

Our Writing Style Guide

**A simple clear
consistent voice**

Foreword

This guide is for all Council employees and contractors and aims to help you write in Council's preferred style and tone.

Following the tips in this guide will help ensure the documents you produce align with Council's writing principles and practices. This will bring **consistency** and **professionalism** to our communication efforts, both internally and externally.

If you have any questions when writing, refer to this guide for clarification.

If you cannot find the answer you need or have any feedback, feel free to reach out to the Communications Team: cce@surfcoast.vic.gov.au.

Make sure to use this Writing Style Guide in conjunction with Council's standard document templates and the Surf Coast Shire Council Brand Guidelines.

SECTION ONE:

The writing process

There are many things to think about when you're writing your document. No matter what you're writing, take time to plan and consider the following:

What's your message?

Think about your message and what you want to achieve. Make sure you have enough material, information and ideas before you start.

Who is your audience?

Always keep your reader in mind. Think about how your message is going to be received and perceived. Your audience will rarely have the same level of knowledge as you.

Ask "what's in it for me?"

Your readers are most interested in what affects them. After writing any piece, no matter how brilliant, ask "what will my readers get from this?".

Keep it simple

Use plain English to convey your message clearly. Keep your writing free of technical language or jargon unless you are writing for a specialist audience.

Keep it friendly

Use positive language. People are generally more receptive when they are told what they can do, instead of what they can't.

Other tips

- Keep sentences short.
- Express one idea in a sentence.
- Avoid repetition.
- Break up complex information.
- Refine your topic.
- Avoid acronyms, abbreviations and jargon.
- Think about how you would explain it to someone with no knowledge of the subject or if you were talking on the phone.
- Avoid clichés, slang and informal writing.
- Remember to check spelling and grammar.
- Make sure all abbreviations are clearly spelled out, and any quotes are properly attributed.
- Check your facts and the spelling of all names (people and places).
- Make sure your sums add up.

Proofread

Once drafted, documents should be proofread several times. Ask someone not closely involved to proofread your document. They will see it with fresh eyes.

Hot tip: It also helps to read what you have written out loud.

Proofreader's check list:

Before you publish, make sure you check:

- **Spelling and punctuation**
Don't rely on the spell checker. Sometimes the word is spelled correctly but it's the wrong word.
- **Hyphenation**
Make sure words aren't broken over two lines.
- **Spacing between lines and words**
This should be even and consistent.
- **Page and paragraph numbering, tables of contents and indexes**
Double check sequences, page numbers and hierarchy.
- **Headers and footers**
These should be logical and consistent.
- **Captions**
Make sure you've correctly named the people and places.
- **Tables, diagrams and figures**
Check they're correct and accurately captioned.
- **Telephone numbers**
Confirm they're right and spaced consistently (5261 0600, 0457 164 513).
- **Addresses (postal, email, website, physical)**
Verify they're accurate and up-to-date.
- **Footnotes and references**
Make sure you've included anything you've referenced and correctly attributed it.

SECTION TWO:

Punctuation and grammar

Punctuation and grammar practices vary from person to person and organisation to organisation. This is because writing, communication and the English language are constantly evolving.

- A more connected world is changing Australian writing styles.
- Electronic communications are challenging traditional written English.
- Some people have kept traditional writing practices, while others prefer modern practices.

This section lists common punctuation and grammar confusions and styles, and notes **Council's preferred style**.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations are usually the first few letters of a word.

For example: December abbreviates to Dec

Avoid using abbreviations. If they must be used, the words should be spelled out in the first instance. However, do not use *approx* to abbreviate approximately. Use the full word, or even better, about.

For **addresses**, write VIC or TAS, not Vic. or Tas. This is Australia Post's preferred format.

Abbreviated **titles** can be used but should not be written with a full stop.

For example: Mr Brown, Miss Smith, Mrs Green, Ms White, Cr Black

Aboriginal

see First Nations

Acronyms and initialisms

Acronyms are pronounceable words created using the first letters of each word in a title.

Initialisms are shortened phrases or names using the first letters said individually.

For example:

GORCAPA (Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority) is an **acronym** and is pronounced "gor-CAP-ah".

EMT (Executive Management Team) is an **initialism** and pronounced "eee-em-tee".

If using an organisation's name or long official title several times, refer to the full name or title the first time, followed by the shortened form in brackets. You can then use the acronym or initialism throughout the rest of document.

Note: Do not use SCSC or SCS to represent Surf Coast Shire Council. (See *Shire* for details of how to reference the organisation).

