



The Territory way.

A guide to writing the Territory way.

Open, honest and engaging – the way we talk tells people a lot about us. If we want to be known for doing things the Territory way, our language needs to reflect this.

This document is a guide to writing the Territory way – in a way that is open and direct, positive and friendly. Simple words, simple sentence structure and direct language. They make TIO accessible to customers and potential customers.

No matter what you are writing for TIO, this guide will help you develop your style to suit the Territory way.

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Special TIO Considerations

- The name TIO should always be used, never “Territory Insurance Office”, except for when citing the Act *Territory Insurance Office Act*.
- The brand name should stand alone and not be preceded by an article.
 - Incorrect: *The TIO has helped flood victims*
 - Correct: *TIO has helped flood victims*However, the article may be used when TIO is used as an adjective:
 - Correct: *A TIO claims manager will be in Katherine today to help flood victims*
- Where possible and appropriate, try to incorporate the brand positioning statement in a document or advertising. For example:
 - *The claims manager said it was the Territory way to help when people are in need*
 - *The new bank account helps people to invest the Territory way*
 - *Ensuring people get back to work after an accident is just another example of how we care for people the Territory way*
- Set the brand name and positioning line in the same font as surrounding text. Do not bold, enlarge, italicise or underline for emphasis.

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| Abbreviations | <p>Where possible, avoid using full stops to indicate shortened forms of words. The preferred style is: St, Mt, am, Mr, snr</p> <p>Use full stops only to avoid confusion.</p> <p>For metric symbols, use km for kilometre, g for gram, sq m for square metre and so on. The units tonne and litre should be spelt out.</p> <p>Place number and symbol together eg 500km. Express all fractions as decimals eg 2.5km not 2½km.</p> |
| Aborigine Aboriginal | <p>These terms are rarely used. If necessary, Aborigine is the noun; Aboriginal, the adjective. Write <i>Aboriginal people</i>, using a capital letter.</p> <p>The word Aboriginal is now normally only used in the following context: <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</i> or <i>people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent</i>.</p> |
| About | <p>When referring to numbers, do not use <i>around</i> when you mean <i>about</i>. Forget <i>approximately</i> and other fancy words. Use <i>about</i>.</p> <p>When using about, numbers should be rounded out: <i>About 900</i>, not <i>about 902</i>.</p> <p>Use <i>more than</i> not <i>over</i>. <i>More than 900</i>, not <i>above 900</i>.</p> <p>When referring to time, use <i>at 7pm</i> or <i>about 7pm</i>, not <i>at about 7pm</i>.</p> |
| Advise/ advice | <p><i>Advise</i> means to provide information or guidance. <i>Advice</i> is guidance given or received. It is a noun, not a verb.</p> |
| According to | <p>This phrase can be seen as implying disbelief. Best to stick with <i>said</i>.</p> |
| Acronyms | <p>Avoid using acronyms such as MAC, PDS, etc. Readers don't know what they mean.</p> <p>Instead, use the full name in the first instance "The Motor Accidents Compensation Scheme" and "the scheme" afterwards.</p> <p>However, TIO is a brand name in its own right and should always be used as such. Other examples include TAC,</p> |
| Alright | <p>It is alright to use <i>alright</i>. Not <i>all right</i>.</p> |

