



**World Food
Programme**

WFP style guide

Table of contents

Abbreviations and acronyms.....	4
Bullet/List	5
Capitalization	7
Country names and currencies	9
Disclaimers	11
Footnotes	13
Non-English words	15
Numbers and units	16
Punctuation	19
Sentences.....	28
Spelling	30
Tables.....	31
Technical guidance for documents	32
Things to avoid	34
Usage.....	38
Verb tenses.....	43
Word index.....	45

WFP style guide

This guide sets out the writing conventions used in WFP documents and advises on usage. It is intended as a resource for authors writing in English who want their documents to conform to WFP writing conventions.

The aim is to help authors to produce clear, consistent, readable texts that are accessible to an audience that varies enormously in language and culture.

Writers should bear in mind that many of those who read WFP documents in English are not mother-tongue users of English. Many English-language documents are translated into the other official languages of WFP – Arabic, French and Spanish – and often into Russian and Chinese.

Aim your documents at a general audience. Do not assume that readers have technical knowledge. Avoid jargon. Be clear and concise but provide sufficient context so that what you write may be readily understood. Every document tells a story, and every story has a beginning, middle and end. Present ideas in a logical sequence.

Aim for clarity, accuracy and consistency.

For further information

Preferred word forms and spellings, acronyms, names of countries and WFP organizational abbreviations may be found on [UNTERM](#) or [FAO TERM Portal](#).

Abbreviations and acronyms

Keep the use of acronyms to a minimum; use them only where they make a document more readable.

If a name or phrase appears in a document only a few times do not use an acronym to represent it; write it in full the first time and for subsequent occurrences again write it in full or use an abbreviated version if there is no risk of confusion. Ideally, acronyms should not be used in headings (unless the use of the full name would render the heading impractically long).

An acronym should not be used without first spelling out the full name or phrase for which it stands. The first time such a name or phrase occurs it should be spelled out in full, with the acronym “defined” by placing it inside round brackets immediately after the name or phrase. A list of acronyms may be set out at the end of a document in which acronyms are used.

If an abbreviation or acronym first appears in a footnote, figure, table or box, it should be written out in full again the first time it is used in the main body of the document.

No acronyms except for **WFP** and **HIV/AIDS** should be used in the executive summaries of Executive Board documents.

Never use acronyms for governments – e.g. **the Government of Pakistan**, not **GOP** – or ministries – e.g. **the Ministry of Agriculture**, not **MOA** – or the names of countries – e.g. **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**, not **UK**. **World Bank** is never abbreviated.

Never use acronyms to refer to people or staff positions – e.g. **Country Director**, not **CD**.

Omit the article before acronyms used as nouns – e.g. **FAO**, not **the FAO**, but use it with initialisms, i.e., acronyms that are pronounced letter by letter, such as **the FBI**.

Acronyms do not have full stops – e.g. **WFP**, not **W.F.P.**

Bullet/List

A bullet list should:

- introduce the list with a colon;
- use initial lowercase letters;
- end each with a semicolon;
- put "and" after the penultimate semicolon; and
- close the final entry with a full stop.

When entries consist of complete sentences, begin each with a capital letter and end each with a full stop.

Bullet lists are not punctuated if the entries are very short:

- radios
- televisions
- cameras

Be consistent. Make sure the items all follow the same structure – complete sentences or verb phrases or noun phrases. For example:

Complete sentences

The project is characterized by the following features:

- It will provide a system of management and monitoring that will ensure sustainable use of the region's natural resources.
- It is expected to be self-financing through user fees.
- All stakeholders will participate in all aspects of system management.

Verb phrases (each bullet point begins with a verb):

The project is characterized by features that will:

- provide a system of management and monitoring that will ensure sustainable use of the region's natural resources;
- self-finance the system through user fees; and
- allow all stakeholders to participate in all aspects of system management.

OR **noun phrases** (each bullet point begins with a noun):

The project is characterized by the following features:

- provision of a system of management and monitoring that will ensure sustainable use of the region's natural resources;
- self-financing of the system through user fees; and
- participation of all stakeholders in all aspects of system management.

Do not create lists that use all three features, as in:

The project is characterized by the following features:

- provision [noun] of a system of management and monitoring that will ensure sustainable use of the region's natural resources;
- the system is expected to be self-financing [complete sentence] through user fees; and
- allows [verb] all stakeholders to participate in all aspects of system management.

Capitalization

Use capitals sparingly. Write Member State(s) of WFP and of the United Nations, but member state(s)/country(ies) of other institutions.

Job titles

References in text to WFP job titles such as budget officer, project director and accountant are not given as acronyms or capitalized. The following titles are capitalized: Secretary-General, Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, Assistant Executive Director, President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Chief, External Auditor, Chief Financial Officer.

Programmes, conferences, seminars, workshops

Once the full title is given, references to the programme, the conference, etc. are not capitalized.

Bodies proposed but not yet established

These are not capitalized. The same holds true for references to draft conventions and treaties that do not yet exist.

References to parts of documents

Do not capitalize *paragraph* or *annex*, e.g. "In paragraph 12, reference is made to ...".

Titles of documents and publications

The titles of **documents** are set in roman in quotation marks, with only the first word capital except for words that would otherwise be capitalized.

Committee members will need a copy of the document "Revision of Mali transitional interim country strategic plan and corresponding budget increase" for reference.

Note, however, that when a title is descriptive and can be used without interrupting the flow of the sentence it may be used without capitalizing the first word or using quotation marks.

Committee members will need a copy of the update on WFP's role in the collective humanitarian response (WFP/EB.A/2019/5-E) for reference.

For **publications**, use capitals for the initial letters except for articles and prepositions, and set the title in *italics*.

Committee members will need copies of *Sustainable Energy Planning: A practical Guide to Sustainable Community Development* at the meeting.

Government names

Government is capitalized when it refers to a certain government but not when it is plural or used as an adjective:

- the Government will provide funding;
- it is a government programme;
- the governments of the Russian Federation and Mozambique were present; and
- the Government of Uganda responded.

Words such as *committee* and *commission* take a capital letter only when used as part of a proper name. The word *Secretariat* takes a capital letter when referring to WFP.

Do not use acronyms to refer to governments or ministries.

Country names and currencies

For names of countries, adjectives of nationality and denominations of currency, consult [UNTERM](#) or [FAO TERM Names of countries and territories](#).

Names of countries

Countries have both “full” and “short” names. Short names are used in United Nations documents, while full names are only used in treaties.

Note that the short names of some countries differ from the way that people commonly refer to those countries: Plurinational State of Bolivia, State of Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic, United Republic of Tanzania, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Some short names include the definite article; examples include the Gambia, the Niger and the Sudan.

When listing countries, in both narrative text and in lists, list them in alphabetical order except when there is a logical reason to do otherwise, for example when listing countries in descending order of malnutrition rates.

The short names *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* and *United States of America* must be set out in full (i.e., as written here) the first time they appear in a document but thereafter may be presented in the abbreviated forms *United Kingdom* and *United States*. The abbreviated forms may also be used in tables, if necessary, without using the full short form first.

Currency

In most documents, including every document for the Executive Board, use ISO currency code to abbreviate currency.

- USD 43.2 million
- EUR 15.4 million

For external communications, US\$ may be used to denote the United States dollar. Note that in that case, there is no space between the \$ and the figure: e.g. US\$250,000.

In text, when referring to currency, one decimal place is preferred for all amounts in millions.

- Food-for-work activities totalled USD 23.2 million.