Acts, bills and regulations *(see also Italics)*

Acts

All components of an Act, including the year, are italicised. When referring to Acts, use a capital A.

For example: *Local Government Act 1989*

Subsequent references to the same Act can be written without italics and with the date omitted (Local Government Act), and can also be abbreviated to Act.

For example: Council is required to comply with the *Local Government Act 1989*. Staff members need to read the Act.

Bills

Bills before parliament are written without italics. This is because they have not been given royal assent.

For example: Crown Land (Reserves) Amendment (Carlton Gardens) Bill 2008

Regulations

Regulations are written without italics.

For example: Regulation three of the First Home Owner Grant Regulations

Addresses

Spell words such as street and road in full. Use a capital S or R when talking about a specific street or road.

For example:

14 Gilbert Street
Between Grossmans and Coombes Roads
The streets of Torquay

When writing an address in full, commas should not be used.

For example:

Surf Coast Shire Council
1 Merrijig Drive
Torquay VIC 3228

When writing an address on one line, a comma should be used in place of a line break.

For example: Please send your comments to Surf Coast Shire Council,
1 Merrijig Drive, Torquay VIC 3228.

Alignment

Most of the time, text should be **left aligned** as it makes a document easier to read.

Justification (that is, stretching the lines from margin to margin) can make documents hard to read and leave trapped areas of white space. It's best to avoid this.

Right aligned or *centred* text can sometimes be used, but sparingly and usually for headings. Body text in these documents is usually left aligned.

Ampersand (&)

Avoid using the ampersand. It may be used in tables, bullet lists, advertisements and places where space is limited, and when part of a registered business name.

Apostrophes

Apostrophes show possession or the omission of letters in a word. They are not used in any other situation.

Omission of letters

An apostrophe used to denote omission will replace missing letters.

For example:

I have	becomes	I've
Will not	becomes	won't
It is/has	becomes	it's (not to be confused with its)
He is/has	becomes	he's (not to be confused with his)
They are	becomes	they're (not to be confused with their or there)

Ownership

An apostrophe is used to show someone owns something.

If the noun is singular, the apostrophe comes before the s.

For example: This is Mike's desk.

The apostrophe indicates the desk belongs to Mike.

If the noun is plural, the apostrophe comes after the s.

For example: The councillors' name badges.

The apostrophe indicates the name badges belong to several councillors.

Exceptions

Mr Collins's house not Mr Collins' house.

If the word's plural form comes from changing internal letters (such as changing child to children or man to men, etc.) then the apostrophe comes before the s.

For example:

Children's

Men's

Women's

People's

When not to use an apostrophe

His, hers, its, theirs and yours do not have an apostrophe. (See *It's or its in Word Clarifications for more on when to use an apostrophe for its*).

For a period such as a decade.

The 1950s **not** The 1950's

In abbreviations, acronyms or initialisms.

RDOs **not** RDO's

Plurals

Apostrophes are not used to show plural objects.

For example:

Ten cats walked down the street **not** Ten cat's walked down the street

Thursdays **not** Thursday's

Brackets / parenthesis

Use round brackets to separate explanatory or qualifying material from the main sentence.

For example: The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) welcomed community feedback.

Square brackets are used for editorial clarification in quotes.

For example: "The dog buried it's [sic] bone."

Bullet points

Bullet points make reading lists easier. There are two types of bullet points: sentence fragments and full sentences.

For sentence fragments, each point is lowercase. The last bullet point ends with a full stop.

For example:

Assistance is available in several forms:

- monetary assistance
- equipment modifications
- advisory services.

When bullet points are made up of full sentences, normal sentence rules apply.

For example:

The committee came to two important conclusions:

- Officers from the department should investigate the matter.
- Research should be funded in three priority areas.

Capital letters

Capital letters are used to begin sentences and for proper nouns and names. Overuse of capital letters can make text harder to read.

Do not use a capital letter for each word in headings (see *also Headings*).

Limit the use of capital letters to:

- proper names
- position titles (Councillor, Mayor)
- titles of programs, strategies, projects, plans, tenders and publications
- days of the week, months, and special holidays
- geographical names
- national and religious groups and religions.

The Aged and Family Department has capitals but when you are talking about aged and family services in general, capital letters are not needed.

This also applies to the Victorian Government (a proper name), whereas state government is a general term and does not need capitals. Shadow cabinet and opposition leader are not official titles and do not need capitals.

The words *group*, *department*, *unit* and *team* should also have capitals when used as part of the full title but not when used alone in text.

