which says *10 three-inch pipes* or *four four-bedroom houses*)

Use superscripts for mathematical notations but not for ordinals.

10^2x11^9
12th in line; 1st to arrive
2nd to the last

Although it's commonly accepted practice to omit the comma with numbers in the thousands, a comma is preferred for clarity, especially in technical writing.

2,000 not 2000 (unless you mean the year 2000)

Note: European countries and Canada often use a comma for the decimal point. Take care not to confuse when writing for a foreign audience.

Use numerals for serial numbers. Note the capitals in the last two examples; all sections, chapters, figures, tables, etc. should be capitalized but not lesser terms, such as pages, lines, paragraphs.

pages 352-357
lines 5 and 6
paragraph 1
Chapter 2
Section 7.5.1

5.2 UNITS OF MEASURE

Avoid using abbreviations or symbols in text for basic units of measure involving a single quantity (length, distance, time, height, pounds); instead write them out. Within tables, graphs, and charts the abbreviation is acceptable, but put a space between the unit and the numeral, unless space is limited.

3 inches (not *3 in* or *3in*)

Abbreviations are acceptable for derived units of measure (acquired by multiplying/dividing, such as miles per hour, parts per million, square feet).

32 mph
52 lb/in^2
96 ppm

5.3 YEARS & DATES

In a contraction, fiscal year, consecutive years, or a continuous period of 2 years or more are written as follows and are joined by an en dash, not a hyphen (see entry on dashes).

1989–92
1998–99
1998–2001 (change of century, not *1998–01*)
2001–3
2000–2001 (not *2000–01* to avoid multiple ciphers together)
FY 2010 or FY10

If the word *from* precedes the year, or the word *inclusive* follows it, the second year is not shortened and the word *to* is used (not a dash)

from 2005 to 2007 (not *from 2005–7*)
2005 to 2007, inclusive (not *2005–2007 inclusive*)

Dates should be written thusly:

December 7, 1941, is a day that will live in infamy. **But:** On December 7 Pearl Harbor was bombed. (comma always follows a year with complete dates)

The team will celebrate in December 2010 when it completes its 3-month project. (no comma after the year in incomplete dates)

Additionally, pay attention to the use of commas with ordinals; avoid using ordinals in dates except when writing *the/of* constructions.

Incorrect: October 27th, 2010
Correct: October 27, 2010

Incorrect: the 27th of October, 2010
Correct: the 27th of October 2010

Avoid: We will finish on October 27th.
Preferred: We will finish on October 27.

5.4 DECIMALS & FRACTIONS

Decimals and fractions are more easily understood when written with numerals instead of words.

3/5 or 0.6, *not* three-fifths
1.36, *not* one point three six

Decimals are preferred for figures that convert cleanly, while fractions are best used with figures that do not convert cleanly. Your choice will depend on the necessity of precision required in your text (see next entry).

1/3 is precise; 0.34 is slightly more than 1/3; 0.3333 is awkward
1/4 is exactly 0.25

However, avoid using fractions or decimals in cases of approximation; instead, write out the number.

1/4 mile [or *0.25 mile*] *down the road* implies that it is accurately [or precisely] that distance
one-quarter mile down the road implies an approximation

Use a cipher (0) before a decimal point without a whole unit. Omit the cipher after a decimal point unless the figure is an exact measurement. All figures less than 1 have singular units.

0.25 inch (**but:** .30 caliber)
0.5 inch (not *inches*)
0.58 cubic foot (not *feet*)
1.25 inches

Fractions standing alone, or if followed by *of a* or *of an*, are generally spelled out.

> I've heard that three-fifths of all water quality specialists are brilliant.
> I'm so full, I want only one-half of an apple instead of the whole thing.

Use fractions or decimals for modifiers or when writing out the words renders the sentence cumbersome. Close the space between the whole number and the fraction when using numerals.

> ½-inch pipe (not *half-inch pipe*)
> 3½ times the amount *or* 3.5 times the amount (not *three and one-half times the amount*)
> 3½ (closed space, not *3 ½*)

5.5 ORDINAL NUMBERS

When ordinals appear in the same phrase, and one of them is 10th or more, use figures for all.

> This legislation was passed in the 1st session of the 102nd Congress.
> He represented the first, third, and fourth regions.
> **But:** The report was the sixth in a series of 14. (see next entry)

Ordinals and numerals appearing in the same sentence are treated according to the separate rules governing ordinals and numerals standing alone or in a group.

> The fourth group contained three items.
> The fourth group contained 12 items.
> The 8th and 10th groups contained three and four items, respectively.
> The eighth and ninth groups contained 9 and 12 items, respectively.

Beginning with 10th, use figures for numbered streets, avenues, etc.

> First Street NW
> 13th Street
> 810 12th Street

5.6 NUMBERS WRITTEN OUT

Do not repeat a written-out number in figures (*She had five [5] reports to write*.) except in legal documents. In such cases, follow these rules:

> five (5) dollars, *not* five dollars (5)
> ten dollars ($10), *not* ten ($10) dollars
> **But:** She had five reports to write.

If spelled out, whole numbers should be set in the following form:

> two thousand twenty (not *two thousand **and** twenty*)
> one thousand eight hundred fifty (not *one thousand eight hundred **and** fifty*)
> eighteen hundred fifty (not *eighteen hundred **and** fifty*)

However, if spelled out, any number containing a fraction, or piece of a whole, should use the word *and* for the fraction or piece:

sixty-two dollars and four cents
ninety-nine and three-tenths degrees
thirty-three and seventy-five one-hundredths shares

5.7 Signs & Symbols

In general, and for clarity, use as few symbols as possible and stick to symbols more commonly known to your audience. Unless you clearly define them upon first reference, and use that symbol to represent that specific word throughout your text, avoid using symbols that have different meanings in different disciplines (e.g., T can mean *temperature*, *Tesla*, and *tera*). Instead, write out the word to avoid confusion.

Use °F and close the figure with the symbol. If Celsius must be used, put it in parentheses after the Fahrenheit reference.

32°F (0°C)
But: from 32 °F to 45 °F (space between the numeral and *°F* when listing a range of temperatures)
Also correct: 32 °F – 45 °F

When using the symbol % close the gap with the figure. In narrative, some people prefer *percent* instead of the symbol. Whichever you choose, be consistent throughout the document.

3% (**not** *3 percent* or *3 %*)

Use µ for microgram (no italics).

Refer to the GPO Style Manual section titled Signs & Symbols for more detailed usage rules (http://www.gpoaccess.gov/stylemanual/browse.html).

5.8 International System of Units (SI) Style Guidelines

Use a period after abbreviated units only when they end a sentence.