Two decimal places are preferred for all amounts in billions.

- The programme of work is expected to total USD 4.21 billion.

There will be exceptions to this in financial documents, in which amounts are given in full: e.g. USD 23,231,059.

In text, amounts under 1 million are written in hundreds of thousands (without decimal places) rather than using the million unit measure.

- USD 873,300 will finance technical assistance and special studies. (not USD 0.873 million.)

Disclaimers

Notice encouraging dissemination

The World Food Programme encourages the dissemination of the material contained in this publication on condition that reference is made to the source.

Disclaimer notices

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the World Food Programme concerning the legal or development status of any territory, country, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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Views of the author

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the World Food Programme.

Maps

The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map(s) do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of WFP concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory or sea area, or concerning the delimitation of frontiers.

Countries

The word "countries" appearing in the text refers to countries, territories and areas without distinction.

Companies/brand names/products

The mention or omission of specific companies, their products or brand names does not imply any endorsement or judgement on the part of the World Food Programme.

Accuracy at time of preparation

The conclusions given in this report are considered appropriate at the time of its preparation. They may be modified in the light of knowledge gained at subsequent stages of the project.

Footnotes

Footnotes should be brief, limited to providing references or extra information that would be out of context in the body of the text.

For published references

¹ John Smith and Aimee Brown. 2001. *The School Feeding Handbook*.

² John Smith. "Feeding Children" in *Journal of Nutrition* 8(6): 22–23.

³ K.P. Pietersen. 2007. *World Hunger – a Statistical Analysis*.

⁴ D.C.S. Compton. 2007. *Hybrid crops for food production*.

Note that the titles of articles are set in normal font with the title of the publication in which they appear *italicized*. The titles of all other sources except Executive Board documents are *italicized*.

For Executive Board documents

¹ "Food Aid for All" (WFP/EB.1/2007/5-A).

Hyperlinks

Where the cited source is available online insert a hyperlink to it in the title. Where it is not available online insert "(not available online)" at the end of the citation. If a work is not available either online or in hard copy insert "(unpublished)" at the end of the citation. Information about the nature of the source, such as "Ph.D. thesis", may be inserted as well but is not required.

Authors

Where there are three or fewer authors list them in the order in which they appear in the cited source by first name (or initial if that is the only thing provided in the source) and last name. Where there are more than three authors list the first author only, followed by "and others".

¹ Susan Wilson and Roberto Salazar. 2010. *The ABCs of Food Aid*.

² Bernadette Lacroix and others. 2020. *The triple nexus*.

Use of ibid

"Ibid." (the abbreviation for "ibidem", meaning "in the same place") refers to the work cited in the preceding footnote or to the preceding work within the same footnote. The term should not be used when the preceding footnote includes more than one source.

¹ World Bank Group. 2021. *Prosperity for all Saotomeans: Priorities to end poverty, promote growth and build resilience in São Tomé and Príncipe – Systematic Country Diagnostic*.

² Ibid.

In line with the United Nations editorial manual, Latin terms such as "Ibid" are **not** italicized.

Footnote numbering

Footnote numbers should be in superscript and attached to the word or phrase to which they refer. If the word or phrase is followed by punctuation the footnote number is placed after the punctuation mark.

... at the end of the programme,⁷ when ...

Notes to tables

Notes to a table should be presented immediately at the foot of the table, not as footnotes at the bottom of the page. They should be indicated by lower case letters or symbols rather than numbers.

Non-English words

If necessary, briefly explain local terms in parenthesis or in a footnote when they are first mentioned, for example "...*walo* (low-lying land flooded during part of the year)...", "...*woreda* (administrative district)...".

Non-English words are set in italics, without using quotes.

Some Greek and Latin words have passed into common usage in English – but be careful with the plural forms:

- phenomenon/phenomena
- criterion/criteria
- genus/genera
- datum (rare in the singular)/data
- forum/fora
- medium/media

Numbers and units

General

Numbers from one to ten inclusive are written in text as words, whereas numbers from 11 upward are written as numerals. Exceptions to this are as follows:

- Always use Arabic numerals for dates, percentages, currency, measurements, ages, ratios and scales.
- Write out any number that begins a sentence, e.g. Fifteen NGOs were present.
- Use numerals where a number accompanies a unit, e.g. 5 km, 8 percent, USD 2 million.
- When providing two or more numbers that refer to the same subject and at least one of them is over ten, use Arabic numerals, e.g. the number of replies varied, ranging between 2 and 12 per group.

In regular text, use commas to denote thousands: e.g. 100,000 or 51,357. Write numbers in millions as a numeral, with one decimal place if necessary, e.g. 2.6 million mt. In tables, thousands and millions are denoted by a hard space, e.g. 6 234 859.

Qualifiers - avoid them

Do not qualify numbers with “some”, “over”, “more than” “less than” or “approximately”. If it is important to give an exact number, do so; otherwise use the formats set out here. Hence:

“... the operation requires 4,000 mt of food ...” not “... the operation requires some 4,000 mt of food ...” “... targeting 600,000 refugees ...” not “... targeting more than 600,000 refugees ...”

It is obvious that the numbers are approximations.

Fractions

Write fractions in words. Fractions are not hyphenated: two thirds; four fifths. They are hyphenated, however, when used as compound adjectives, e.g. “a two-thirds share”.

Units of measure

The standard abbreviations for metric units of measure are used.

Unit	Symbol
Metres	m
Square metres	m ²
Cubic metres	m ³
Kilometres	km
Hectares	ha
Metric tons (do not use "tonnes")	mt
Grams	g
Kilocalories	kcal

Do not use punctuation with such measurements (e.g. 1 cm, 6 km, 5 g, 10 ha).

Do not abbreviate the word *litre*.

Percent

Use **percent** (not per cent or %) in text. The use of % is acceptable only in tables and graphs. When using the percentage sign in a table, do not use a space (e.g. 16%, not 16 %).

Dates

WFP uses the international day/month/year format for dates (e.g. Monday 3 July 2006). Note that there is no comma between the month and the year and no "th" or "rd" after the date numeral.

Write a period covering a number of days as follows: "from 10 to 20 July 1997" OR "10–20 July 1997"; "from 15 October to 1 November" OR "15 October–1 November".

Do not mix them.

Crop, fiscal or school years

Use a slash (/) between years to indicate a period beginning in one calendar year and ending in another – e.g. "...the 2003/2004 school year...". Use an en-dash (–) between

years to indicate calendar years. Thus 1995–1999 would cover the five-year period including both 1995 and 1999.

Centuries

Write out centuries in full (e.g. “twenty-first century”, not 21st century).

Decades

Decades should be written using numerals. For example, “In the 1990s ...”. Do not use an apostrophe (not “the 1990’s”).

Time

The 24-hour system is used: 11:00 (not 11 a.m.); 17:45 (not 5.45 p.m.) Do not use the word hours: e.g. “13:00” (not “13:00 hours”).

Punctuation

Full stops

Use full stops in contractions such as **e.g.** and **i.e.** and in abbreviations such as **M.Sc.** and **Ph.D.**

Do not use full stops:

- after people's titles, e.g. Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr; spell out *Professor*;
- in acronyms, e.g. WFP, FAO;
- after abbreviations of units of measurement, e.g. 15 kg and 68 ha;
- after a heading or the title of a figure, table or box;
- when the last letter of an abbreviated word is the same as that of the original word, e.g. Ltd (limited), St (Saint).

Commas

Use commas to make your writing clear and unambiguous. Here are the most common uses of commas.