For example: The Executive Management Team met this morning to discuss the matter.
The team did not make a decision.

Job titles should be capitalised. For example, when referring to the Statutory Planning Manager, the title should be in upper case.

When talking about Council's planning officers (a general term), the collective reference to officers should be in lower case.

When talking about programs, strategies, projects, plans or tenders, use capital letters when it is part of a title. Use a lower case letter when using the word on its own.

For example: The Jan Juc Pathways Tender is now being advertised. Visit the website to view the tender documents.

Clichés

A cliché is a phrase, expression or adjective people use so much it no longer has any meaning, or has become a vague term disguising a lack of facts.

For example:

- moving forward
- address the issue
- bottom line
- not ruling anything in or out.

Clichés should be avoided in your writing.

Collective nouns and names

Collective nouns are nouns signifying a group of people or things. Use collective nouns and the names of companies as singular.

For example:

Staff, family, committee, council, team, department, unit.

Council has (not have) met and it has (not they have) made a decision.

The Torquay Football Club owes its (not their) success to the local community.

Exceptions

When a club or organisation is referred to by its nickname.

For example: The Tigers owe their (not its) success to the local community.

When a company name ends in s (and it looks like a plural word), it is still used as a singular word.

For example: Leader Newspapers is (not are) running the same article.

Colons *(see also Semicolon)*

The colon introduces more information to a sentence. This can include a list or a series of items, an explanation or a quote.

For example: The Surf Coast Shire is made up of three wards: Otway Range Ward, Torquay Ward and Winchelsea Ward.

A colon also introduces a list of bullet points (see *Bullet points*).

Commas

Commas improve readability. Leaving commas out can blur the meaning of your sentence, while overuse of commas can distract readers.

The most frequent uses of commas include:

- Between items in a list or series

For example: *The Surf Coast Shire is made up of three wards: Otway Range Ward, Torquay Ward and Winchelsea Ward.*

- When separating elements which are not part of the main statement

For example: *Torquay and Winchelsea, which are now part of Surf Coast Shire, were once in separate municipalities.*

The Oxford comma is the final comma in a list of things. The Oxford comma isn't necessary but can be used to add clarity to a sentence.

For example: There will be further investigation in areas such as stormwater and drainage, biodiversity, climate change, and bushfire risk assessment.

Council

When talking about Council, you don't need to say the Council or our Council, simply say Council. Don't use shire when talking about Council; shire is a general term referring to the geographical area.

For example:

On Thursday, Council made a decision about Stribling Reserve.
The shire includes the townships of Torquay and Lorne.

When talking about councils in general, use a lowercase c, unless writing their full name.

For example:

Surf Coast Shire Council meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month, but other councils meet on other days.

Councillors

Use a capital C when referring to a specific councillor. When talking about the role of a councillor or all of the councillors, use a lowercase c.

For example: Councillor Smith attended a conference with other councillors from regional Victoria.

Cr is the abbreviation of the word councillor. This can be used like other title abbreviations such as Mr or Dr. A full stop is not needed after the abbreviation (see *also Abbreviations*).

For example: I have heard Cr John Smith will stand for re-election.

Compass points

The compass points are north, east, south and west. When talking about them in general, they don't need capitalisation.

For example:

to the north (in a northerly direction)
northbound
north-east, north eastern
north pole, south pole (celestial, magnetic or electric poles)

When referring to a geographic location, they need capitalisation.

For example:

the North (part of the world, country)
North Pole, South Pole (geographic location)

Dates *(see also Time)*

Dates should be expressed as a day, month and year, in that order without commas. The ordinal indicator (th, st) is not to be used.

For example:

6 October 2017 (not 6th)
Friday 6 October 2017 (not Friday the 6th of October)
6/10/17

Dates that run over several days must use from and to, not use a dash.

For example: The festival runs from 1 October to 6 October (not 1 - 6 October).

For ranges of years, use a dash (not a slash) without a space before and after. Do not repeat the century, except when the centuries are different.

For example:

2005-10

1995-2002

Decades should always use numerals with no apostrophe before the s.

For example: The 1980s, the mid-1980s

Refer to centuries in numerals. This is an exception to the no ordinal indicator rule.

For example: 20th century

Electronic e

Don't hyphenate any electronic references such as email, enews, ebulletin.

However, when the word following the e is a proper noun, it should be capitalised.

For example: the Surf Coast Shire eNews

Ellipsis (...)

Use an ellipsis (three dots) to show text has been removed or hesitation in speech. There is a space before and after the ellipsis.