Incorrect: The stream is 75 ft. from the road.
Correct: The stream is 75 ft from the road. The distance is 75 ft. (Better yet, write out "feet.")

Use standard unit symbols, prefix symbols, unit names, and prefix names. Follow ICIS-DMR style.

s for second (not sec); cm^3 for cubic centimeter (not cc)

Write unit symbols in roman (straight) type. Write variables and quantity symbols in italics (m for meters vs. *m* for mass or s for seconds vs. *s* for displacement). Superscripts and subscripts are in italic type if they represent variables, quantities, or running numbers; they are in roman type if they are descriptive. These rules apply independent of the font used for surrounding text.

For more information on when to use italics or roman typeface, refer to the National Institute of Standards and Technology's (NIST) "Typefaces for Symbols in Scientific Manuscripts" (http://physics.nist.gov/cuu/pdf/typefaces.pdf).

No "s" is necessary to make a plural for a unit symbol.

Incorrect: 75 cms
Correct: 75 cm

Symbols for units are lowercase except for those derived from a person's name. For example, the unit of pressure is named after Blaise Pascal, so its symbol is written "Pa," whereas the unit itself is written "pascal." **The one exception** is *liter*, whose original symbol "l" resembles the numeral 1 or sometimes the uppercase letter "I" (depending on the typeface used). NIST recommends that "L" be used instead.

Put a space between the numerical value and unit symbol unless when the value is used in an adjectival sense. **Exceptions:** superscript units for plane angle and the symbols for degrees and % are all closed with their corresponding numerals.

Incorrect: a 25 kg sphere; an angle of 2 ° 3 ′ 4 ″
Correct: a 25-kg sphere; an angle of 2° 3′ 4″

Use the unit symbol following each numeric value to avoid confusion.

Incorrect:
35 x 48 cm
1 MHz–10 MHz; 1 to 10 MHz
20 °C–30 °C; 20 to 30 °C
123 ± 2 g
70 ± 5 %
240 V ± 10 % (you cannot add 240 V and 10 %)

Correct:
35 cm x 48 cm
1 MHz to 10 MHz **or** (1 to 10) MHz
20 °C to 30 °C **or** (20 to 30) °C
123 g ± 2 g **or** (123 ± 2) g
70 % ± 5 % **or** (70 ± 5) %
240 x (1 ± 10 %) V

When writing dimensionless quantities, the terms *ppm* (parts per million), *ppb* (parts per billion), and *ppt* (parts per trillion) are recognized as country-dependent terms, since their values vary among countries. SI, therefore, recommends avoiding these terms when writing for an international audience. Instead, use numerals and symbols. (Below *V*, *l*, and *t* are volume, length, and time)

2.0 µL/L; 2.0 x 10^{-6} *V*
4.3 nm/m; 4.3 x 10^{-9} *l*
7 ps/s; 7 x 10^{-12} *t*

6.0 USEFUL REFERENCES

1. **The Gregg Reference Manual** (http://www.mhhe.com/business/buscom/gregg/)
   Widely used in business writing and adopted by the Montana Secretary of State. Use this manual to comply with formatting and usage rules when and where required by Montana's governing bodies. Especially useful for composing letters, memos, emails.

2. **The Associated Press Stylebook** (http://www.apstylebook.com/)

Use for information on the treatment of specific words and terms. New versions are issued frequently; the online version is updated regularly. Where AP style is not explicit enough for DEQ's needs, refer to Gregg style. DEQ departs from AP style in a few ways, which are noted throughout this guide.

3. **The Chicago Manual of Style** (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html)
More comprehensive than *The AP Stylebook*. Use it for detailed rules on grammar and punctuation.

4. **The Elements of Style**, by William Strunk Jr. & E.B. White
A classic guide, succinct and clear, used for decades and praised by writers and editors everywhere.

5. **The Elements of Technical Writing**, by Gary Blake & Robert W. Bly.
An excellent, highly recommended, easy-to-read resource for anyone who writes or edit reports. Some features: (1) simple rules for tight, clear writing; (2) a list of jargon and redundant phrases to avoid; and (3) how to use numbers, units of measure, equations, and symbols.

6. **EPA Communications Style Book** (http://www.epa.gov/productreview/stylebook/writing.html)
Offers guides to grammar, punctuation, usage, and more. Some styles may differ from DEQ's style but a good guide for quick, online reference.

7. **General Printing Office (GPO) Style Manual**
(http://www.gpoaccess.gov/stylemanual/browse.html)
Offers guides to grammar, punctuation, usage, and more. Some styles may differ from DEQ's style but a good guide for quick, online reference.

8. **The Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)** (http://www.plainlanguage.gov/)
An organization of federal government employees formed PLAIN to support clear communication in government writing. The impetus behind the 2010 Plain Writing Act.

9. **Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary** (http://www.merriam-webster.com/)

10. See the **International Code of Botanical Nomenclature** (http://ibot.sav.sk/icbn/main.htm) and the **International Code of Zoological Nomenclature** (http://www.nhm.ac.uk/hosted-sites/iczn/code/) for details on proper scientific nomenclature for plants and animals, respectively.

11. **Technical Communication**, by Mike Markel
(http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/techcomm9e/default.asp#t_498169____)
A superb resource for technical writers that includes examples of how to write all manner of technical reports, proposals, letters, and more. Also includes information about how to organize and design documents, research subject matter, write collaboratively, analyze audience and purpose, write coherent and effective sentences, create and display graphics, and write and deliver presentations.

APPENDIX A - HOW TO REFER TO DEQ AND ITS DIVISIONS

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality is a large, complex organization. Over the years it has become customary to refer to various parts of DEQ by titles and nicknames that are inaccurate. Below is outline guidance on how to refer to DEQ and its sections to be consistent and in accordance with Montana statutes.

DEQ's structure is described in ARM 17.1.101. Essentially, DEQ is divided into divisions, bureaus, and sections. Sections may be divided into units, programs, or funds. We also have boards and advisory councils. When in doubt, refer to the organizational charts found on the DEQ website.

When referring to DEQ, use the highest level of the organization possible without compromising the information. For example, it's best to use "Montana Department of Environmental Quality" or "DEQ" rather than referring to a specific division or bureau, unless doing the latter is necessary. If you must identify a specific division or bureau, name it in context:

DEQ Enforcement Division
DEQ Permitting and Compliance Division's Hazardous Waste Section
DEQ Office of Financial Services
Energy and Pollution Prevention Bureau of the DEQ Planning, Prevention & Assistance Division

Never refer to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality as "the agency" nor as "MDEQ" nor as "the DEQ" (simply "DEQ" will do without the article "the"). Avoid references to "the Department." If you must use the latter, use a lowercase "d" ("the department").