To mark introductory phrases.

Launched in 2024, the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty represents a renewed multilateral and multistakeholder effort to tackle the causes of deprivation.

To separate phrases that are not essential to the meaning of a sentence.

The framework, comprising four global assurance standards and eight minimum measures, covers the entire programme cycle from needs assessment to post-distribution monitoring.

Note that no commas are used when the information is essential to understanding the sentence, as is the case with relative clauses that begin with "that":

The donors **that support the fund** will receive regular updates on its implementation.

To separate elements in a list.

The rations comprised **vegetable oil, pulses, rice and wheat flour**.

Note that we don't use the serial comma¹ unless there is potential for confusion.

The meeting brought together experts in **supply chains, vulnerability mapping and analysis, and monitoring and evaluation**.

To join two independent clauses (grammatically complete sentences) with a conjunction (*and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet*)

Most displaced people first seek safety in neighbouring countries, **but** lack of support forces many to continue to destinations further afield.

To separate two or more coordinate adjectives that describe the same noun.

Customizable, secure and interoperable systems will be key to ensuring that WFP operations are flexible and efficient.

To shift between the main discourse and a quotation.

The farmer **said**, "WFP should continue to support these initiatives".

Note that no comma is used for reported speech.

The farmer **said that** WFP should continue to support these initiatives.

To prevent confusion or misunderstanding. Sometimes, a comma is needed to remove ambiguity or make a sentence easier to read. While the rules are flexible in some respects, there are instances where you should never use a comma.

¹ Also known as the "Oxford comma", this is a comma used after the penultimate item in a list.

- **Don't separate the subject of a sentence and its verb with a comma:**

- ✗ The presentation delivered by the country director, **is** available on the website.

- **When a sentence has one subject but two conjugated verbs, don't use a comma:**

- ✗ WFP will focus on continuous coalition building to enhance its ability to coordinate global efforts, **and** shape policy to improve food security worldwide

- **Don't use a comma after i.e. or e.g.**

Interested in learning more about commas? Visit the [OWL platform](#) run by Purdue University for more examples and helpful explanations.

Colons

The main use of the colon is to indicate that the clause following the colon is an explanation or elaboration of the clause preceding it.

The film was a disaster: the plot was thin, the direction aimless and the acting obvious. (The second clause explains the statement in the first.)

The colon is also used to introduce a list.

The committee posed the following questions: What are the constraints on development? What will be the benefits?

The colon should not be used to introduce a list when the list flows grammatically and naturally as part of a sentence.

Correct: The main components of an automobile engine include the cylinder block, the pistons and the cylinder head.

Incorrect: The main components of an automobile engine include: the cylinder block, the pistons and the cylinder head.

An initial capital letter is used in the clause following the colon when the clause is a complete sentence. Otherwise, use a lower case letter.

Semicolons

Semicolons are used to mark closely related independent clauses in a sentence. Information in the second clause is added to that in the first; it does not explain or amplify the first clause, as the colon does. Both the clause before and the clause after the semicolon must be complete sentences (that is what makes them independent clauses). Thus, the semicolon used in this way may always be replaced by a period, but the semicolon signals the reader that the two clauses are closely related.

The delivery of rations was interrupted for two days; alternative means of transport had to be found to resume the shipments.

Compare:

The water was as smooth as glass; the further bank was perfectly reflected in it. (Semicolon – the second clause adds information related to the first.)

The water was as smooth as glass: not a breath of wind was stirring. (Colon – the second clause explains the first.)

Semicolons may be used to separate items in a list that are sentences or clauses (and that could be presented in a bulleted list with the items in the list set out on separate lines).

The project achieved the following: it reached 160,000 beneficiaries; it stayed within budget; and it provided experience on which future activities could be based.

Semicolons separate the entries of a numbered or bulleted list:

- assess needs;
- train workers; and
- monitor progress.

Hyphens

The use of hyphens is constantly changing. As words are combined to form new compound terms, they often evolve from two separate words (“policy making”), to a hyphenated form (“policy-making”) before becoming a single word (“policymaking”). Because of this, we need to regularly review our list of hyphenated words (see below).

That said, there are some guidelines:

1. Use a hyphen to join two or more words serving as a single adjective before a noun:

- A **food-insecure** community
- A **well-known** concern

But no hyphen is used if the adjective come after the noun:

- The community is food insecure.
- That concern is well known.

And no hyphen is used for ---ly adverb + adjective combinations:

- Locally engaged staff
- Highly respected institution

2. Use a hyphen to avoid confusion or an awkward combination of letters:

- WFP **pre-positioned** 100 mt of flour (positioned something in advance, avoiding confusion with the noun “preposition”)
- The employee **re-signed** the contract (signed the contract again, avoiding confusion with “resign”, leave one’s job)
- The park was home to **100 year-old** trees. (100 trees that are one year old)
- The park was home to **100-year-old** trees. (unspecified number of trees that are 100 years old)

3. Use a hyphen with compound numbers

- **Forty-three** countries implemented the programme.

But no hyphen is used for fractions

- One third of households had poor dietary diversity.

Unless the fraction is used as an adjective

- A **two-thirds** majority is needed for the amendment to pass.

4. Use a hyphen with prefixes such as self-, all-, post-; between a prefix and a word starting with a capital letter; and with figures or letters

- The **self-assessment** provided insight into the challenges faced.

- The work was **all-consuming**.
- During **post-distribution** monitoring...
- In the **mid-Atlantic**...
- In **mid-September**...
- In the **mid-1990s**...

If in doubt as to whether to hyphenate a word, follow the list below, the WFP word list at the end of this style guide, the word list in the [United Nations editorial manual](#) or the online [Oxford English Dictionary](#), in that order.

Hyphenated

- -based (e.g. cash-based transfers)
- Capacity-building (adj.), capacity-strengthening (adj.) (no hyphens for noun forms)
- co- (many compounds closed, but note co-author, co-chair, co-investor, co-worker)
- context-specific
- cross-cutting
- decision-making (noun and adjective forms)
- field-level agreement
- follow-up (n. and adj.) (no hyphen as a verb: “The team would follow up on the reports”)
- food-deficit country
- food-insecure community
- -generating
- hard-earned
- -led (“government-led project”)
- non-
- nutrition-sensitive
- one-off (n. and adj.)
- on-site

- -oriented
- post-
- prenatal
- pre-package
- pre-position
- pre-record
- pro- (in adjectives, e.g. pro-business (not in pro forma, pro rata, pro bono))
- real-time (adj.) (but “reporting in real time”)
- Rome-based agencies
- -saving (e.g. life-saving, time-saving)
- -scale
- scale-up (n.) (no hyphen as a verb, e.g. “It is necessary to scale up the project”)
- school-aged
- self- (compound forms hyphenated)
- semi- (compound forms hyphenated)
- -sensitive
- sub- (many examples of both hyphenated and unhyphenated words; see the WFP and UN editorial manual word lists)
- sudden-onset
- -term
- -wide
- -year (e.g. five-year plan)

Unhyphenated

- agro (compounds closed except before a vowel, e.g., agro-ecology, agroforestry)
- bi (compound forms of bi are closed: biannual, biennial, bimonthly, biweekly, etc.)
- capacity building (n.)
- capacity strengthening (n.)