For example (hesitation in speech): He was ... well, interesting.

For example (text removed): The Mayor was part of the G21 Board Delegation ... to discuss regional priorities.

First Nations

Preferred terms

We usually refer to Indigenous or Aboriginal people as **First Nations people**.

It may sometimes also be appropriate to use **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**.

The term **Traditional Owners** is used to refer to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander individuals, or groups legally recognised under the Aboriginal Heritage Act, who can prove a traditional or historical connection, attachment and/ or relationship to a particular area of land.

In Surf Coast Shire, we have three Traditional Owner Groups:

- The Wadawurrung People
- The Gulidjan People
- Gadubanud People

These are represented by 2 Registered Aboriginal Parties - Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation - who are responsible for managing and protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage on Country.

Country, and Acknowledgement of Country

The term **Country** is used by First Nations peoples to describe the lands, waterways and seas to which they are connected. 'Country' in this sense is a complex idea that encapsulates ideas about lore, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity.

Surf Coast Shire spans three Countries:

- **Wadawurrung Country** (covering Torquay through Anglesea and up to the Painkalac in Aireys Inlet, and up to the Barwon River in Winchelsea)
- **Gulidjan Country** (coving Deans Marsh)
- **Gadubanud Country** (from Painkalac Creek in Aireys Inlet to Lorne)

It is important to include an **Acknowledgement of Country** in written documents. You can find more information about this in Council's *Acknowledgement of Country* Policy.

Full stops *(see also Abbreviations, Brackets, Quotation marks)*

Full stops are used to mark the end of a sentence.

Use **one space** after a full stop.

When not to use a full stop:

- after headings or subheadings
- after Mr, Mrs, Ms, Cr or other common abbreviations such as WA, SA
- in abbreviations for honours such as OAM, AM, OBE, MBE
- when using Hon for politicians
- between initials for people's given names (Mr J K Smith).

Government

The word government is only capitalised as part of a formal title or abbreviated specific title. Lower case is appropriate elsewhere.

For example:

The government has complex issues to manage.

The Australian Government is providing Surf Coast Shire Council with a grant.

There are interchangeable terms used for the different tiers of government; however, the following is recommended:

Australian Government	not	federal government
Victorian Government	not	state government
local government	not	local council

Federal government, state government and local government are general terms and do not need capitalisation.

Headings

Use sentence case, meaning only the first word of a heading needs capitals.

For example: Capital assistance for community agencies and services

The exception is when a proper noun is used in the heading.

For example: Capital assistance for Surf City Precinct announced

Hyphenation

Hyphens are used to join complex words and compound words.

For example:

Complex words: pre-1990, ex-member, re-form (to mean form again rather than reform to fix or change), two-year-old.

Compound words and terms: cold-shoulder, three-stage operation, government-owned, mother-in-law.

Hyphens should not be used to separate a word over two lines.

For example: The official opening of Grenville Oval supports our goal as Council to create a community where everyone can participate.

Inverted commas (see *Quotation marks*)

Italics

A general rule is to use italics and appropriate capital letters for the titles of published materials (although there are exceptions). Italics can also be used to emphasise a word or phrase.

Italics should be used for the following:

- books, periodicals and newspapers
- films, television and radio shows
- plays
- poems
- musical compositions
- works of art
- legislation and legal cases (including Acts of Parliament)
- scientific names of plants and animals.

Italics should not be used for the names of:

- reports
- studies
- plans
- policies
- projects
- programs
- art exhibitions
- events.

Mayor (see also *Councillors*)

Use a capital M when referring to a specific mayor. When discussing the role of the mayor in general or all of the mayors, use a lowercase m.

For example:

The Mayor of Geelong City Council attended the event with mayors from other councils. Surf Coast Shire Mayor, Cr Bell, also attended the event.

Measurements

All measurements should be written as metric. Imperial measurements should be converted to metric, including temperature.

Use abbreviations for all measures except tonne and litre. There should be no space between the number and abbreviation. A full stop is only used after an abbreviation when it appears at the end of a sentence.

All abbreviations are expressed as singular. Numerals should be used with abbreviations. Fractions should be expressed as decimals (see also *Numbers*).

For example:

30km	not	30kms
1.5km	not	1½km

The following is a list of units and their abbreviations.