Refer to the boards and advisory councils as separate from DEQ itself:

Correct: the Board of Environmental Review
Incorrect: DEQ Solid Waste Advisory Council

APPENDIX B - USING THE DEQ LOGO

The DEQ logo is the agency's official trademark and should be used in official capacities only. The logo provides the public with an easily recognizable symbol. Used in conjunction with other logos, DEQ's logo implies a professional relationship. Never use the logo in any way that directly or indirectly expresses or implies DEQ sponsorship, affiliation, certification, approval, or endorsement that may not exist. However, do encourage other agencies, entities, or individuals with whom we partner to include DEQ's logo in jointly produced project materials.

Follow these guidelines for correctly using the DEQ logo:

- Always use the full logo, never just its outline.
- Maintain the original colors, without altering color or tone.
- Use the logo as it was created. Never distort it, delete certain features or substitute other features, nor use any of the logo's elements separately. This includes the original typeface.
- Always use the logo on a level plane. Never rotate the logo.

Using a single logo strengthens DEQ's public brand as an agency; using numerous varied logos weakens branding. If you need to create a new logo for DEQ units or projects, **you must secure approval from DEQ's Public Affairs Coordinator** (who will vet it through proper channels). Always pair DEQ's official logo with the unit or project logo.

LOGO FILES

DEQ's logo comes in a variety of styles and file formats to meet different needs. You'll find them on the network drive at H:\GRAPHICS\DEQ Logo. First determine whether you need full color, single color, or black-and-white. Next, choose a file format most appropriate for the way your document will be published. In general, the best choice is a .jpg image. If you prefer a .tif file, note this format is for paper documents and cannot be used for websites.

You can resize logos for importing into both paper and electronic documents. Keep in mind, the logo appears over a white background, which may clash with your material. If you need a transparent background, use a .gif file, but be aware this format may be difficult to resize. If you need the DEQ logo in another file format, or for a specialized job, please submit a HelpDesk ticket or call 444-1840.

APPENDIX C - GUIDANCE ON DEQ EMAIL

DEQ SIGNATURE LINES

An email signature can say a great deal about the professionalism of both you and DEQ. This is especially true for emails sent outside of DEQ, which tend to be more formal than just a brief reply or comment to a coworker. For outside emails, you must adhere to the following guidance on signature lines:

- Keep it short while providing all essential information for the recipient to contact you.
- Never use quotations, mission statements, or logos.
- Never use special fonts, Outlook stationary, colors (only black), graphics, or animations.

Tips for professional email signature lines include:

- Use one contact phone number and/or email address. Pick your preferred contact method and skip the rest.
- Omit your mailing address and fax number unless necessary to include.
- Include your name and email address in replies and forwards.
- Don't attach your vCard to messages. Not everyone uses them, and those that do use them don't need to receive them repeatedly.
- Leave out a legal disclaimer unless required to do so.
- Leave out a virus-checked message at the bottom of every email.
- Use simple, easy-to-read fonts (e.g., Times Roman, Arial, Calibri, Verdana).

Examples of acceptable email signatures:

Jackie Doe
Hazardous Waste Site Cleanup Bureau
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
(406) 444-1111
jkdoe@mt.gov

John Doe
DEQ Bureau Chief
406-444-1111
Jdoe3@mt.gov
www.deq.mt.gov

Jeff Doe
Administrative Support
DEQ Industrial & Energy Minerals Bureau
Phone: (406) 444-1111
Fax: (406) 444-1111
Jedoe@mt.gov

EMAIL ETIQUETTE

All emails sent from your DEQ email address represent the agency as a whole and are, legally, the property of DEQ. They can be archived long after you've deleted them from your computer and long after you've left the agency. That's why it's always best to use the appropriate level of formality; maintain a courteous and professional tone; and be sure to use proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

CONTENT

Work-related emails should always be courteous and professional; avoid language that is provocative, abusive, predatory, or foul. In particular, libelous or defamatory language can land both you and DEQ in serious trouble. Even when emailing coworkers, try to use a level of professionalism that won't embarrass you later. If you're uncertain whether something might be offensive to anyone, leave it out.

> **Whoa!:** Hey Sue, just got back from that conference in Phoenix. WHAT A TOTAL WASTE OF TIME!!! I can't believe that jerk boss of ours sent me there! Does he even live in the 21st century?!! Even that loser, Ted, in Sales would know that this supposedly new approach to marketing died with the printed newspaper.
>
> **Go!:** Hi Sue, I just returned from the conference in Phoenix. I'd like to give you my impressions when you have some time. Thanks.

Use a positive, more thoughtful tone and choose words carefully to express touchy situations. Avoid accusatory language; asking nicely usually gets better results.

> **Whoa!:** You guys returned the field equipment in pretty bad shape. Ever heard of soap and water? Even my 3-year-old knows how to clean up after himself.
>
> **Go!:** The field equipment came back pretty dirty. I'm not sure what happened but could your team please clean it? Keeping it in good shape will help it last longer. Thanks!

For sensitive or confidential information, consider using the phone instead, or request an in-person meeting. Remember, emails can be forwarded, and anything in writing can come back to haunt you. Use the appropriate tone and style for both your audience and the situation.

> **Whoa!:** We need to talk about Jim's work performance. He totally screwed up again, and I think he should be fired. Worse, I heard he tried to pass off an idea as his but then I found out that Jane really posed it first. Jane does all the work and she should get credit.
>
> **Go!:** I'd like to discuss the work performance of one of your direct reports. Could we set up a time to meet in person?

Get to the point quickly; omit unnecessary background information and irrelevant details. Avoid archaic or wordy phrases like "pursuant to our agreement," "attached please find," "the reason I am writing to you is," and other similar fluff.

> **Whoa!:** Pursuant to our agreement, attached please find Appendix B, which you said you would review. It contains some things I think you'll find interesting. Remember that conference I went to in Phoenix? Well the keynote speaker posed some unusual suggestions for improving our sales, so I thought I'd incorporate some of that stuff into the Appendix and I'd really like to know what you think about it. Some of it may sound quirky but I think we can pull it off and I know just who is Sales can do it! Your opinion really matters to me cuz you've been in the biz for a long time …
>
> **Go!:** As promised, I'm attaching Appendix B for your review. I look forward to your comments. In particular, let me know what you think of the recommendations on page 3.

Use the appropriate level of formality for the audience and the situation. All emails sent from your DEQ address should reflect at least a moderately formal tone without flowery language.

> **Too formal:** It was inevitably the case that our team was successful in presenting our proposal, which was of the highest quality. I would like to, therefore, commend everyone for performing in a most industrious manner, and I extend my appreciation.

Moderately formal: Thank you, team, for an excellent proposal. I appreciate your hard work.