- co- (many compounds closed, but note co-author, co-chair, co-investor, co-worker)
- emergency response
- extra (usually closed (e.g., extrabudgetary, extracurricular) except when extra is followed by a proper noun (extra-Community) or a vowel (extra-atmospheric))
- food assistance for assets
- handover
- multipurpose (generally compound forms with multi are closed, except where multi is followed by “i”)
- multisectoral
- overambitious (generally compound forms with “over” are closed)
- private sector
- rollout (but “WFP will roll out guidance to country offices”)
- school meals (e.g., school meal programme)
- sub (many examples of both hyphenated and unhyphenated words)

En-dashes

An en-dash is used to connect spans of numbers or dates (e.g. 2005–2006) and where the second word in a group does not modify the first one, as in “a WFP–FAO project”. It is also used to separate an interjected phrase from the main sentence, in which case it is used with a space before and after it. As with an interjected phrase between commas, it should be possible to lift out the part of the sentence within dashes, leaving the rest of the sentence complete.

This donation – the largest received so far – will enable WFP to buy extra food.

Parentheses and brackets

(When a complete sentence is enclosed in parentheses, its punctuation is also enclosed.)

When only part of a sentence is enclosed in parentheses, punctuation is placed outside (as in this example).

Use parentheses and brackets sparingly. Excessive use can impede readability.

Quotation marks

Double quotation marks are used for quoting sentences, phrases or words.

As with parentheses, punctuation marks are placed inside the quotation marks only if they belong to the quotation; otherwise, they are placed outside. When a full stop or other punctuation mark would apply both to the quotation and the sentence, it is placed outside the quotation marks.

Reported speech is enclosed in double quotation marks.

Where one quotation appears within another, the inner quotation takes single quotes.

“When we say ‘urgent’, we mean the day before yesterday,” said the editor.

Punctuation not referring to the quote itself falls outside the quotation marks.

Mr Smith was said to be “resigned to his fate”.

However, where a complete sentence is quoted, it takes its own punctuation.

Mr Smith was said to be “resigned to his fate in the restructuring. He did not expect miracles.”

When a quotation is interrupted by words such as she said, commas separate the interjected phrase.

“We will do it by Friday,” she said, “so the deadline will be respected.”

When it is necessary to insert words into a quoted passage to make the passage function grammatically, enclose the inserted words in square brackets to indicate that they are not part of the original quotation. Use an ellipsis (...) to indicate that you have omitted words from a quoted passage.

Sentences

Subject/Verb/Object

In English, the usual sentence structure is subject, followed by verb, followed by object or complement. Keep the verb and object close to the subject.

For example:

If current trends continue, by the turn of the century tourism
[subject] **will displace** [verb] **agriculture** [object] **as the island's main**
industry.

not:

Tourism, if current trends continue, by the turn of the century will
displace agriculture as the island's main industry.

Do not appear to change subject in mid-sentence; for example, prepositional phrases should be adjacent to the noun they refer to:

With its numerous beaches, the island offers good prospects for
tourism.

not:

With its with numerous beaches, tourism has good prospects in the
island.

Long sentences

Avoid long complicated sentences. Short, clear sentences convey meaning more effectively than a single complex structure.

Active over passive voice

Choose the active voice over the passive if you can.

WFP responded quickly to decentralization.

not "Decentralization was responded to quickly by WFP."

However, if the writer wishes to be impersonal, perhaps to avoid implications of blame, the passive voice is the better choice.

Take care with word order and subject pronouns. Words placed in the wrong order or the use of subjects such as this or it without a clear referent can lead to ambiguity.

Consider the meaning of this:

“The woman who shot herself in the foot accidentally recovered”.

The line should have read: **The woman who accidentally shot herself in the foot recovered.**

Do not pair two words where one will suffice. It is not necessary to write: “... their *relevance* and *significance* to planning and implementation ...”; the paired terms have the same meaning, so one or the other will suffice.

The meaning is clearer in “... **their relevance to planning and implementation ...**”.

The addition of a paired synonym does not strengthen a sentence; it weakens it.

Spelling

With some exceptions the United Nations follows British spelling. Ensure that the default language for your document is set to English (UK). The present style guide includes a [word index](#) that shows WFP spelling of selected words.

The United Nations Editorial Manual also includes a [word list](#).

Follow the WFP list; if a word is not there check the Editorial Manual list; if it's not there follow the first spelling in the online edition of the [Oxford English Dictionary](#) and [Oxford LEXICO](#).

Follow an organization's spelling of its own name, e.g., Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Z versus S

Use **z** (not s) in such words as realize, organization and mobilization.

Use **s** in words such as analyse, catalyse and paralyse.

Tables

Number tables in sequence. Each table should have a title that describes it accurately and briefly.

Material that would be better off in two separate tables such as data that, although related, are organized differently and have different column headings should not be put in a single table to save space.

Data adequately treated in the text or in a figure should not be repeated in tabular form. Similarly, there is no need to create a table if it would consist of only one column or row of data; such data should be described in the text, as in the following example:

The increases in recent years were 10.9 percent in 2003, 10.1 percent in 2004 and 9.7 percent in 2005.

A table must be placed immediately after the paragraph in which it is mentioned.

Technical guidance for documents

WFP publication materials

For regular WFP fact sheets, brochures and publications follow the [branding guidance](#) and use [templates available here](#)

WFP house fonts

WFP house font for publications is Open Sans

Executive Board documents

The formatting of original documents should be as simple as possible. Documents for the Board, the Bureau and consultations are formatted by the relevant team in the Executive Board Secretariat, where specific templates are used. If graphics are to be included, the original electronic files should accompany any document that is to be formatted so that they can be inserted.

Text that cannot be changed

If a document going to editing contains text that cannot be changed, for example because it has been agreed with other parties, please make sure that it is clearly indicated.

Font use for Executive Board documents

Use Open Sans 10 point for Board documents.

Use ***italic*** exclusively for book titles and for words and expressions in languages other than English (which must be explained in brackets).

Use **bold** for subheadings, but not where text is highlighted by the formatting, for example in bulleted lists.

Avoid overuse of italic and bold lettering. Do not use italic or bold fonts in text to denote emphasis, which should be reflected in the phrasing.

Your document after editing

If your document is edited for the Board, it will be returned to you for clearance with two copies attached. One copy shows all of the editor's deletions and insertions and is a read-only document. The second copy has the editors' changes incorporated, with doubts or queries marked in yellow or green; it is open for you to amend if required. Any blue highlighting is for internal formatting use.

You will be asked to review the document to ensure that editorial changes have not altered the meaning of the original or removed essential text. You should enter any changes into the OPEN FOR REVISIONS copy in track changes mode.

Remember that Board documents must adhere to word limits set by the Board.

Things to avoid

Officialese

Avoid jargon, buzzwords and buzz phrases. They obscure meaning and make documents more difficult to understand and to translate.

Excessive detail

Include only relevant detail needed to make your point. Too much information will weaken or obscure your argument. In addition, every word written, at least in Executive Board documents, must be edited and translated, so the longer your document the more it costs.

Redundant words and words to avoid

Avoid unnecessary adjectives and adverbs: they add to the length of a document and often impede communication.