Length:

- m metres
- mm millimetres
- cm centimetres
- km kilometres

Mass or weight:

- g grams
- kg kilograms

Area:

- ha hectares
- sqm square metres
- sqcm square centimetres

Volume (fluids):

- ml millilitres
- cc cubic centimetres
- kl kilolitres

Speed:

- m/s metres per second
- km/h kilometres per hour

Other:

- N newtons
- J joules
- W watts
- Pa pascals
- mb millibars
- A amperes
- V volts
- Hz hertz
- rpm revolutions per minute
- C celsius

Money

When referring to Australian dollars use the following format: \$50.15.

When the amount is less than one dollar use 10c or \$0.10.

When referring to thousands use \$10,000. In tables and graphs, where space is tight, use \$10k.

When referring to millions use \$1,850,000 or \$1.85 million. In tables and graphs use \$1m.

Numbers *(see also Addresses, Measurements)*

Spell out numbers one to nine and use numerals from number 10 onwards. This includes first, second, ninth, 10th, 25th and so on *(see Dates for use of the ordinal indicator)*.

If you are starting a sentence with a number, spell the number out.

For example: Forty people attended the lunch.

Alternatively, start the sentence with “A total of 40 people” or “More than 40 people”.

When using numerals 1 to 999 in tables or graphs do not use a comma. Commas within numerals begin at 1,000.

Use numerals when referring to measurements.

For example: 5mm not five mm.

Percentages

With numerals, use either the symbol % or the words per cent. With words, only use per cent.

For example:

25% or 25 per cent

Nine per cent

Quotation marks

Use double quotation marks, also known as inverted commas or talking marks.

For example: “That report is well written,” she said.

Single quotation marks are used for quotes within quotes.

For example: “He told me he was ‘extremely hungry’ so I gave him a biscuit,” the rescuer said.

Punctuation and quotation marks

Punctuating spoken sentences trips many people up. Punctuation is placed inside the closing quotation mark to delineate the end of the quote, except when the quote appears within a complete sentence.

For example:

“It’s great fun. I love working with children,” she said.

She said, “it’s great fun. I love working with children”.

Do not use quotation marks to emphasise certain words, use **bold** or *italics*.

Do not use quotation marks for the names of books, newspapers, council publications, poems, plays, movies or any other titles, use *italics*.

Referencing

Council style is generally not to reference in academic form when writing for the community. However, it is important to acknowledge the sources of information when quoting directly from another publication.

If you ever need to reference sources within a document, Council uses the Harvard (author-date) system.

You should include a reference list at the end of your text, with all sources arranged alphabetically as follows:

1. author’s surname followed by a comma
2. author’s first initial
3. year of publication followed by a comma
4. title of publication in *italics* and followed by a comma

5. publisher's name followed by a comma
6. place of publication followed by a full stop.

For example: Guilio, G 1987, *We're warming up*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Regardless of whether you quote directly or paraphrase, you must include the author's surname, the year of publication and the page numbers if appropriate.

For example:

Guilio (1987, pp. 244-7) was the first environmentalist to record interest in the warming of the climate.

Overall interest in the warming of the climate was first recorded in 1987 (Guilio 1987, pp. 244-7).

If references cited in text have more than one author, both need to be acknowledged.

For example:

King and Wilson (2017) found...

A recent study (King and Wilson 2017) found...

For more than two authors, such as work by Guilio, King, Wilson and Carruthers, the Latin term *et al* is used.

For example:

A recent study by Guilio et al (2017) found...

A recent study (Guilio et al 2017) found...

Semicolons *(see also Colons)*

Semicolons join related full sentence clauses. Do not use a capital letter after a semicolon.

For example: Council will discuss the playground issue at the next meeting; start dates depend on the resolution.

Semicolons can also be used when one or more items in a series or list, within a sentence, contain internal commas.

For example: Councillors came from Torquay, Victoria; Clare, South Australia; and Margaret River, Western Australia.

Spacing for sentences and paragraphs

Separate sentences with one space (never two). Use a single line space between paragraphs.

Shire *(see Council)*

Shire refers to a geographic region. Always use a capital S when using the full title of the shire. When describing geographic boundaries, or using the word in its general form, a lower case s is used.

For example:

I am a resident of Surf Coast Shire.

I own property in both Surf Coast and Central Goldfields Shires.

All of Victoria's regional shires were represented at the expo.

A common confusion is using the word shire for Council. These terms are different and one cannot substitute the other. We work for Council (refers to the organisation) which governs the Surf Coast Shire (refers to the area of land).

Signature blocks

Letters

A professional letter concludes with “Yours faithfully”. You do not need a comma after the conclusion.