> **Too informal:** Our presentation was a total disaster! The client obviously doesn't appreciate what it takes to slap these things together.

Moderately formal: Although our presentation didn't go as we'd planned, I hope to speak with the client to reiterate some of our points.

Informal exchanges among coworkers are acceptable: "Hey, man, thanks for the tip on that restaurant. Totally awesome food!"

When email recipients are unknown to you, use a more formal tone, which you convey by both language and layout. That is, treat your email as you would a letter. Use full sentences properly punctuated and spelled. Use courteous language—but not wordy or flowery. Break the lines into short digestible paragraphs and close with "sincerely" or other courteous sign-off.

> David Shaw
> Disposals R Us
> 123 Main Street
> Helena, MT 59601
>
> Dear Mr. Shaw,
>
> Thank you for your email about applying for a MPDES permit for Disposals R Us. You will find all the information you need on our website at http://www.deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/mpdes/default.mcpx.
>
> There are two kinds of permits: general and individual. General permits cover wastewater discharges from common activities, such as construction or industrial. Individual permits are

issued when specific facility conditions or activities need authorization. Please read the information carefully to determine which would apply to your business situation.

You may contact our Water Protection Bureau for more information; 406-444-1111.

Yours sincerely,

Always use correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Even in short or informal emails, errors can send an underlying message of carelessness or disrespect. What does that say about your work? Email may have replaced the spoken language in many interactions today, but that is no excuse for poorly written content.

Though quick and convenient, emails sometimes pose problems because tone of voice can easily be misconstrued. Tone includes the use of spelling and punctuation. For example, ALL CAPS could signify either anger/frustration or joy/laughter. Or did the writer simply want to emphasize something? Similarly, exclamation points can denote anger, joy, or sarcasm. Your recipient may not be able to tell by your email's content which of these emotions you intended.

Avoid writing an email when you're upset. Anger especially is easily conveyed in the written word—even if not intended—and often appears as sarcasm or outright abuse. Similarly, avoid firing off a response to an email that has made you angry. If responding will make you feel better, do so but send the email to yourself only. When you've calmed down, go back and read what you wrote, then adjust your words to meet the guidelines above (i.e., courteousness, professionalism, correctness).

ACCEPTED EMAIL PROTOCOL

- Answer promptly and only when an answer is needed.
- Use distribution lists cautiously; send emails only to those that need the information.
- Attach only necessary files and compress larger ones; send links whenever possible.
- Include the message thread when replying but avoid letting messages get too long or including too many people.
- Get permission from the original sender before copying or forwarding a message or attachment.
- Use the TO field for those who are expected to respond or take action.
- Use the CC field for those who need an FYI only.
- Create templates for frequently used responses.
- Confirm receipt of important documents or information that requires your action. A simple "received" or "will do." is sufficient.
- Avoid recalling emails; instead, send another email stating, "I sent the previous email in error. Please ignore." or something similar.
- Avoid email to discuss confidential or sensitive information; use the phone or speak in person.

Use sparingly, if at all:

- URGENT and IMPORTANT, unless it truly is.
- Reply All; reply only to those who need a reply and never use Reply All to carry on a conversation; call a meeting instead.

- BCC field, except for mass emails when recipients do not need to know who one another are. BCC in other situations can be construed as going behind backs.
- Delivery and read receipts. If a person doesn't respond in a timely fashion, call her.
- Abbreviations and emoticons.

We hope we don't have to say it, but…

- **DO NOT** forward chain letters or known hoaxes.
- Delete spam immediately without opening; notify IT if appropriate.
- **DO NOT** forward emails with libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist, or obscene remarks, jokes, or images.

Before You Hit SEND

- Proofread for grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Check for the appropriate level of formality.
- Check for a courteous tone.
- Check for offensive, or potentially offensive, language.
- Determine if email appropriate versus the phone or a talk in person.
- Check that the recipient list is correct.

APPENDIX D - GENERAL WRITING TIPS

Many of the following tips are paraphrased from EPA's Communications Style Book online and *The Elements of Technical Writing* (both found in Section 6.0 of DEQ's Editorial Guide). These tips are universal in good English writing, whether your prose is technical, creative, or journalistic.

Know your audience and writing goals.

Before writing anything, have a clear answer to each of the following questions:

1. What do you want to communicate?
    a. What is your goal in communicating the info?
    b. What do you want to accomplish with this communication?
    c. List in order of priority the most salient points.
2. Who is your audience? Define all potential members.
    a. What is their comprehension level of the materials presented? Write to the lowest common denominator.
    b. What does your audience want—or need—to know?
3. What is the best format (e.g., letter, report, brochure, fact sheet)? Format is often based on the salient points and the audience; sometimes the deadline matters, too.
4. What is your distribution plan? How will your audience get the material?
5. Who should be involved in the project?
6. What is the deadline?

Use the most effective style and tone to match your goals.

In nonfiction writing, style is either formal (sometimes academic), informal, or journalistic. Tone reflects the writer's attitude toward the subject matter and the audience. Tone must be appropriate for both the content and the style.

Fact sheets and other educational materials for the public should be written in a more informal style with a conversational tone.

Because technical writing is **utilitarian**, it must reflect accuracy more than anything else; the tone is always neutral. However, just because it's academic doesn't mean you have to use multi-syllabic words and long sentences. It's okay to infuse technical writing with a more informal tone.

According to *The Elements of Technical Writing*, "[A] more relaxed, conversational style *can* add conviction, readability, and vigor to your work."

Use the active voice as much as possible.

Use the active voice as much as possible and include an identifiable subject. Passive sentences often obscure responsibility (e.g., *a report was compiled* doesn't indicate who wrote it). Active sentences are strong, clear, simple, and credible. The active voice not only makes writing more vigorous, it simplifies prose by eliminating unnecessary words.

> **Passive:** An emergency meeting was called by DEQ to address pollution problems.
> **Active:** DEQ called an emergency meeting to address pollution problems.

The passive voice is okay—even necessary—at times. Use it when the doer is either unimportant or unknown. As long as the meaning is clear you may use the passive voice, but do so sparingly and with caution. Both examples below are acceptable ways to cast a sentence.

> The first water samples were collected in 1962.
> It was found that *E. coli* contaminates Butte's water.

Avoid ambiguity; use plain rather than complex or elegant language.

Say what you mean and keep the prose simple. Delete unnecessary information, words, and phrases that don't add meaning to your writing. Check out this real DEQ sample:

> It was noted during the facility site evaluation that the installed BMPs in the southeast and northwest corners of the facility site were not installed according to specifications provided in the Site Map (Photos 1 and 4). Specifically, there are tracking pads installed at each location. The Site Map clearly states that silt fence will be installed at the corners of the track pad. There was no silt fence installed at either track pad. As a result, there is a potential for sediment to be discharged from the construction-site. BMPs must be implemented and maintained to minimize potential pollutants in storm water discharges and minimize or prevent significant sediment from leaving the construction-site.