Some examples of words and expressions to avoid:

key. A *key* decision is an important or significant decision; *key* personnel are essential staff. In most cases there is no need to use a qualifier at all. Consider whether what you are describing is actually key and whether you really need to say it.

a total of. Leave out. **not** “The operation cost WFP *a total of* USD 743,200 ...”; **not** “WFP will require a *total of* 45 trucks ...”.

careful(ly). Leave out. **not** “...the rations are **carefully** calculated on the basis of...”. (They would not be calculated carelessly.)

closely. E.g., “WFP will work *closely* with its partners” or “... is collaborating *closely* with ...”. Consider whether closely provides necessary information. WFP can be assumed to work with partners as closely as is necessary to achieve its objectives, so normally it should be sufficient to say simply that WFP will work with its partners.

concrete. Unnecessary. **not** “... the department has made *concrete* proposals for developing ...”.

detailed (analysis). An analysis must by nature pay attention to detail.

effective(ly), as in “... proposals for *effective* strategies to address the problem ...”. Avoid. Nobody is going to propose ineffective strategies; in any case, effectiveness is determined after the event.

efforts, as in “... WFP will continue its advocacy *efforts* for ...”. Unnecessary.

events, as in “... is affected by recurrent flood *events* ...”. Unnecessary.

food commodity. Do not use *commodity* as a synonym for “food”. Use “food item(s)” if you need to specify, just as “non-food item(s)” is used. The OED defines a commodity as “... a thing that is an object of trade, *esp.* a raw material or agricultural crop”.

mutual (agreement). An agreement is by definition mutual.

specific, as in “... must give *specific* reasons ...” or “... in the *specific* event of an emergency ...”. Unnecessary.

to the extent possible, as in “... WFP will support the project to the *extent possible* ...”. If you have to qualify, be precise, as in “as long as resources are available ...” or “provided access is granted ...”.

Metaphors

Metaphors are unlikely to convey meaning to non-native speakers of English and are not readily translatable. They are often vague and are arguably inappropriately informal for documents prepared for the Executive Board.

Some examples of metaphors and other words and expressions to avoid:

bundling. Prefer “combining”.

dashboard. In corporate speak it means “a set of” or perhaps “a system of”.

role, as in “... WFP will play the role of facilitator ...” or “... in this operation, the role of WFP will be to ...”. Prefer “WFP is to be the facilitator” or “WFP will ...”.

talk the talk/walk the walk. Difficult to translate, informal.

traffic lights. The term means “a system to identify different states or situations”; prefer “monitoring system” or “early-warning plan” or whatever accurately conveys your meaning.

window, as in “window of opportunity”. Commonly misused.

own, ownership. Used to suggest involvement, commitment or enthusiasm, it is almost always too vague for the reader to have any real understanding of what it implies.

Latin and Greek expressions – use the English equivalents

If you are determined to use a Latin or Greek expression, check the [Oxford online dictionaries](#) because at some have passed into common usage and are set in roman (ad hoc), while others are italicized and may be transliterated (*inter alia*).

AVOID

inter alia	among other things (it's almost always redundant)
modus operandi	way of working; method of implementation
post-	after; subsequent
vis-à-vis	with regard to; regarding

USE

Miscellaneous

As, since, because and for. *As* and *since* are used when the reason is already well known or is less important than the rest of the sentence; they often begin the sentence. Use *because* to avoid possible confusion with the notion of time. *Because* is generally used when the reason is the most important part of the sentence. Use it rather than *as* or *since*. *For* suggests that the reason is given as an afterthought, and its clause never comes at the beginning of the sentence. Avoid it.

Association, group, organization. Don't alternate these terms for the same entities; choose whichever is appropriate and stick to it.

Biennial, biannual. *Biennial* means "once in a biennium" or "once every two years". *Biannual* means both twice a year and once every two years. Since most people confuse the two terms it is best to avoid both of them and instead use "twice a year", "once every six months", "every two years" or the like.

Bi-monthly, bi-weekly. Do not use these ambiguous terms: bi-monthly can mean either "twice a month" or "once every two months". The same applies to bi-weekly.

Concerned. Putting *concerned* before the noun risks conveying the sense that the parties etc. are worried. The preferable placement is after – *the parties concerned, the countries concerned* – because the meaning is “the parties that are concerned”.

False intensifiers. Do not use *very, particularly, extremely*, etc. with words such as *critical, crucial, decisive, fundamental, unique or usual*. Something either is crucial, unique, etc. or it is not; there’s no degree and therefore no need for intensifiers. In general, avoid intensifiers: they are subjective terms that dilute meaning.

Fewer or less. Use *fewer* when referring to items that are *countable*: “There are fewer people here today than there were yesterday.” *Less* is used for *uncountable* quantities: “He has put less effort into this job.”

Level. Use *the* before an adjective qualifying *level*, as in “At *the* national level”, not “at national level”.

Nouns in apposition. The treatment depends on whether the item cited is the only one of its kind: “My sister, Barbara, has arrived” (commas before and after the noun in apposition; implies you only have one sister) or “My sister Barbara has arrived” (no commas; implies you have several sisters and the one called Barbara has arrived).

Prepositions. Avoid common mistakes in the use of prepositions by following these general rules:

- **assist in + gerund** (e.g. “assist in planning” or “assist in the planning of”; not “assist to plan”)
- **help + infinitive** (e.g. “help to develop”)
- **integrate into** (not in)
- **suggest + gerund** (e.g. “suggest using” or “suggest the use of”; not “suggest to use”)
- **to target - no preposition** (e.g. “... will target children under 5 ...”); but NB “... targeted at children under 5 ...”

Such as, including. *Such as* or *including* implies that you’re listing only some of the items, so there’s no need to add etc. at the end.

Synergy. *Synergy* means: “i) the interaction or cooperation of two or more drugs, agents, organizations, etc., *to produce a new or enhanced effect compared with their separate effects*; ii) an instance of this”. Don’t use *synergistic* as a synonym for “cooperative”, “interconnected” or “interrelated”.

Usage

Contents

1. Prepositions
2. Its and it's
3. Like or as
4. Single and plural
5. That or which?
6. Possessives
7. Split infinitives

Prepositions

In formal writing prepositions should not be placed at the end of a clause or sentence, but there are many circumstances in which a preposition may or even must be so placed, especially to avoid what Sir Winston Churchill called “the kind of English up with which I will not put”.

It is perfectly acceptable to write:

There are no other problems, at least none that the mission is aware of.

The alternative would be: “There are no other problems, at least none of which the mission is aware.”

Its and it's

The word **it's** is a contraction of **it is**. The apostrophe does not indicate possession.

The word **its** is a **possessive adjective**; it does not contain an apostrophe.

- Oh, **it's** [= it is] just the dog wagging **its** [possessive] tail.
- Why is today a holiday? **It's** for the country to celebrate **its** independence.
- The country office gives **its** staff extra security training; **it's** one of the reasons why people are happy to work here.

Like or as

The word introduced by *like* must be a noun or pronoun; it must not be governed by a preposition, but by the subject or object of the main verb.

The commodities will be used as a stopgap. (The commodities *are* the stopgap.)
not: “The commodities will be used like a stopgap.”

The document looks like an agenda. not: “The document looks like it is an agenda.”
(The document is not an agenda.)

Be careful with constructions where *like* or *as* could be used:

- **He talks like an expert.** (He sounds like an expert but may not be one.)
- **He is speaking as an expert.** (He is an expert and is speaking in that capacity.)

Use ***such*** as to give examples.

- **In mountainous countries such as Peru or Nepal ...** Do NOT write “... countries *like* Peru or Nepal...”.

Single and plural

The verb follows the number of the subject, not of the complement.

- **A secondary target group [subject] for the project *is* [not *are*] the rural communities [complement] in which the very poor primary target group lives.**

Do not be drawn off track by a clause.

- **WFP, in addition to the other agencies mentioned, *is* [not *are*] looking into the possibility.**

Exception: a subject that is singular in sense though plural in form.