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| Alternate/ Alternative | <p><i>Alternate</i>: To switch between two or more options; every second one (adjective) eg On alternate Sundays.</p> <p><i>Alternative</i>: Different or other option; different from what is normally done eg Alternative power sources.</p> |
| Amid | Use <i>amid</i> , not <i>amidst</i> . |
| Among | Do not use <i>amongst</i> . Similarly, use <i>while</i> not <i>whilst</i> . |
| Ampersand (&) | Do not use unless it is part of a proper name. |
| An or A? | <p><i>An</i> is used before words that begin with a vowel sound (a, e, i, o, u). For example, An apple, an egg.</p> <p><i>A</i> is used before words pronounced with an initial consonant sound (letter other than a vowel) eg a ball, a cat.</p> <p>For words starting with an <i>h</i> sound followed by an unstressed first syllable, such as hotel, <i>an</i> is preferred, though it is regarded as optional.</p> |
| And/or | <p>Use the word <i>both</i>. For example: He has a reputation for arriving late and/or drunk.</p> <p>This sentence becomes: He has a reputation for arriving late or drunk or both.</p> |
| Apostrophes | <p>Apostrophes are used:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To indicate letters omitted in contractions of words: <i>It's, don't, hasn't ...</i> <p>Such contractions are normally used only in direct quotations or in advertising for effect.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To indicate the possessive case: The <i>boy's</i> ball (one boy); the <i>boys'</i> ball (more than one boy). <p>Watch out for the plural: the <i>children's</i> game or the <i>women's</i> courage.</p> <p>For plural nouns ending in <i>s</i>, add the apostrophe only:</p> <p>The <i>girls'</i> spirit (more than one girl) or the <i>footballers'</i> win. (more than one footballer).</p> <p>For singular nouns ending in <i>s</i>, add apostrophe <i>s</i>: the <i>abyss's</i> call (one abyss); the <i>boss's</i> smile (one boss).</p> |

With proper names ending in *s*, it becomes trickier. Usually pronunciation is a good guide: Tom *Jones's* voice; Howard *Hughes's* millions. Say the names before deciding.

When in doubt, rebuild the phrase instead of using an apostrophe: the disciples of Jesus; the teachings of Moses.

Apostrophes are NOT used for:

1. Plurals of figures are presented without apostrophes: *in his 70s*, *Boeing 727s* ...
2. Abbreviations such as *MPs*, *QCs*.
3. Words that have been shortened *phone* (as in telephone), *paper* (as in newspaper).

Appropriate language

Avoid vulgarities and discriminatory language. Omit anything that could be considered offensive to any section of the community. Respect the feelings of all Territorians.

Approximately

Use *about*. Short, plain words are preferred.

As to whether

Use *whether*.

As yet

Yet

**At present/
presently**

Write *now* instead of *at present*, *at the present time*, *presently*, *currently*, *at the current time*.
Or simply leave out

Between

Between 8am *and* 4.30pm, not between 8am *to* 4.30pm.

Alternatively, use *from* 8.00am *to* 4.30pm, not from 8.00am-4.30pm.

Capitals

Central Australia
Chairman
Chief Executive
Dry Season or the Dry
President (for both a head of state and a company officer)
Red Centre
South East Asia
Top End (of the Northern Territory)
Tropic (of Capricorn, but the tropics)
Wet Season or the Wet

Centred around

This is incorrect. Use *centred on*.

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| Collective nouns | A collective noun singular in form takes a singular verb: TIO <i>is</i> , TIO people <i>are</i> The company <i>is</i> , company officers <i>are</i> The Board <i>is</i> , board members <i>are</i> The committee <i>is</i> , committee members <i>are</i> |
| Colloquialisms | Colloquialisms are best reserved for advertising and promotions. They do not belong in other publications. |
| Commas | Handy for clarifying or slowing down a sentence. Otherwise, use sparingly or leave out. |
| Commence | Use <i>start</i> or <i>begin</i> . Short, sharp words make for crisper writing. |
| Compliment/ complement | <i>Compliment</i> : To congratulate; an expression of praise. <i>Complement</i> : To add to; that which completes; counterpart. |
| Compare with/ to | Use <i>compared with</i> when pointing out a difference: <i>Compared with</i> Calcutta, Darwin is a very small city. <i>Compared to</i> when things are being likened to each other: She <i>compared</i> his teeth <i>to</i> ivory. |
| Contrast | Use <i>contrast with</i> . |
| Coordinate/ Coordinator/ cooperate | Leave out the hyphens |
| Current/ Currently | Use <i>now</i> |
| Dates and times | This information should be precise and complete. Dates: Write out months rather than using a number. Saturday 21 October 2000 (not Saturday, October 21, 2000). Times: 9am, 6.55pm. |
| Different than | Use <i>different from</i> , not <i>than</i> or <i>to</i> . One thing differs <i>from</i> another. Or use <i>unlike</i> , <i>other than</i> . |
| Dot points | The first word of each dot point should be in lower case. Use a comma at the end of each line, and a full stop at the very end of the list. At the end of the second last dot point, use the word <i>and</i> following the comma. |

For example:

TIO assessors will look at:

- the amount of damage caused,
- the extent to which it was attributable to the flood,
- the cost of each claim, and
- the total payout to be made.