How does this sound for a rewrite, assuming the meaning was properly translated:

> During the site evaluation DEQ noted that no silt fence was installed at the southeast and northwest corners of the facility's tracking pads (photos 1 and 4). As part of BMPs, the site map clearly states that a silt fence would be installed to prevent sediment being discharged from the construction site. BMPs must be implemented and maintained to minimize the potential for pollutants to enter water sources and to minimize or prevent significant amounts of sediment discharge from the construction site.

Use positive statements wherever possible.

Positive statements are easier to understand; e.g. *Do not close the valve.* vs. *Leave the valve open.* The words "do not" make the reader's brain stop (*Wait, what am I* not *supposed to do?*). Also, people respond more favorably to positive statements.

Break up the monotony by mixing long and short sentences.

Technical writers tend to cram lots of words into single sentences, forcing readers to work hard to understand the point. Vary the length of sentences in your document but aim for short ones when the subject matter is difficult to grasp. In letters, use shorter sentences more frequently; reports will have a higher number of longer sentences. When long sentences are necessary, insert shorter ones before and after them to give readers a break. Varying sentence length also promotes reader comprehension and keeps readers engaged.

Avoid clichés and jargon.

Clichés are words and phrases that have become meaningless with overuse. Instead, say exactly what you mean (e.g., use "roughly" instead of "ballpark figure").

Cliché's ugly stepsister is jargon. Here is what EPA says about jargon in its Communications Stylebook:

> It includes techno-talk, shop-talk, and random, stylized forms of bad grammar. Maybe the worst is jargon compounded with pretentiousness. The idea behind most jargon is that it is a code through which one communicates with the secret clan of people who "talk that way." At best, this is a dubious proposition; but, even if true, it is no more effective than plain language because people "talk that way" too.

Reserve jargon for an audience who understands it and even then, use it sparingly. Some examples of DEQ jargon include hazmat, gasification, foul flooding, and backwash.

Repeat if necessary but don't be redundant.

Repetition is an effective communication tool in teaching. Use it to remind readers of what is most important or to recall a previously mentioned idea in a document. Redundancy is unnecessary repetition. Many commonly used phrases are redundant. Watch out for these:

Redundant	**Use Instead**
absolutely essential	essential
adding together	adding
continue on	continue
first and foremost	first
cancel out	cancel
current status	status
point in time	time
in close proximity	close
goals and objectives	goals (or objectives)
final outcome	outcome

Revise, edit; edit, revise.

Even the best writers don't write it perfectly the first time. All writing requires revision followed by careful editing. The former is the writer's job, while the latter should be performed by competent editors, which includes your colleagues. You can save a lot of time by writing documents in simple prose right from the start. Don't try to make the first draft sound pretty or fancy or perfect. Practice writing as if writing to friend who is unfamiliar with the subject matter. Some writers edit as they write. Break the habit! Just get it down on paper first then mop up during your revision, abiding by the other nine tips above.

Remember, clarity is king.

Technical writers often use long noun strings, groups of nouns lumped together and used as adjectives to modify one noun—the last one in the string. **Avoid long noun strings at all costs**. Noun strings cripple sentences; they force readers to stop and re-read. In the worst cases noun strings render sentences incomprehensible. Control your writing by eliminating non-essential words or by using more prepositions and articles to clarify the relationships among the words.

> **Whoa!:** Montana's surface water use classification system
>
> **Go:** Montana's system for classifying surface water use

Go: Montana's system for classifying the use of surface waters

Whoa!: The resulting TMDL development priority status for all pollutants on the 303(d) list is reported in Appendix B.

Better: Appendix B includes the status of pollutants on the 303(d) list and their priority in developing TMDLs.

Although concise writing is always best, if three sentences are needed instead of two to get the point across, write three sentences. If you need to use more words to explain something, do so. Consider which of the following is easier to understand:

advanced tertiary biological nutrient removal system
advanced tertiary system for removing biological nutrients

Often, if you clearly state what you mean, your writing will naturally be concise. **Clarity always trumps brevity**. What good is your prose if readers must work hard to understand it, or worse, don't understand it at all?

APPENDIX E - COMMONLY MISUSED WORDS

The following words are commonly misused in the English language; many come from *The Chicago Manual of Style*, while others are common errors in technical writing, and specifically in DEQ documents. Chicago elaborates that dictionaries, although recommended authorities, often include common usage of words but often fail to comment on the standards of good usage for those words. Thus, Chicago style states: "…good usage should make only *reasonable* demands without setting outlandishly high standards. The purpose of the following glossary is to set out the reasonable demands of good usage as it stands today."

Refer to **Appendix A** for how to spell, capitalize, and hyphenate DEQ-specific terminology.

ability / capability / capacity *Ability* refers to a person's physical or mental skill or power to achieve something (the ability to ride a bicycle). *Capability* refers more generally to power or ability (she has the capability to be supervisor) or to the quality of being able to use or be used in a certain way (a jet with long-distance-flight capability). *Capacity* refers especially to a vessel's ability to hold or contain something (a high-capacity fuel tank). Used figuratively, *capacity* refers to a person's physical or mental power to learn (an astounding capacity for mathematics).

about / approximately *About* indicates a rough estimate; *approximately* indicates near accuracy.

advise / inform *Advise* means to offer counsel; *inform* means to communicate information.

> She advised us not to confront the treatment plant's owner.
> DEQ informed the group about the new permitting process.

affect / effect *Affect* is almost always a verb and means to influence, have an effect on. *Effect*, usually a noun, is an outcome or result. As a verb, *effect* means to cause or to bring about (the goal was to effect a major change in the regulations), though it's preferable to use a more accurate word such as *accomplish*, *perform*, *produce*, *generate*, or *make*.