For example:

Yours faithfully

[signature space]

Robyn Seymour

Chief Executive Officer

Email signatures

All staff email signatures must follow the set template. Additional sign-offs in varying fonts, colours and sizes or picture or logos are not permitted. Additional campaigns or personal interests are also not permitted.



Talk to the IT team to set up your signature or if you have questions about your email signature.

Slashes

You do not need to place spaces between words and slashes.

For example: Cat/dog **not** cat / dog

Telephone numbers

Telephone numbers should be written as follows:

Landline numbers written as two groups of four digits: **5261 0600**

Mobile numbers written as one group of four digits and two groups of three digits: **0457 164 513**

Spaces should be used between numbers, not dashes.

Australia's emergency number should be written as follows:

Triple zero (000)

Spelling out the word with the numbers after it in brackets.

Time

Time should be expressed in numerals with the abbreviation am or pm.

Divisions of hours should be shown by a full stop, not a hyphen or a colon; minutes don't need to be added for the top of the hour. There should be no space between the end of the numbers and the am or pm.

If you are writing a distinct block of time, a dash should not be used between times, you should instead use the word **to**.

For example:

9am

8.15pm

8.15am to 1pm

Noon, midnight

Underline

Avoid underlining words, as this has come to be indicative of a link (even in printed materials)

Wards

Wards of the Surf Coast Shire should be spelled with a lower case **w** unless after that name of the ward.

For example: The meeting was held in the Winchelsea Ward.

Surf Coast Shire is divided into four wards.

The actual ward names should always be spelled with a capital.

For example:

Anglesea Ward

Lorne Ward

Winchelsea Ward

Torquay Ward

Website

All websites are written out in full and referred to in text as

www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au.

Websites should appear in bold in your text so people can recognise the entire address.

Don't use http:// when writing web addresses, this is not needed to get to a website.

For internal pages on our website, the communications team can create a friendly URL to make writing and reading website addresses easier in our documents. Please talk to the communications team if you need a friendly URL.

SECTION THREE:

Word clarification

Australian English

Make sure you use Australian spelling in your writing.

Common examples of Australian English include:

- organisation **not** organization (use **s** not **z**)
- colour **not** color; valour **not** valor (include the **u**)
- Councillor **not** Councilor
- program **not** programme
- aluminium **not** aluminum.

Ensure your computer dictionary is set to Australian English for all programs including emails.

Advice or advise

Advice is a noun, meaning an opinion about what could or should be done in a situation or about a problem.

Advise is a verb, meaning to counsel.

For example: I advise you to seek professional advice.

Affect or effect

Effect can be a verb (doing word) and a noun (naming word). Affect can only be used as a verb.

Affect (verb) means to have an influence on.

For example:

Council was affected by the change in legislation.

Fatty foods will affect your health.

Effect (verb) means to cause, bring about, result in, or accomplish.

For example: He effected a great improvement in working conditions.

Effect (noun) is a result or consequence.

For example: Her skills as a writer had a great effect on Council's communications.

Alternative and alternate

Alternative is a choice between only two options, not several.

For example: Many alternatives is incorrect. Instead say, there are many options.

Alternate means to rotate or take turns.

For example: My sister and I alternate doing the dishes.

Among or Amongst

Amongst is the British spelling of among. Use the Australian English among.

Biannual or Biennial

Biannual means twice a year.

Biennial means once every two years.

Compare to, or compare with

Compare to is used to note similarities.

Compare with is used when noting differences.

Compliment or complement

Compliment (noun) is an expression of praise or admiration.

For example: The staff member was happy to receive the compliment.

Compliment (verb) is the act of offering praise or admiration.

For example: The mayor complimented the councillor on her ability to build rapport with constituents.

Complement (noun) is something that completes or makes perfect.

For example: His garden was a complement to his home.

Complement (verb) is the act of achieving completion or perfection.

For example: His garden complemented his home.

Different from or different to

Different to does not exist. One thing is different from another, not different to it.

Discreet or discrete

Discreet refers to self-restraint or being prudent.

For example: I told her to be discreet about her personal life.

Discrete means consisting of distinct parts.

For example: The course will cover three discrete models.

Division or department

There are three **divisions** at Surf Coast Shire Council, which are overseen by three general managers. Each division is made up of a number of **departments**.

e.g., i.e. and etc.

e.g. means for example

i.e. means that is, or in other words

etc. (et cetera) means and others or and so forth (**not ect**)

E.g. and etc. can be spelled out or abbreviated, depending on usage. Full stops for all expressions should be as above.