For numbered lists, use no punctuation except at the end of the last item on the list.

For entire sentences listed as dot points, use an initial capital letter and a full stop for each. Use double spacing between each sentence.

Avoid using a mixture of single words, short phrases and complete sentences in a list of dot points. Make it one or the other.

For displays, adopt a similar look without punctuation, but use capital letters at the start of each line. Dot points may be omitted if desired. For example:

New High Interest Account

- High interest
- No lock in period
- Money at call
- Low account fees

**Either/
neither**

Singular in number. Use either of the two *is*, not either *are*. The same rule applies for *neither*.

Etc

Means *and other things*. Why not omit it? Any item important enough to call for *etc* deserves a mention.

At the end of a list introduced by *for example* or *such as*, it is incorrect to use *etc*.

Ex

Use *former*.

**Exclamation
marks**

Not to be used for emphasising simple statements: It was a great day. We went for a drive.

Use exclamation marks after true exclamations or orders: What a great day! Get the car out!

Exceptions are in advertising.

Fewer

It is correct to use *fewer* with numbers, *less* with quantities: *Fewer* people, *fewer* houses but *less* sugar, *less* water.

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| Figures | <p>One to nine – spell out. After that use numerals.</p> <p>For figures of five or more digits, use a comma: 2000 but 20,000</p> <p>Avoid starting a sentence with numerals. If the sentence cannot be rewritten, spell the figure out.</p> <p>Percentages and measurements are always expressed as numerals: 9 per cent, 5kg.</p> <p>Millions and billions are spelt out: \$7 million, 2.75 billion. Leave a gap between the figure and the word.</p> <p>Use 1950s, then 50s. In his 90s, not nineties.</p> |
| Financial years | <p>Use full year values separated with a dash: 2008-2009</p> |
| First/ Second | <p>Preferred to <i>firstly</i>, <i>secondly</i>.</p> |
| Focused | <p>Spell it this way, not <i>focussed</i>.</p> |
| Following | <p>It is better to use <i>after</i> when that is what is meant.</p> |
| Fulfil | <p>There is no double-l in <i>fulfil</i> or <i>fulfilment</i>, but there is in <i>fulfilled</i>. Similarly, use <i>enrol</i>, <i>enrolment</i> but <i>enrolled</i>.</p> |
| Headings | <p>These should appear in sentence case format, without a full stop. The initial letter of the first word should be capitalised. All remaining letters, except for proper nouns, should be in lower case.</p> |
| Hyphens | <p><i>The Macquarie Dictionary</i> describes hyphens as the most variable detail of all in writing.</p> <p>Compound nouns often move through three stages— from two words, to hyphenated, to one word. So, all three forms can be in use at the one time eg death rate, death-rate, deathrate.</p> <p>As well, there is a move away from hyphenated prefixes eg coordinate, cooperate, even reenter.</p> <p>Leave out hyphens wherever possible as they slow the reader down.</p> |

An exception: Compounds of two words used adjectivally before a noun eg five-year terms, a red-hot poker, a Darwin-based firm.

But write: *Her firm is Darwin based.*

If This word usually takes the conditional tense, that is *were* not *was*: If I *were* you, I would give up (rather than If I *was* you ...)

Indigenous Always takes a capital when referring to the *Indigenous* people of Australia. When used as an adjective for indigenous people of other countries, use lower case *indigenous*.

As a sign of respect in Indigenous society, the name of a dead person is often not mentioned for at least a year after the death. An image should not be shown unless the family involved gives approval.