- **Twenty miles *is* a long way to walk.**
- **Six months *was* the time allowed for completion.**
- **Fish and chips *is* a popular dish.**

Countries that are plural in form take singular verbs.

- **The United States *has* the world's most powerful economy.**

A singular verb is used when the group is seen as a unit.

- **The team *is* currently based at Brindisi.**
- **The staff *consists* entirely of locally employed people.**

A compound subject (with *and*) is normally plural.

- **Their lives, their liberties and their religion *are* [not *is*] in danger.**

When alternative subjects (with *or*) are both singular, the verb is singular.

- **United Nations troops have been ordered to shoot if life [subject 1] or property [subject 2] *is* [not *are*] in danger.**

However, if one subject is singular and one is plural, the verb is plural:

- **The registered woman head of household [subject 1, singular] or her children [subject 2, plural] *are* allowed to receive the food ration.**

The plurals **men** and **women**, not “male” and “female”, are used as adjectives when referring to people, e.g. **women farmers**. Use **households headed by women**, NEVER “female-headed households”.

Determiners

The following determiners require a verb in singular:

Anybody, anyone, somebody, someone, nobody, no one, everybody, everyone; each, every, either, neither; more than one; much, little; one of (plural noun but singular verb: one of the projects is); **the number of**.

But note that with defining relative clauses introduced by “who” or “that” the verb agrees with the subject of the clause:

“The unit is one of the teams that are (not is) excluded from the survey”.

“That” refers back to “teams”, not to “one of”, and thus the verb is plural.

The following determiners require a verb in plural:

a number of, a group of; many, few, both, several; each (after a noun or pronoun: "They each play several instruments.").

The following determiners require either singular or plural, depending on the number of the noun:

a lot; most, some, any, half; none; the majority; percent; that, which, who.

Certain cases depend on the numerical sense of the sentence, e.g. singular words that refer to groups or plural words that express a singular notion or unit.

With **any/either/neither/none of**, use a singular verb where possible, but a plural verb if the notion of plurality is present: "**None of the suggestions was very interesting**"; but "**None of our problems have been solved**" is acceptable.

That or which?

Contrary to common belief, there is a difference between *that* and *which*. Using one rather than the other can mean the difference between clarity and confusion.

That (restrictive) is defining:

- **The northern regions that are prone to drought are the ones WFP will target.** (There might be other northern regions, but it is only those that are susceptible to drought that are being targeted for aid.)

Which (non-restrictive) is not defining; it gives additional information that could be omitted and not affect the intended message of the sentence.

- **The northern regions, which are prone to drought, will each receive 450 mt of food.** (Being drought-prone is a characteristic of the northern regions.)

That, as a relative pronoun, is not preceded by a comma; **which**, as a relative pronoun, normally is.

Between or among?

Generally speaking, **between** is used to refer to two separate things.

The agreement between WFP and UNICEF covered nutrition-sensitive operations in the country.

WFP has been forced to choose between cutting ration sizes and reducing the number of people served.

Note that **between** can be used for more than two things. As explained in the Oxford Dictionary, it is “still the only word available to express the relation of a thing to many surrounding things severally and individually”.

There is excellent communication between the three agencies.

The treaty between France, Germany and Spain was signed last year.

There are fences between the houses.

Among, by contrast, expresses a relation to things collectively and vaguely.

Angola, Brazil and Colombia were among the countries affected.

The disease spread among the population.

There was great excitement among the members of the team.

Possessives

There are three main forms of possessive:

- possessive in 's (or s' if plural): the project leader's objectives, water users' association;
- possessive with *of*: the objectives of the project leader, association of water users;
- possessive used with gerund to form a noun: as in “He did not approve of his daughter's going to school.”

The sense of the possessive can also be conveyed by using an adjective/noun construction: e.g. “office equipment”, “project objectives”; the adjective is singular .

Do not use the 's form of possessive with inanimate things: use “**the capacity of the trucks**”, not “the trucks' capacity”.

Verb tenses

Consistency

Be consistent in the use of tense. When you begin in the past, stay in the past.

The evaluation mission *noted* that the beneficiary schools *had* few teaching materials.

A common error is the use of the present perfect to describe an event that has already ended. The correct verb tense for this case is past simple:

Between 2003 and 2005, the enrolment rate *fell* from 54 percent to 43 percent.

not: Between 2003 and 2005, the enrolment rate *has fallen* from 54 percent to 43 percent.

The subjunctive

The subjunctive mood expresses a wished-for, hypothetical or contingent relationship between subject and predicate, as for example in "... if I *were* you ..." or "... *be* that as it may ...". It is used after verbs such as "recommend" and "suggest".

The Board recommends that WFP *be* proactive in developing partnerships.

We suggest that he *take* leave of absence until the matter has been resolved.

The subjunctive is usually used after "if".

If a further emergency *were* to occur during this period.

When using the conditional would, be sure to use the subjunctive as well.

If funding *were* [subjunctive] provided, the project *would* [conditional] be able to proceed.

WFP *would* [conditional] have to end its operations if the decision *were* [subjunctive] to be negative.

Reported speech

Indirect speech conveys a report of something that was said or written rather than the exact words that were spoken or written. It is used in certain official documents, including summary records.

Direct: The election is being held today.

Indirect: The President confirmed that the election was being held that day [or on a specific date].

Direct: Fifteen States are members of the working group.

Indirect: The Secretary of the Council reported that 15 States were members of the working group.

Even though the original statement may still be valid at the time of reporting, the verb is changed from the present to the past tense since it must agree with the verb in the main clause, which is in the past tense.

Note: This rule is not necessarily applied to statements that are universally true:

The speaker noted that, under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has [*not* had] the right to life, liberty and security of person.

For more information on indirect or reported speech, see the [United Nations Editorial Manual Online](#).

Word index

A B C D E F G H I J L M N O P R S T U V W Y Z

A

- above-mentioned; aforementioned
- abridgement (not “abridgment”)
- accommodation
- acknowledgement (not “acknowledgment”)
- acreage (prefer area)
- addendum (pl. addenda)
- ad hoc
- advice (n.); advise (v.)
- adviser (except: respectful workplace advisor)
- after-care
- after-effect
- afterwards (not “afterward”)
- ageing (not “aging”)
- agenda (pl. agendas; don’t use “agendum/agenda”)
- aggregate data
- agriculturalist; agriculturist
- agro-ecology, agro-ecosystem
- agro-industry
- agroprocessing
- agroforestry
- agropastoral, agropastoralists
- aide-mémoire (pl. aides-mémoire; use “memorandum”, pl. “memorandums”)
- air-drop

- air cargo (preferred to “airfreight”)
- airlift
- alkaline
- allotment
- all together (all in one place)
- altogether (completely)
- aluminium (not “aluminum”)
- among (not “amongst”)
- anaemia (not “anemia”)
- analyse
- annex (I, II, III etc.)
- annual performance report
- annual session of the Board
- antenatal (compound words with prefix ante are closed artifact)
- anti-fraud and anti-corruption (policy)
- anti-personnel mine
- assist + in + gerund or noun (e.g. “assist in planning”; never assist + infinitive)
- appraisal mission
- artefact
- artisan (noun), artisanal (adj.)
- as at (on a specified date)
- as of (on and after a specified date)
- autumn (not “fall”); avoid referring to seasons (which vary by north/south hemisphere) and instead use specific months or quarters

