



IFES ENGLISH STYLE GUIDE

Updated March 2017

These guidelines apply to communications – including emails, letters, websites, printed materials – from International Services in Malaysia, the UK and the US.

In general, assume you have an international audience and write with that in mind. Even if the initial communication is only for one audience, it may be forwarded or distributed more widely.

If producing an appeal or report solely for use within a specific country, you may follow conventions more suitable to that country (for example for money or phone numbers) though try to deviate as little as possible. Separate standalone publications, like books, booklets or Word and World papers, may also adopt conventions more appropriate for their genre.

You may find it helpful to start your own “mini-style guide” to help keep your team consistent in the conventions you use.

Please make a note of areas where you disagree or have questions or find yourself deviating from this. This is an evolving document and we want it to work well for everyone.

Contact: brandhelpdesk@ifesworld.org

1. ABBREVIATIONS

1.1. AVOID ABBREVIATIONS

In general, avoid abbreviations. This helps keep your writing clear, gives it a more conversational style and makes it easier to understand for non-first language English speakers.

Do not shorten days of the week, months or Bible books.

Try to find alternatives to eg, ie, ff and etc.

It is fine to use acronyms to refer to IFES itself, IFES regions (EPSA, MENA) and national movements, but use full names for other IFES terms: eg national movement, associate general secretary, Indigenous Support Development and Governance Development (not NM, AGS, ISD and Gov Dev).

1.2. NO FULL STOPS

- St Mr Ms Mrs Dr Revd (in general, avoid using titles in body text)
- MA BSc PhD MPhil
- am pm
- IFES (not I.F.E.S.)
- BC AD
- personal initials: TB Dankwa (not T.B. Dankwa)
- Bible versions: NIV AV RSV

2. NUMBERS

2.1. WORDS OR DIGITS?

In general use words for single-figure numbers, digits for anything above nine (for example one, nine, 10, 15). The same rule works for ordinal numbers: (eighth, ninth, 10th, 11th). Dates, times, money and percentages are exceptions.

Using digits:

- For numbers from 10 upwards
- Times of day using 24-hour clock: 15:00 and time zone, if necessary
- Headlines: 25 Students Become Christians
- Use comma separation for more than three digits: 2,049
- Use a hyphen for ranges of numbers: 15-20 people were at the event
- Million: 3 million – in general use the word in a sentence and in a table or graph use what is most appropriate, which may include abbreviating million to m.
- Use digits for percentages, even for single-figure numbers: 2%, 40%, 100%

Using words:

- When the number is an approximation: There were hundreds of people at the event
- For ages expressed as decades: He was in his eighties
- When sentences start with numbers (unless in a headline): Fifty-five students attended the conference last week

2.2. MONEY

In general, write out the currency in full the first time and specify which symbol or standard ISO currency code you will use for future references: for example, 50 US dollars (\$), 30 Uruguayan pesos (UYU) or 100 euros. When used, the abbreviation precedes the numeral: \$50, UYU 30 or EUR 100 (or €100).

For tables, ensure the column headers show the currency in full as well.

However, if writing an appeal or thank you letter for just one country you may automatically use local symbols or abbreviations.

2.3. ORDINALS

Use regular text, not superscript: 15th, not 15th.

Don't use ordinals for dates: Tuesday 5 November, 5 November 2016 or November 5, 2016.

2.4. DATES

Write in full, using words and no abbreviations: 10 September 2010 or September 10, 2010 not September 10 2010 or 10.09.2010.

Hyphen to show periods of time: 2003-04, 1999-2001

2.5. DECADES

No apostrophe before the s: 1990s, he is in his mid-50s.

2.6. TIME

The 24-hour clock is used in many parts of the world and offers greatest clarity for an international audience: 05:30 and 17:30.

Alternatively, be sure to specify am or pm: 5:30am and 5:30pm

Always remember to specify which time zone.