These sensitive issues are sometimes negotiable.

Check with the community, taking care not to mention the dead person's name when doing so. For further information, contact the Land Council in your region. They will either help or refer you to another agency or local community.

Initials Always use a person's first name eg Eric Wisdom, then Mr Wisdom throughout in formal documents. In most cases now, people prefer to be called by their first name.

internet Use lower case: *internet*. Similarly, *web* and *email* (no hyphen).

In order to For brevity, use *to*.

In the near Future Use *soon*.

Its/ It's *Its*: Singular ownership where gender is unknown eg The aircraft lowered its undercarriage.

It's: Abbreviated form of *it is*.

License/ licence *License*: To grant permission or to authorise.

Licence: A certificate or formal permission to do something.

Media/ medium *Media*: Often, a means or instrument. The plural of *medium*. Strictly speaking, this word takes a plural verb: *The news media are on the scene*.

Medium: The singular of *media*.

Italics

Italic type, *in which letters slope to the right*, follows a number of recognised conventions though none that is universally applicable. Rely on common sense.

Italics are often used for:

1. Titles of books, movies and other artistic works. For example: The students saw *Some Like It Hot* as part of their film studies. Hemingway won the Nobel Prize for Literature for *The Old Man and the Sea*.
2. Names of newspapers and periodicals: *NT News*, *Territory Business Magazine*, *Centralian Advocate*, *The Australian*. Note that if the article *The* forms part of the title, it is italicised.
3. Names of ships, aircraft and other vehicles: *Sea Spray*, *Southern Cross*, *Bluebird*. However, this does not apply to the abbreviation HMAS preceding a name such as HMAS *Darwin*. Nor does it apply to model or brand names eg a Holden station sedan, a Boeing aircraft.
4. Citation of Acts: Laws begin their lives as draft statutes or Bills before parliament and, if approved at all levels, become Acts. For official purposes, Bills are presented in roman type: Air Pilots Training Act. Acts appear in italics: *Air Pilots Training Act*.
5. Scientific names of plants and animals: These are always italicised. For example: *Eucalyptus*, though abbreviations of "variety" and "species" are set in roman. Common names are in roman eg blue gum, barramundi.
6. Words and letters cited as such. For example: The term *free fire zone* is used to ...Wherever I go, I find the words *No Parking*.

Last/past

It is correct to write *in the past few days* or *in the past week* unless you mean *in the final few days* or *in the final week*, which would then be *last*. Similarly, *in the past month*, *in the past year*, *in the past decade* are all correct.

Lend

A verb. The noun is *loan*.

Lengthy

Use *long*.

Literally

Often used wrongly for dramatic effect. It means *in an exact or literal sense*. For example:

The storm *literally* blew people off their feet. (This means people were actually sent flying).

Do not confuse it with *metaphorically* or *allegorically*.

Majority of

For brevity, use *most*. Use plain, brief words.

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| Meet | Do not use <i>meet with</i> . |
| Millions | Adopt this style: \$7 million, \$2.75 million. Note the gap between the figure and the word. The same applies to billions. |
| None | This word is singular; it means not one and takes a singular verb. Write <i>None is</i> not <i>none are</i> . |
| Northern Territory | Use of <i>the Territory</i> is acceptable as our target audience is generally Territorians. Be careful with formal publications such as the Annual Report which may be widely distributed outside of the Northern Territory. |
| Numbers | See <i>Figures</i> . |
| Only | Should be carefully positioned to avoid confusion. Place it as close as possible to the word it qualifies. For example: He drinks beer <i>only</i> on Saturdays (ie not on other days). He drinks <i>only</i> beer (and nothing else) on Saturdays. <i>Only</i> he drinks beer on Saturdays (ie he is the only one who ...) In speech, where this word wanders, stress and intonation often eliminate any ambiguity. |
| our/-or | For word endings, in most instances, <i>our</i> is correct. The exception is <i>Labor</i> when it refers to the <i>Australian Labor Party</i> . |
| Over | Use <i>more than</i> 200, not <i>over</i> . |
| Per | Instead of per tonne or per year, use \$3 a tonne or 50,000 a year. |
| Per cent | This is two words. Percentage is one word. Use numerals in text, 7 per cent or the symbol in headings, advertising and tables, 7%. |
| Plurals | See <i>Apostrophes</i> . |
| Possess | Sounds impressive, but use <i>have</i> or <i>own</i> . |
| Possessives | See <i>Apostrophes</i> . |
| Prepositions | It is acceptable to end a sentence with a preposition. For example, Nobody knows where they are or even where they came <i>from</i> . Trust your ear for sound. If it sounds right, do it. |