B

- back-loading
- backstop
- baseline data
- basic healthcare
- bedridden
- benchmark
- benefited, benefiting (not “benefitted”, “benefitting”)
- biannual (ambiguous: avoid it; use “twice a year” or “every two years”)
- biennial (every second year)
- biennium (period of two years) pl. biennia; e.g. the 2001–2002 biennium
- bi-monthly (ambiguous; avoid it. Use “every two months” or “twice a month”)
- bio- compound forms closed, no hyphen: e.g. biodegradable
- birth rate
- birthweight
- the Board
- bulgur wheat
- breadwinner
- breakdown (n); break down (v.)
- breastfeeding
- breastmilk
- brushfire
- budgeted; budgeting
- budget increase (not “budgetary”)
- build-up (n.); build up (v.)
- built-in (adj.); built in (v.)
- by-product

C

- capacity building (n.); capacity-building (adj.); prefer “capacity strengthening” and “capacity-strengthening” programmes
- Capital Budgeting Facility
- capacity strengthening
- caregiver; but: care provider
- carry-over (noun or adjective); carry over (verb phrase)
- case study
- cash flow
- cash in lieu of commodities
- ceasefire
- centre
- centuries; spell out, e.g. twentieth century
- change-over
- channelling
- checklist
- chickpea
- Chief Risk Officer
- childbearing; childbirth; child rearing
- childcare
- children under 5
- classroom
- coefficient
- co-finance
- commodity (avoid, use “food” or “food item”)
- cooperation
- coordination
- co-worker

- cold store; cold storage
- colour
- commercial sex (prostitution; as opposed to transactional sex such as sex for food)
- complementary = additional
- complimentary = conveying compliment, as a gift
- corporate partnership strategy
- corporate results framework (Corporate Results Framework when used in the title of a specific framework (e.g. Corporate Results Framework (2017-2021))
- corporate risk register
- cost recovery
- cost-benefit analysis
- cost-effective; cost effectiveness
- counsellor, counselling
- counter-productive
- country director (Country Director of X)
- country office (not “CO”)
- country operation management plan
- country portfolio budget
- country strategic plans
- country strategic review
- country strategy outline
- country team
- cowpea
- cropland
- cross-cutting

D

- database
- day care; day-care centre
- day labourer
- day-school
- daytime
- death rate
- decision-maker; decision-making (n.); decision-making process
- defence
- de-mining
- dependent (adj.) (on); dependant (n.)
- desertification
- deworming
- developing country (not “underdeveloped country”)
- developing world (not “Third World”)
- dialogue
- disability (persons with disabilities)
- draught (re. animals used for haulage etc.)
- drawback
- drinking water
- dropout (noun and adjective); drop out (verb)
- drought-affected
- drought-prone; flood-prone
- dry farming
- dryland (adj.); dry land (noun)

E

- ecosystem
- elderly (use “older persons”)
- email, e-business, e-marketing, e-customer, e-vouchers
- end product; end-use; end-user
- end-to-end telecommunications network
- enrol; enrolled; enrolment
- enterprise risk management
- euro
- equalled; equalization
- Executive Board; in most documents, “Board” is sufficient
- Executive Director
- expectant and nursing mothers (use “pregnant and breastfeeding women” instead)
- ex post; ex-post evaluation (avoid: use English “after”)
- External Auditor
- extra-budgetary

F

- FAO Finance Committee
- farm worker
- farmhouse
- farmland
- farmyard
- far-reaching
- far-seeing
- “female-headed household(s)” (use “households headed by women”)
- “female beneficiaries” (use “women beneficiaries”)

- fertilizer
- field office (do not confuse with “country office”)
- fieldwork; fieldworker
- Financial Framework Review
- first regular session of the Board
- first hand (even if adjective)
- fit for purpose
- five-year plan
- focusing
- follow-up (adj., noun); to follow up (verb)
- food assistance for assets: a blanket term that applies to food, cash or vouchers for work, asset building, training etc.
- food basket
- food crop
- food-deficit country
- foodgrains, foodstuffs
- food-insecure (adj.); food insecurity
- formatted
- fortnightly
- -free (compound forms hyphenated (e.g. disease-free))
- freelance
- freshwater (adj.)
- front line (noun); front-line (adj.)
- fruit crop; fruit fly
- fruit tree
- fuel oil
- fuelwood
- fulfil, fulfilling, fulfilled, fulfilment
- full cost recovery

- full-scale
- full-time (adv. and adj.)
- fundraiser; fundraising

G

- gauge
- General Assembly resolution
- General Regulation II.2(a)
- General Rule VII.2
- general service (GS) posts
- the Government of ... (when referring to a specific national government, not local government)
- government (adj.)
- grain-fed
- gram(s) (not gramme(s); g after a numeral)
- grass roots (n.), grass-roots (adj.)
- grey (not "gray")

H

- handover
- hand tool
- headquarters (do not abbreviate as HQ)
- heavy-duty
- healthcare
- healthcare worker
- high-yielding (variety)
- hillside
- home-grown

- home-made
- homepage
- home-making
- host Government; host governments
- household (spell out; do not use “hh” or “HH”)
- household(s) headed by women/children/older persons (not “female-headed households” or “child-headed households” etc.)
- Human Development Index

- inasmuch as
- inbred
- inbuilt; built-in
- income generation; income-generating
- in-depth
- index, indexes (literary)/indices (numbers)
- Indigenous (capitalize when referring to cultures, communities, lands, languages, etc. of Indigenous Peoples, e.g.: Indigenous culture in Ecuador; Indigenous languages are dying out)
- infra-red
- infrastructure
- in-house
- in kind (adv.: contributions in kind; adj.: in-kind contributions)
- in-patient
- in-service
- insofar as
- install, instalment
- inter alia; avoid and use “including” or similar instead
- inter-agency (NB Inter-Agency if part of title)

- Integrated Road Map
- internal control framework
- internally displaced person (IDP); internally displaced persons (IDPs)
- internet
- inter-sectoral
- inter-regional
- interrelated
- inter-village
- intra-regional
- iodine deficiency

J

- judgment
- Joint Inspection Unit

K

- kilocalorie(s) (kcal after a numeral)
- kilogram(s) (not kilogramme; kg after a numeral)
- kilometre(s) (km after a numeral)
- know-how
- knowledge sharing (n.), knowledge-sharing (adj.)

L

- labour, labour force
- labour-intensive
- landfill
- landholder, landholding
- land-locked

- landmine
- landowner
- landownership
- large-scale (adj.)
- learned (not “learnt”)
- letter of agreement
- liaison
- licence (n.); license (v.)
- life cycle; lifespan
- lifeline
- lifelong
- life-saving
- lifestyle
- lifetime
- list (but “List” when referring to a specific list, e.g; List D)
- livestock
- logical framework (“logframe” in tables)
- long term; long-term (adj.)
- long-standing (adj.)
- low birthweight, low-birthweight baby

M

- macroeconomics; macroeconomic
- management plan (Management Plan in the title of a specific management plan, e.g. WFP Management Plan (2018-2020))
- maize meal
- make-up
- “male” (avoid it; use “men”, as in “households headed by men”, not “male-headed households”)

- Management result dimension
- man-made (use “from human causes”, “human-induced” or similar phrasing)
- manpower (use “human resources” or “personnel”)
- market place
- market town
- matching contribution
- matching expenditures
- matching funds
- meantime (but “Greenwich mean time”)
- Member States (of WFP, but States Members of the United Nations)
- members of the Board; Board members
- memorandum of understanding / memorandums of understanding (if it’s a specific title, in full, of a specific agreement it may be capitalized)
- metre (m after a numeral; but: parameter; diameter)
- micro- (compound forms closed, except before o (e.g. micro-organize))
- micronutrients
- midday
- middle-income countries
- mid-term
- mid-1970s, mid-August
- mine-detector
- mindset
- minefield
- mission statement
- monetization, monetize
- monocrop, monocropping, monoculture
- multi-purpose
- multisector; multisectoral
- multi-year