For example: He likes citrus fruit (e.g. oranges and lemons) but not stone fruit.

Either ... or (see also Neither ... nor)

Either is always followed by or.

For example: Residents can apply for either a blue permit or a green permit depending on their needs.

Either is used to describe one or the other and should not be used for more than two items.

Elicit or illicit

Elicit means to draw out facts, information, a response or reaction.

For example: He questioned his staff member to elicit the information he required for his sales report.

Illicit means actions or goods that are illegal.

For example: The police arrested the man for illicit behaviour.

Inquiry and enquiry

Inquiry relates to an investigation.

Enquiry means to ask.

For example: The director enquired where the court of inquiry was to meet.

It's or its

It's is short for it is or it has.

Its means something belonging to a thing.

The apostrophe shows a letter is missing. If in any doubt, read the sentence aloud and check whether it is/it was/it has could be inserted instead. If it can, use an apostrophe.

For example:

It's (it is) certain to come before Council.

Council has approved its (Council's) financial report.

Learnt or learned

Both are correct, but for consistency, Council uses learned.

Licence or license

Licence is a noun and refers to the document or formal permission from a regulatory authority to do something.

For example: I have a driver's licence.

License is a verb and means to grant authoritative permission to undertake an action.

For example: I am licensed to sell alcohol.

Neither ... nor *(see also Either ... or)*

Neither is always followed by nor.

For example: She lacks neither courage nor conviction.

Neither refers to one or the other and should not be used if more than two items are being discussed.

One word or two?

One word

- Banyul-Warri
- carpark
- childcare
- cooperation
- coordinate/coordinator
- Grasstree (plant)
- masterplan
- playgroup
- ratepayer
- re-election
- taskforce
- VicRoads (note the capital R)
- wellbeing
- whereas
- worthwhile

Two (or more) words

- Grass Tree Park
- Surf Coast
- Surf Coast Shire

Personal or personnel

Personal is an adjective and means something private or individual.

For example: I don't know much about his personal life.

Personnel is a noun and describes people employed in an organisation, business or service.

For example: Surf Coast Shire Council personnel will be attending the seminar.

Practice or practise

Practice is a noun.

For example: The doctor opened a private practice.

Practise is a verb, describing an action or habit.

For example: I need to practise playing the piano.

Principal or principle

Principal (noun) refers to the head of a group.

For example: The school principal gave an inspired speech at the graduation ceremony.

Principal (adjective) means the first or highest in rank or importance.

For example: This matter is of principal importance to Council.

Principle (noun) means standard or rule of personal conduct.

For example: She does not wish to participate because it is against her principles.

Program or programme

Programme is the British spelling of program. Use the Australian English program, unless specified.

Site, sight or cite

Site refers to a location or place.

For example:

This is the site of the new primary school.

Council has started the site cut for the new building.

Sight relates to eyes and vision.

For example:

The aeroplane is out of sight.

Surf Coast Shire has many beautiful sights.

Cite is used when identifying or referencing.

For example: I made sure to cite the source of the information in my report.

Stationery or stationary

Stationery refers to writing materials (think of the e in pen).

Stationary refers to a fixed object.

Surf Coast Shire

Shire is the land which makes up the whole of the municipality. The name of this shire is Surf Coast Shire.

Council means the organisation, its officers and councillors.

The office at 1 Merrijig Drive, Torquay should be referred to as the Surf Coast Shire Council office or shortened to Council office.

Do not use shire office or municipal office.

Do not use the plural offices.

Tautology

A tautology says the same thing twice and should be avoided.

For example:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| • 4pm in the afternoon | pm tells us it is in the afternoon |
| • added bonus | a bonus is something added |
| • descend down | to descend is to go down |
| • four hectares of land | hectares tells us it is land |
| • invited guest | a guest is someone invited |
| • new innovation | an innovation is new |
| • final outcome | an outcome is final |
| • first and foremost | if something is foremost it is first |
| • return back | to return is to go back |
| • rise up | to rise is to go up |
| • temporary reprieve | a reprieve is temporary |
| • contact phone number | a phone number is a way of contacting someone |

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| • very unique | it's unique or it isn't |
| • 12noon | 12pm is noon so write noon |
| • truly accurate | it's either accurate or not |
| • actively looking | if you are looking, you are being active. |

That or which

The words that and which can be overused and are sometimes unnecessary. Use that before a restrictive clause and which before everything else.

Sometimes you can leave the word that out of a sentence without changing its meaning.

For example: It doesn't mean that we have to skimp on taste.