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| Presently | <p>Use <i>now</i>.</p> <p>Can also mean <i>in a short while</i>. For example: She will be with us <i>presently</i>. In this instance, use <i>soon</i>.</p> |
| Prior to | Use <i>before</i> . One word is usually better than two. |
| Program | Has taken over from <i>programme</i> . |
| Provided | Use <i>provided</i> not <i>providing</i> . We'll be okay <i>provided</i> we take enough food. Using the word <i>if</i> is usually better than using <i>provided</i> . |
| Quotes/ quotation marks | <p>When directly quoting someone, it is not necessary to close inverted commas at the end of every sentence. But you must close inverted commas at the very end of the direct quotation.</p> <p>At the end of a direct quote, the punctuation mark is placed within the inverted commas, not outside them. For example: "We're lost," he said. "We should try to follow a river or creek back to civilisation."</p> <p>When there is a quotation within a quotation, single marks must be used inside double ones:</p> <p>He said, "She reckons I should concentrate on 'keeping my cool'." Note the position of the full stop.</p> |
| Region | Say <i>Katherine region</i> , without the capital for <i>region</i> . |
| Said/says | Use <i>said</i> for serious documents and <i>says</i> for lighter ones, such as advertising. |
| Shall/will | <p>In everyday speech, <i>shall</i> is seldom heard, yet both words have a place.</p> <p><i>Shall</i> expresses the speaker's belief about a future state or action: In five years, I <i>shall</i> be ...</p> <p><i>Will</i> expresses determination or consent: Before too long, I <i>will</i> tell her exactly...</p> |
| Shortly | <i>Soon</i> is better. |
| South East Asia | Write it this way—with caps and without a hyphen. |
| That/which | The choice of <i>that</i> or <i>which</i> depends on whether the word appears in a defining or non-defining clause. Either may be used in defining clauses: The town <i>that/which</i> they like to travel to ... |

In non-defining clauses—those conveying incidental information—only *which* may be used: The class, *which* was held under a shady tree, turned out to be ...

A simple definition: *that* tells which one; *which* adds a fact.

Try leaving them out: The beach I like to go to... Again, when quoting someone, *that* can often be left out eg *She said* instead of *She said that* ... Consider whether the sentence flows better and still makes sense without it

Try Use *try to* not *try and*. For example: Bill will *try to* win, not *try and* win—unless he actually tried and won, in which case *tried* is superfluous.

Unique This word cannot be modified. There are no degrees of uniqueness. Do not write *most* unique, *quite* unique, *very* unique.

Utilise Write *use*.

Very Avoid this word. It usually adds little to an adverb or adjective. Similarly, avoid the word *extremely*. Instead, use a word strong in itself.

web For *world wide web*, use lower case. Similarly, *website*, *internet*, *email*.

While Often used indiscriminately as a stand-in for *and*, *but* or *although*.

The word *while* may be used as a substitute for *although* when it does not lead to ambiguity or absurdity but, strictly, it means *during the time that*.

It is incorrect to write: *While* the desert air is hot, it can also be chilly. Try replacing *while* with a semi-colon: The desert air can be hot; it can also be chilly.

Do not use *whilst* for *while*.

Who/whom *Who* is used when it is the subject of a verb, *whom* when it is the object of a verb or preposition: The man *who* fishes on the jetty every night. The boy *whom* you just called.

The word *whom* is sinking from view, especially in questions: *Who* do you want to see?