> Pollution affects the quality of drinking water.
> Pollution's effects on water quality can be an enormous issue for municipalities.

alternate / alternative As a noun *alternate* means to substitute; as a verb, to change. *Alternative* is a choice between two or more possibilities.

among See *between / among*

anxious / eager When you are anxious, you are full of anxiety or worry. When you are eager, you are full of enthusiasm or desire. The former can make you sick to your stomach, while the latter can make you jump for joy. If you're anxious to get going, or to start your vacation, it means you're full of worry about it, which is probably not likely.

approximately See *about / approximately*

article See *section / article*

as See *like / as*

as yet / as of yet Stilted and redundant. Use *yet*, *still*, *so far*, or some other equivalent.

as per Though common in the commercial world, *as per* has long been considered nonstandard. Instead of *as per your request*, use *as you requested* or *per your request* (less good).

assure See *ensure / insure / assure*

awhile / a while (see also *while*) *Awhile* is adverbial (let's stop here awhile); *A while* is a noun phrase that follows the preposition *for* or *in* (she worked for a while before beginning graduate studies).

because of / due to *Because of* means by reason of or on account of (the field work was postponed because of bad weather); *due to* means attributable to (the field work went well due to the diligence of the team).

beside / besides *Beside* means next to, by the side of; *besides* means in addition to.

between / among Use *between* when referring to two things and *among* when referring to three or more things.

big / large / great Use *big* for bulk, mass, weight, volume; use *large* to describe dimension, extent, quantity, capacity; use *great* to describe importance, excellence, superiority. However, use *greater than* for comparing quantity.

Bureau / bureau Capitalize only when referring to the full name of a DEQ bureau. When referencing a bureau as simply "the bureau," use lowercase.

can See *may / might / can*

capability See *ability / capability / capacity*

capacity See *ability / capability / capacity*

capital / capitol / Capitol *Capital* refers to the location of a seat of government and is lowercase. (The capital of Montana is Helena.) *Capitol* refers to the actual building that houses the seat of government and is uppercase when referring to states or the U.S. government. (The Capitol in Helena is on Montana Street.)

center / middle *Center* is a point around which everything revolves; *middle* is an approximation and suggests a space rather than a point.

cleanup / clean up *Cleanup* is both a noun and adjective; *clean up* is a verb.

> The cleanup will take six weeks.
> Workers will clean up the site in six weeks.
> The cleanup work will take six weeks.

compare with / compare to To *compare with* is to discern both similarities and differences between like things (we compared the 2007 results with the 2005 results). To *compare to* is to note primarily similarities between things; use it when the intent is to assert (some compare learning grammar to getting teeth pulled). In most of your technical writing you will use *compare with*, unless you mean to imply irony, as in the latter example.

compose / comprise *Compose* means to assemble or constitute; *comprise* means to encompass (specifically, encompass that which is already assembled). Things compose groups and groups comprise things. Never use *is comprised of*, which is incorrect grammar, but you do use *is composed of*.

> The project manager, field advisor, and ground staff compose the inspection team.
> The inspection team comprises a project manager, field advisor, and ground staff.
> The inspection team is composed of a project manager, field advisor, and ground staff.

continuous / continual *Continuous* means uninterrupted; *continual* means frequently recurring.

convince / persuade *Convince* is to change someone's mind or overcome with proof; *persuade* is to plead or urge through argument. You can persuade someone to use the XYZ method without convincing her that it's the proper method to use.

data / datum Sources differ on the use of *data*; some technical writing gurus say *data* can take both a plural and singular verb or pronoun. CMS says: "In formal writing (and always in the sciences), use *data* as a plural." AP says data "normally takes plural verbs and pronouns" (emphasis added).

As per *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, *datum* is something given or admitted, especially as the basis for reasoning or inference. Use sparingly, if at all, as it's largely fallen out of use; however, *datums* are used when referencing GIS data.

> The data is sound (used as a collective)
> The data have been carefully collected (means individual items)
> The data has been carefully collected (means a single collection of items)

dispose / dispose of To *dispose* means to arrange, incline, or make ready; to *dispose of* means to get rid of something.

> The on-scene coordinator is disposed to clean up the site now.
> The on-scene coordinator will dispose of the hazardous material at an approved landfill.
> **Improper use:** EPA will dispose the hazardous material.

due to See *because of / due to*

each other / one another *Each other* refers to two things; *one another* refers to three or more things.

> The five of us greeted one another. (not *each other*)

eager See *anxious / eager*

effect See *affect / effect*

effects of *et al.* Vague; be specific instead.

> **Vague:** Pollutants can have an effect on municipal water supplies.
> **More precise:** Pollutants in municipal water supplies can make people sick.

effective / efficient A person or thing that performs its intended function is *effective*; but, if that person or thing wastes time, money, or effort in performing its function, it's not very *efficient*.

ensure / insure / assure *Ensure* means to make sure of something; *insure* means to take out an insurance policy; *assure* means to inform confidently.

> I will ensure whether you are entitled to receive benefits. You should be entitled since you were insured. Whatever the case, I assure you that I will follow up on this matter.

e.g. / i.e. *e.g.* means for example (*exempli gratia*); *i.e.* means that is (*id est*). The two are not interchangeable. Both are always followed by a comma and are best used in parentheses in technical or formal writing.

> I collected my belongings (i.e., toothbrush, sleeping bag, backpack) and left. (implies the person had no other belongings to collect)

> I collected my belongings (e.g., toothbrush, sleeping bag, backpack) and left. (implies the person had other belongings that she collected; the 3 on the list were just some of them)

entitled / titled Persons are *entitled* to privileges, while books and other works of art/productions are *titled* with a name. The corruption of the word *entitled* has been so great that most dictionaries now accept *entitled* to mean the title of. Note, however, that *en* is redundant (likewise is *encircled* when simply *circled* will do). Save ink and use *titled* when referring to the name of a piece of work.

farther See *further / farther*

Federal / federal Usually only capitalized when part of a proper noun (the Federal Register) but not in constructions such as *the federal government*.

fewer / less In general *fewer* is used for individual items, while *less* is used for bulk, quantity, or matters of degree. *Less* modifies collective nouns, mass nouns, and nouns denoting an abstract whole. *More than* is the opposite of both, however.

> The more you pester the project manager, the less respect she'll have for you.
> I have less than $20 in my wallet. **But:** I have fewer than 20 one-dollar bills.
> There were fewer people in the crowd than expected.

Avoid redundancy by never using *fewer in number* or *fewer number of people*. A simple *fewer* will do.

figuratively / literally / virtually *Figuratively* means like, similar, resembling; *literally* means exactly the same as stated; *virtually* means approximating reality.

Do not use *literally* unless you mean that a statement is exactly as it was stated. Similarly, avoid using *literally* for emphasis or to denote indignation, disbelief, or suffering of some kind: *We literally had one day to write the report!* is better written, *We had only one day to write the report!*

In no case should you use *literally* in exaggeration: *The boss literally blew up like a volcano when we told her we lost the data.* (Not only would that be fascinating to witness—if not a little messy—but a scientific curiosity.)

finalize Avoid in favor of stating what exactly must take place to complete that which you would like to make final. Use *complete* or another term.

> **Vague:** The contract will be finalized soon.
> **More clear:** The contract will be complete once all parties have signed it.

further / farther Use *further* when referring to matters that are not physically measurable; use *farther* when referring to physical distances.