2.7. PHONE NUMBERS

Remember to include the country code: +44 (0) 1865 263777 or +44 (0) 7712 345678.

2.8. ADDRESSES

Remember to include the country name, otherwise follow the standard address format for the country in question.

3. PUNCTUATION

3.1. APOSTROPHES

Plurals: do not use an apostrophe with acronyms: CUs, DVDs (not CU's, DVD's).

Possessives for IFES: try and rewrite to avoid the problem: the IFES office (not IFES' office).

Possessives for names ending in 's': rewrite if possible, but if not then use apostrophe and no 's': James', Moses', Jesus'.

Special cases: leaders conference, graduates conference, missions conference.

Dates: 1980s (not 1980's)

3.2. ELLIPSIS

Three dots, with a space after but not before: "but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst... It will become in him a spring of water."

Don't start or end a quote with an ellipsis.

3.3. EN AND EM DASHES

Dash: in general use the spaced en dash: The global reach of IFES is exciting – it shows the unity of the gospel.

Only use the em dash in professionally designed pieces and ensure it is used consistently: --

3.4. EXCLAMATION MARKS

Avoid using exclamation marks if possible, and never use more than one at the end of a sentence.

3.5. HYPHENATION

No hyphen or space for email, website, online.

Use a hyphen to join two words that form a single expression eg as an adjective: follow-up course, I work part-time.

Use a hyphen for numbers if you need to write them out: twenty-seven, ninety-eight.

3.6. ITALICS AND ROMAN TYPE

Use italics for titles of conferences, blogs, books, films, songs, TV, newspapers in the body text: *The Day of his Power*, *The Times*.

But put the conference theme and title of individual blog posts in quotation marks.

Use italics for foreign words.

Do not use italics for the Bible or names of books of the Bible.

Italics may be used to differentiate between quoted and non-quoted material (eg in a blog).

3.7. PARENTHESES

Use round brackets.

Use square brackets to enclose any non-original material within a quote, such as an authorial note for clarification: "I love doing [Bible study] with my friend."

3.8. QUOTATIONS

Use double quotation marks, then use single quotation marks for a quote/speech within a quote.

For Bible references, use round brackets after the quote and place final punctuation before the brackets: "It will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:13)

If a quote ends with a full sentence, the end punctuation (full stop, exclamation or question mark) should be inside the quotation marks: James said, "The students all had a great week."

If the end punctuation is not part of the quote put it outside the brackets: Paul tells the Galatians to "carry each other's burdens".

3.9. SPACING

Use a single space between sentences.

4. SPELLING

Either US English or UK English can be used, but ensure they are used consistently in each communication piece.

The IFES website uses UK English for unsigned content. Reports and other pdf files can be in either US or UK English.

Use program, even when using UK English.

IFES/national movement has/have: usually singular but let the context decide, for example:

- IFES is producing a new edition of Influence later this year.
- UESI India has seen considerable growth recently. They are now employing an extra 10 staff workers.

5. CAPITALISATION

5.1. MINIMISE USE OF CAPITALS

As a general rule, avoid capitalisation wherever possible – it comes across as “shouty” and makes the page look cluttered. Some common exceptions are explained below.

5.2. ACADEMIC SUBJECTS

Use a capital for languages but lower case for other subjects: she studied biology and French; he has a degree in theology.

Do not use capitals for degree types: he has a bachelor’s in music and a master’s in ancient Greek.

5.3. CERTAIN BIBLICAL NOUNS

Use capitals for certain nouns: the Bible, a Christian, Christianity, the Scriptures, the Old and New Testament, the Gospel of John, St Mary’s Church.

Do not use capitals for adjectives: biblical, godly, scriptural, or for nouns used in a more generic way: I shared the gospel with her, I play the piano at church.

5.4. COMPASS POINTS

Use capitals when part of the name of a county or province: West Sussex, East Java. And also these regions: Middle East, Central America, North America, South America, Latin America and the West, the Global South (when referring to the cultural entities).