N

- national zero hunger strategic review
- nationwide
- never-ending
- non- compound forms hyphenated (non-aligned; non-existent; non-food)
- no-objection basis
- northeast (n.), northeastern (adj.)
- note for the record

O

- observer
- offence
- off-season
- offshore
- oil-seed production
- on-farm
- ongoing
- online; offline
- onset
- on-site (adj.)
- on-the-job (adj.)
- organigram
- orient
- overcropping
- overestimate
- overexploitation
- overnutrition
- over-reliance

- overriding
- oversight framework

P

- paddy field; paddy rice
- para- compound forms solid (paramedical; parastatal)
- paragraph 2
- paralyse; paralysis
- participatory
- peacebuilding
- peacekeeping
- per capita
- percent (not %, except in tables; not “per cent”)
- permanent representative (Permanent Representative when referring to a specific person)
- persons with disabilities
- phase-in (n.)phase in (v.)
- phase-out (n.)phase out (v.)
- piecework
- pipeline
- pisciculture (avoid it: use “fish breeding”, “fish rearing”, “fish farming”)
- plan of action
- plan of operations
- plateau; plateaux
- pledging target
- plenary
- plough, ploughing
- Plumpy'Doz; Plumpy'Nut; Plumpy'Sup
- policyholder

- policymaker; policymaking
- post-date
- post-harvest
- postnatal
- practice (n.); practise (v.)
- principles (IASC principals)
- pre- compounds hyphenated in verb tenses
- prenatal
- pre-package
- pre-positioned
- pre-record
- pregnant and breastfeeding women and girls (not “expectant and nursing mothers”; avoid abbreviating to “PBWG” whenever possible)
- prerequisite
- preschool; preschool-aged child
- preventive; preventative
- pro forma
- programme (not capitalized when referring to WFP)
- programme of work (but capitalized when the title of a specific document)
- -proof compound forms closed (airproof, rainproof)
- pro rata
- prorated
- proved (not “proven”); but “proven ability”
- PSA equalization account

R

- rainfall; rainstorm
- rained
- rainforest
- rainproof
- rainwater
- rangeland
- rape oil (use “rapeseed oil”) as the oil comes from the seed of the rape plant, not the plant itself; canola oil is an edible variety of rapeseed oil, but there are other types so canola oil may or may not be a suitable synonym for rapeseed oil)
- Rapporteur
- re- compound forms solid, except before e (e.g. re-examine, re-estimate)
- real time (n); real-time (adj)
- reforestation
- regional bureau (not “RB”); plural: regional bureaux
- regional director (Regional Director of X)
- resilience building
- resolution
- rights-based approach
- risk taking
- riverbed; riverbank; riverside
- road map
- rollout (noun); roll out (verb)
- rollover (noun); roll over (verb)
- Rome-based agency
- root crop
- round table (even if adjective)
- run off

S

- safety net
- the Sahel
- Sahelian zone
- savannah
- school-aged children
- schoolbook
- schoolchildren; schoolgirl, schoolboy
- school day, school year
- school-leaver; school-leaving
- schoolteacher
- school feeding programme
- second-hand
- second regular session of the Board
- Secretary-General (of the United Nations; other organizations may use Secretary General without the hyphen, e.g., Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe)
- sectoral (not “sectorial”)
- self-: compound forms hyphenated
- semi-: compound forms hyphenated
- setback; to set back
- shelf-life
- shortfall
- short term (n.); short-term (adj.)
- side effect
- silage; ensilage
- sizeable; medium-sized
- smallholder; smallholding
- small-scale (adj.)

- socio-: compound forms hyphenated, with some exceptions such as socioeconomic
- southern Africa (not South Africa, the country)
- soybean
- spill-over (noun and adj.); spill over (verb)
- staff (for WFP, prefer “employees” in order to include all contract types)
- standby
- States Members (of WFP; but Member States is preferred)
- state-wide
- stockpiling
- stopgap
- storeroom
- strategic goal (Strategic Goal when referring to a specific strategic goal of the Strategic Plan (2017-2021), e.g., “Strategic Goal 1: Support countries to achieve zero hunger (SDG 2)”)
 - strategic objective (Strategic Objective when referring to a specific strategic objective of the Strategic Plan (2017-2021), e.g., “Strategic Objective 1: End hunger by protecting access to food”)
 - strategic outcomes (lower case, even when referring to a specific strategic outcome in a country strategic plan)
 - strategic plan
 - strategic result (Strategic Result when referring to a specific strategic result of the Strategic Plan (2017-2021), e.g., “Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food (SDG Target 2.1)”)
 - strategic review
 - subcomponent (compound forms closed except when followed by “b” and the following:
 - sub-account
 - sub-amendment
 - sub-aquatic
 - sub-area

- sub-assembly
 - sub-centre
 - sub-discipline
 - sub-element
 - sub-issue
 - sub-item
 - sub-lessee; sub-lessor
 - sub-office
 - sub-prefect
 - sub-prefecture
 - sub-prime
 - sub-Saharan
 - sub-theme
 - sub-working group
- sub-district
- sugarcane
- sun-dried
- Super Cereal
- Super Cereal Plus
- supplementary budget
- system-wide

T

- takeover (noun)
- take-home rations
- task force
- teacher training
- teamwork
- test run
- textbook
- Third World (use “developing world”, “developing countries”)
- timeframe
- time-lag
- time-limit
- timeline
- time-saving (adj.); time-saver
- timetable
- tire (use tyre; “tire” is US English)
- to date
- tone at the top
- tonnage
- tons (not “tonnes”; the standard WFP unit is metric tons, mt after a numeral)
- toolbox
- topsoil
- towards
- transactional sex (sex in exchange for food as opposed to commercial sex, i.e., prostitution)
- transborder
- transferring
- transshipment

- transhumance; transhumant
- travelled, traveller, travelling
- trouble shooter; troubleshooting
- turnover
- two-week (adj.)
- twofold

U

- under-: compound forms closed (e.g. undernourished, not under-nourished)
- under 5 (as in “children under 5” – numerals for ages)
- underdeveloped countries (use “developing countries” instead)
- underemployment
- underfunded
- undernutrition
- under way (not “underway”; e.g. “the project is under way”)
- United Nations (never “UN” except when reproducing a title or a quotation)
- United Nations entities
- United Nations funds and programmes
- United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework
- United Nations technical mission

V

- value added tax
- vis-à-vis – avoid it; use English “in relation to”, “regarding”
- vitamin A
- vulnerable group

W

- wage-earner
- wage rate
- wage scale
- watercourse
- watershed
- water supply
- water table
- “we”- avoid it for Board documents; use “WFP” or “the Secretariat”
- website; but “the Web” and “web page”
- well-being
- wheat flour
- WiikHall “brand name; prefer “temporary structure”
- windbreak
- women’s empowerment (avoid; use “empowerment of women”)
- woodlot
- Working Capital Financial Facility
- working day; work day
- workforce
- workplan
- work site
- working group

- worldwide

Y

- year end (Avoid it; use “end of the year” (n.) or “end-of-year” (adj.)
- year-round (adj.)

Z

- zero-based budgeting
- zero hunger