> The further we investigate, the more issues we uncover.
> The farther we go down the road, the more interesting the scenery.

good / well *Good* pertains to a thing, including a condition or state of being; *well* pertains to an action. When your fingers are warm they feel good, but if they are sensitive they feel well.

> The wildlife biologist is a good scientist. She did well on her data collection project.

great See *big / large / great*

hopefully The bane of every picky editor's existence, this word is so commonly misused that its proper meaning is largely unknown to most.

> **Avoid:** Hopefully, the results will be in soon. (this means the results are full of hope)
> **Use:** We hope the results will be in soon.

i.e. See *e.g. / i.e.*

if / whether *If* is conditional; *whether* introduces an alternative, often in the context of an indirect question. Use *whether* in two circumstances: (1) to introduce a noun clause (he asked whether his tie was straight) (the answer is either *yes* or *no*), and (2) when using *if* would produce ambiguity. In the sentence *He asked if his tie was straight*, the literal meaning is "whenever his tie was straight, he asked"; the popular meaning "he wanted someone to tell him whether his tie needed straightening" may not be understood by all readers.

More tellingly, *call me to let me know if you can come* means that you should call only if you're coming; *call to let me know whether you can come* means that you should call regardless of your answer. Avoid substituting *if* for *whether* unless your tone is intentionally informal or you are quoting someone.

impact As a verb it is over used and literally means to drive or press closely into something. Use *affect* or *effect* and their variants instead.

> **Avoid:** The contamination will impact a large area.
> **Instead use:** The contamination will affect a large area.
> **Avoid:** The results will impact the way we collect data in the future.
> **Instead use:** The results will have an effect on the way we collect data in the future.

Even better, use precise terms to say exactly what you mean.

> **Vague:** Rising water temperatures have a serious effect on spawning beds.
> **More precise:** Rising water temperatures can reduce the number of spawning beds.

inform See *advise / inform*

insure See *ensure / insure / assure*

Internet A proper noun that must be capitalized.

irregardless It's not a word. Even your spell checker knows that. Use *regardless*.

large See *big / large / great*

less See *fewer / less*

like / as *Like* means similar to; *as* means in the same way that. Purists insist that *as* must introduce a clause (as a compliance officer, you have certain responsibilities) and *like* must always be a preposition coupled with a noun (cool like a mountain breeze). The traditional function of *like* is adjectival, not adverbial, so that *like* is governed by a noun or a noun phrase (managers often see themselves as battlers of bureaucracy like anti-government activists). As a preposition, *like* is followed by a noun or pronoun in the objective case (the person in that old portrait looks like me).

In ordinary speech, *like* displaces *as* or *as if* as a conjunction to connect clauses. For example, in *it happened just like I said it would happen*, *like* should read *as*; and in *you're looking around like you've misplaced something*, *like* should read *as if*. Because *as* and *as if* are conjunctions, they are followed by nouns in the nominative case (do you work too hard, as I do?). In technical writing, strive to use *like* for "similar to" and *as* for "in the same way that."
literally See *figuratively / literally / virtually*

may / might / can *May* means permission or free choice, as well as expressing something that is possible, factual, or could be factual; it is not interchangeable with *might* (uncertain, contrary, hypothetical), *can* (the state of being able), *could* (conditional, uncertain), or *would* (future conditional, uncertain).

> You may examine the results if you like. You might find they are contradictory.
> I might have left my equipment in the field but can't remember.
> I could do the work for you, but then you would never learn how to do it yourself.
> I can write five inspection letters in one day but they might not be accurate.

middle See *center / middle*

more than See *over / more than*

one another See *each other / one another*

online One word, not hyphenated.

> The reports can be found online.
> Go online to register and make comments.

over / more than *Over* is a preposition and refers to position; *more than* refers to a quantity that is greater than.

> **Incorrect:** There are over 300 lakes in Montana.
> **Correct:** There are more than 300 lakes in Montana.

percent / percentage *Percent* is per a hundred; *percentage* is a proportion in relation to a whole.

persuade See *convince / persuade*

principal / principle *Principal* as a noun means head of school, main participant, or sum of money; *principal* as an adjective means first or highest in rank, worth, or importance. *Principle* is a fundamental law or basic truth.

question whether / question of whether / question as to whether The first phrasing is the best, the second is next best, and the third is to be avoided.

Region / region Capitalize when referring to a specific regional office of a state or federal agency. Do not capitalize if referring to a geographic region.

> Missoula is home to the U.S. Forest Service's Region 1 headquarters.
> The New England region was hit with heavy snow.

section / article *Section* is not capitalized when referring to one part of a law or regulation (see *title*), nor is *article*. *Section* is capitalized when referring to report sections in text. Use the legal symbol for *section* (§) when appropriate.

> DEQ interprets section 303(d) to mean we must be in compliance or risk getting fined.
> Refer to Section 2.3 for more information about data collection.

should / will *Should* implies ought to; *will* suggests intention.

strategize Use *devise strategies* instead.

strategy / tactics A *strategy* is a long-term plan for achieving a goal. *Tactics* are shorter-term plans for achieving an immediate but limited success. A strategy might involve several tactics.

tactics See *strategy / tactics*

that / this (those / these) For better clarity use *that* to indicate something already mentioned and *this* to refer to something yet to come. Your audience has a better chance of getting your meaning.

> Montana's natural resources need conserving. That is the reason I volunteer.
> This is the reason I volunteer: Montana's natural resources need conserving.

that / which *That* tells something about a subject specific and necessary to the meaning of a phrase; *which* tells something about the subject that is unnecessary, an aside. The *which* clause is always set off by commas; *that* never is. Note, in British English, *that* is rarely used and replaced mostly with *which*.

> The project, which is 6 weeks overdue, is still with the contractor. (the project happens to be 6 weeks overdue but that is not important in this sentence)
> Let's review the project that is 6 weeks overdue. (as opposed to the project that is running on time)

title Capitalize when referring to a part of a law or regulation; not capitalized otherwise.

> DEQ interprets Title 41 to include all Montana residents.

titled See *entitled / titled*

tribal / tribes Capitalize when referring to the full name of an American Indian nation; lowercase when used alone and in plural form. Lowercase the adjectives *tribal* and *native* unless they are part of a proper name. Native Americans, American Indians, Indian Country, and Alaskan Native Villages should be capitalized.

> the Sioux and Navajo tribes; the Blackfeet Tribe; **but:** The Blackfeet's tribal lands border Glacier.

use / usage / utilize In most DEQ cases, *use* will be the most friendly and appropriate word. Use *utilize* only to mean *turn to practical use*; e.g., "I utilized a rock for a hammer." Use *usage* to mean *a firmly established and generally accepted procedure*, e.g., "Proper grammar usage applies to all."

virtually See *figuratively / literally / virtually*

waste Inherently plural; add an "s" only when distinguishing between different kinds of waste.