Lower case for geographically defined areas: north-east Scotland.

5.5. JOB TITLES

Use capitals if referring to a specific person’s job title: IFES General Secretary Daniel Bourdagné; Associate General Secretary for Operations Tim Adams; Board Chair Chris Collins.

Do not use capitals for generic positions: All general secretaries are required to attend; CU presidents are always students; a new board chair is expected next year; Mr Shin is the longest serving East Asia regional secretary.

Never use capitals for staff worker or team leader, even as someone's job title.

5.6. NAMES OF GOD

Use capitals for words that refer to the Trinity: God, Lord, Father, Son of God, Holy Spirit (and other similar ones eg Lamb of God, Creator, God's Word).

Do not use capitals for pronouns of deity: he, his, him (not He, His, Him) or for God's kingdom.

5.7. TECHNOLOGY

Use capitals for: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, PowerPoint.

Do not use capitals for: email, web, internet, online, tweeting, tweet.

6. IFES MOVEMENTS, REGIONS, MINISTRIES AND OFFICES

6.1. NATIONAL MOVEMENT NAMES

Use the abbreviated name (eg Compa) or acronym (eg AGEUP) followed by name of the country for the first usage. For subsequent usages drop the country name: I joined Compa Mexico as soon as I arrived and went on a mission run by Compa and AGEUP Peru.

If writing for an audience very unfamiliar with IFES, you could be more explanatory for the first usage: Compa, the IFES movement in Mexico, hosted several students from Russia.

Never use phrases such as IFES Mexico to refer to the national movement in a country as this doesn't reflect the indigenous identity of the movement.

Note that acronyms are capitalised (eg AGEUP) but abbreviations are not (eg Compa).

When referring to a group within a movement, do not use their group-specific acronym. Instead, use the national acronym with their location within the country: the AGEUP Peru group in Huaraz or AGEUP in Huaraz

For the North American movements and programs: Inter-Varsity Canada; InterVarsity USA, InterVarsity Link

Do not use capitals (or an abbreviation) for "national movement": TSCF New Zealand joined with three other national movements to host a graduates conference

6.2. IFES REGIONS

Use capitals to refer to the IFES regions: Francophone Africa, English- and Portuguese-Speaking Africa (note the hanging hyphen after English-)

Use a hyphen for sub-regional and capitalise as Sub-regional.

6.3. GLOBAL MINISTRIES

Use capitals to refer to specific IFES ministries: Ministry Impact, Governance Development, Indigenous Support Development, Graduate Impact, Scripture Engagement.

Do not use capitals if talking about the concept generally: For all IFES movements Scripture engagement is a high priority.

6.4. INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

We have three International Services offices, based in Asia, the USA and the UK.

- IFES International Services (or just International Services, depending on context) refers to the team as a whole – all three locations together.
- International Services (Asia), International Services (UK) and International Services (USA) refer to the individual locations. The separate offices and teams can also be referred to in ways appropriate to the context and flow of writing (see examples in the table below). Use Asia wherever possible, over Malaysia, to emphasise the regional ownership of this office.

Do not use abbreviations such as ISUK or IS, which are unsuitable for a Christian organisation.

WE USE	WE DON'T USE
International Services	Headquarters, head office or similar (our purpose is to serve, not be superior to people); abbreviations
Asia, UK and USA	KL, Kuala Lumpa, Oxford, Platteville (countries/regions are more easily identifiable than towns); US (we want to be consistent and use USA);
International Services (Asia), International Services (UK) and International Services (USA) Other examples include: International Services office in Asia, International Services team in the UK, International Services in the USA	International Office, Asia Hub, International Service Centre (or any other old terminology)

7. REFERENCES

7.1. BIBLE REFERENCES

Write Bible references like this: book, chapter number, colon, no space, verse number(s), separated by unspaced commas (for individual verses) or an unspaced hyphen (for a block of verses). Lamentations 2:2, Numbers 5:6,9, Luke 15:11-13

For multiple references, follow this example: Colossians 1:4-7, 3:2, John 15:7-17:4

Reference Bible verses after the quote, in the body of the text, with the punctuation before the brackets: It says in Luke's Gospel, "Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" (Luke 4:8)

Use full names for Bible books (no abbreviations).