> Hospital waste comprises various dangerous items.
> Solid and liquid wastes must be treated differently.

Web Capitalize when referring to the World Wide Web (see *website* et al.).

website *et al.* AP and most other style guides now use *website* (not *Web site*). Similarly, *webcam*, *webcast*, *webinar*, and *webmaster* are single, lowercase words.

well See *good / well*

whether See *if / whether*

while (see also awhile / a while) *While* may substitute for *although* or *whereas*, especially if a conversational tone is desired (ex: While many readers may disagree, the scientific community has overwhelmingly adopted the conclusions presented here). However, because *while* can denote either time or contrast, the word is occasionally ambiguous. When a real ambiguity exists, *although* or *whereas* is the better choice.

which See *that / which*

will See *should / will*

who / whom *Who* is a nominative pronoun used as (1) the subject of a finite verb [it was Jim who noticed the leak in the storage tank] or (2) a predicate nominative when it follows a linking verb [me, that's who].

Whom is an objective pronoun that may appear as (1) the object of a verb [I learned nothing about the man whom I saw] or (2) the object of a preposition [the woman to whom I owe my life].

Many people use *who* colloquially in most contexts, and among those insecure about their grammar, there's a tendency to overcorrect and use *whom* when *who* would be correct. Writers and editors of technical or formal prose often resist the first of these; everyone should resist the second.

APPENDIX F - TROUBLESOME WORDS AND THEIR CORRECT PREPOSITIONS

The list of words below often cause writers trouble; however, some of the words do not always take prepositions. "Transitive" verbs are those that need an object to complete the thought (e.g., *The tire abutted the curb* does not make sense without the words **the curb**; therefore, **abutted** is transitive.)

abide (vb.): with ("stay"); by ("obey"); *none* (transitive)
abound (vb.): in, with [resources]
absolve (vb.): from [guilt]; of [obligation]
abut (vb.): on, against [land]; *none* (transitive)
accompanied (adj.): by (not *with*) [something *or* someone else]
accord (vb.): in *or* with [an opinion]; to [a person]
acquiesce (vb.): in [a decision]; to [pressure]
acquit (vb.): of (not *from*) [a charge]; *none* (transitive)
adept (vb.): at [an activity]; in [an art]
admit (vb.) ("acknowledge"): *none* (not *to*) (transitive)
admit (vb.) ("let in"): to, into; **admit** (vb.) ("allow"): of
anxious (adj.): about, over (preferably not *to*) [a concern]
badger (vb.): into [doing something]; about [a situation]
ban (vb.): from [a place]; **ban** (vb.): on [a thing; an activity]
based (adj.): on (preferably not *upon*) [a premise]; in [a place; a field of study]; at [a place]
becoming (adj.): on, to [a person]; of [an office or position]
bestow (vb.): on (preferably not *upon*) [an honoree]
binding (adj.): on (preferably not *upon*) [a person]
blasphemy (n.): against [a religious tenet]
center (vb.): on, upon (not *around*) [a primary issue]
chafe (vb.): at [doing something]; under [an irritating authority]
coerce (vb.): into [doing something]
cohesion (n.): between [things; groups]
collude (vb.): with [a person to defraud another]
commiserate (vb.): with [a person]
compare (vb.): with (literal comparison); to (poetic or metaphorical comparison)
comply (vb.): with (not *to*) [a rule; an order]
confide (vb.): to, in [a person]
congruence (n.): with [a standard]
connive (vb.): at [a bad act]; with [another person]
consider (vb.): *none* (transitive); as [one of several possible aspects (*not* as a substitute for "to be")]; for [a position]
consist (vb.): of [components (said of concrete things)]; in [qualities (said of abstract things)]
contemporary (adj.): with [another event]; **contemporary** (n.): of [another person]
contiguous (adj.): with, to [another place]
contingent (adj.): on (preferably not *upon*)
contrast (vb.): to, with [a person or thing]
conversant (adj.): with, in [a field of study]
convict (vb.): of, for (not *in*)
depend (vb.): on (preferably not *upon*)
differ (vb.): from [a thing or quality]; with [a person]; about, over, on [an issue]

different (adj.): from (but when a dependent clause follows *different*, the conjunction *than* is a defensible substitute for *from what*: "movies today are different than they were in the fifties")
dissent (n. & vb.): from, against (preferably not *to* or *with*)
dissimilar (adj.): to (not *from*)
dissociate (vb.): from
enamored (adj.): of (not *with*)
equivalent (adj.): to, in (preferably not *with*)
excerpt (n.): from (not *of*)
forbid (vb.): to (formal); from (informal)
foreclose (vb.): on [mortgaged property]
hale (vb.): to, into [a place]; before [a magistrate]
hegemony (n.): over [rivals]; in [a region]
identical (adj.): with (preferred by purists), to [something else]
impatience (n.): with [a person]; with, at, about [a situation]
impose (vb.): on (preferably not *upon*) [a person]
inaugurate (vb.): as [an officer]; into [an office]
inculcate (vb.): into, in [a person]
independent (adj.): of (not *from*) [something else]
infringe (vb.): *none* (transitive); on (preferably not *upon*) [a right]
inhere (vb.): in (not *within*) [a person; a thing]
inquire (vb.): into [situations]; of [people]; after [people]
instill (vb.): in, into (not *with*) [a person]
juxtapose (vb.): to (not *with*)
mastery (n.): of [a skill or knowledge]; over [people]
militate (vb.): against [a harsher outcome]
mitigate (vb.): *none* (transitive)
oblivious (adj.): of (preferred), to [a danger; an opportunity]
off (prep. & adv.): *none* (not *of*)
predilection (n.): for [a preferred thing]
predominate (vb.) (not transitive): in, on, over [a field; rivals]
preferable (adj.): to (not *than*); over [an alternative]
pretext (n.): for [a true intention]
reconcile (vb.): with [a person]; to [a situation]
reticent (adj.): about [speaking; a topic]
sanction (n.): for [misbehavior]; of [a sponsoring body]; to [a person; an event]
shiver (vb.): from [cold]; at [something frightening]
stigmatize (vb.): *none* (transitive); as [dishonorable]
subscribe (vb.): to [a periodical or an opinion]; for [stock]
trade (vb.): for ("swap"); in ("sell"); with ("do business with"); at ("patronize"); in [certain goods]; on ("buy and sell at")
trust (n.): in [faith]; for ("beneficial trust")
undaunted (adj.): in [a task]; by [obstacles]
unequal (adj.): to [a challenge]; in [attributes]
used (adj.): to ("accustomed"); for ("applied to")
vexed (adj.): with [someone]; about, at [something]