7.2. OTHER REFERENCES

For a formal citation use endnotes and follow this pattern for book references: author first name, author surname/initials, full title (place: publisher, date)

8. LAYOUT/TYPESSETTING

8.1. BODY TEXT

Left-aligned (rather than fully justified).

Paragraphs: no indent, line break before new paragraph.

8.2. HEADLINES AND TITLES

Where headings and titles are not all in capitals, use title case, that is capital letters for the principal words. Articles, conjunctions, and prepositions do not get capital letters.

8.3. SUB-HEADINGS

Use either title case or sentence case, but make sure you use it consistently.

Similarly, be consistent in whether or not you leave a line-space after sub-headings.

8.4. BLOCK QUOTATIONS

A longer quote of more than five lines should be indented and not enclosed in quotation marks.

8.5. LISTS/BULLET POINTS

Use full stops at the end of bullet points only if each bullet point is a full sentence – otherwise not and no need to use semi colons or commas at the end of each point.

9. TIPS

- Be consistent – if you choose to do something in a certain style, stick with it throughout.
- Use 'Find and Replace' in Word to check for things like extra spaces, consistency with spelling, etc.
- Set auto-correct in Word to automatically expand abbreviations, eg *WA* for *World Assembly*
- Use ¶ to see the formatting applied to your document.
- Short-cut en dash in Windows: (make sure Num Lock is on) then Ctrl - (minus key on number pad); on a Mac: Alt - (hyphen key). But Word will automatically change a hyphen to an en-dash in most cases.
- Set your spell-check and grammar-check in Word to UK English or US English. This should help you pick up common problems like: *practice* (noun) or *practise* (verb); *dependant* (noun) or *dependent* (adjective); *principal* (chief) or *principle* (rule); *prophecy* (noun) or *prophesy* (verb); *stationary* (still) or *stationery* (envelopes, etc.); *licence* (noun) or *license* (verb)
- As you work, note down anything that you think needs clarifying. The style guide will be reviews every six months.

10. QUICK REFERENCE: COMMONLY USED IFES WORDS

academic subjects: lower case apart from languages: *she studied French and biology*

AGM: can be abbreviated, rather than Annual General Meeting

the Board: upper case when referring to the elected board of IFES (not for national movement boards)

board chair: not *chair of the board* – upper case if referring to a specific person's job title, lower case if a generic position: *IFES Board Chair Chris Collins is keen to liaise with other board chairs from around the world*

board member: always lower case

Bible: upper case *Bible* but lower case *biblical*

Bible study: lower case *study*

degrees: lower case with an apostrophe *bachelor's, master's*

Finance Committee: upper case when referring to the IFES body

General Committee: upper case when referring to the IFES body

general secretary: upper case only if referring to a person's specific job title

God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Word of God, Scripture: upper case for names of God and the Bible, but lower case for pronouns: *him, he, his*

gospel: lower case unless the name of a Bible book – *the Gospel of John*

Inter-Varsity Canada: note hyphen

InterVarsity/USA: note capital V and lack of hyphen

national movement: always lower case and not abbreviated to NM

newsletter: one word

Nominating Committee: upper case when referring to the IFES body

prayer letter: two words

regional secretary: only upper case if referring to a person's specific job title

Scripture engagement: lower case for *engagement* if talking about the general concept. Upper case if talking about the specific IFES ministry.

senior staff meetings: lower case

staff worker: two words

Steering Committee: upper case when referring to the IFES body

World Assembly: upper case