Leaving out that in the above sentence won't change its meaning.

A restrictive clause is a part of a sentence you can't get rid of because it specifically restricts some other part of the sentence.

For example: Gems that sparkle often elicit forgiveness.

A non-restrictive clause is something that can be left off without changing the meaning of the sentence, it adds information, and leaving it off doesn't change the meaning of the sentence.

For example: Diamonds, which are expensive, often elicit forgiveness.

Their, there or they're

Their is a possessive pronoun. It always describes a noun.

For example: Their house, their permit, their department (i.e. belonging to them).

There is an adverb meaning that location.

For example: I will meet you there.

They're is a contraction of they are.

For example: They're travelling by car to Melbourne.

Who or whom

Who is used as the subject of a sentence or phrase. If you can rewrite the sentence to use he/him, then you know who fits your sentence.

For example:

Who brought the cake?

Who did you talk to today?

Who went with you to the meeting?

Whom is used as the object of a verb.

For example:

To whom it may concern.

To whom did you talk today?

Never use the word **that** when referring to a person or people.

While or whilst

Whilst is the British spelling of while. Use the Australian English while.

Your or you're

SECTION FOUR:

Simple is better

The key to good communication is to write succinctly and avoid clumsy language. To make it clear what you mean, use shorter words. Longer words often make it harder to understand. Try using the shorter words listed below to improve your writing.

Avoid	Use	Avoid	Use
accordingly	so	lengthy	long
adjacent to	near	less expensive	cheaper
allows for	allows	made an approach to	approached
a number of	several	made use of	used
a percentage of	some	manufacture	make
approximately	about	members of the public	public/people
assistance	help/aid	merchandise	goods
ascertain	find out	minimum	least/smallest
as a result of	because	numerous	many
as soon as practicable	as soon as possible	objective	aim
at an early date	soon	of the order of	about
at that time	then	one of the reasons	a reason
at the present time	now	on a weekly basis	weekly
attempt	try	on one occasion	once
behind schedule	late	ordinance	rule/law
beverage	drink	outcome	result
called a halt	stop	pass away	die
centre around	centre on/in	participate	take part
close proximity	near	permanent	lasting
commence	begin/start	peruse	read
concerning	about	per hour	an hour
conflagration	fire	placed under arrest	arrested
constructed	built	possessed	had
currently	now	proceed	go
customary	usual	prove beneficial	benefit
demonstrate	show	provided that	if
described as	called	reason why	why
despite the fact that	although	regarding	about
dispatched	sent	remuneration	pay/wages
donation	gift	rendered assistance to	helped
dwell	live	respecting	about/on
endeavour	try	resuscitate	revive
enquire	ask	retail outlets	shops
exceedingly	very	shortly	soon
facilitate	ease/help	short distance away	near/close
filled to capacity	full	spotted	saw
gained entrance to	entered	stockpile	stock
give consideration to	consider	submitted a resignation	resigned
give rise to	cause	subsequently	later
hospitalised	went to hospital	take action on	action
illuminated	lit up	take into consideration	consider
in addition	also	terminate	end
in attendance	present/there	the majority of	most
in consequence of	because	to date	so far
inform	tell	until such time as	until
in order to	to	was suffering from	had
in short supply	scarce	were required to	had to
in succession	running	whole of	all
in the direction of	towards	with the result that	so that
in view of the fact that	since		

SECTION FIVE:

Purpose Direction Approach

Our Purpose and Our Direction are the external statements about why we exist and the type of organisation we aspire to be.

Our Approach is an internal statement about the way in which we will work – it encompasses our values and speaks to our employees and prospective employees about what it means to work for Council.

Council Purpose

We exist to:

Help our community and environment to thrive.

Help

Council recognises the inherent strength of the community and our environment. Our primary role is to assist people to achieve their goals, while recognising this must not be at the expense of the broader community. Sometimes this involves leading, other times standing alongside and often following or getting out of the way. We are here to help.

Community

Community is about people and places. We see one community (the Surf Coast Shire) and we see many individual communities (townships, interests, age).

Environment

We are lucky to live here. Our environment was here before us. It is precious and is something that defines and shapes us all. We have a critical stewardship role to protect what is so special.

Thrive

Thrive is an inspiring word – it means more than better or improve but it doesn't suggest that we are in a bad place to begin with. Our position at this point of time is good but we strive for better. Thrive means to grow, flourish, prosper.

Organisation Direction

Our organisation will be:

An innovative and flexible leader,
and a constructive partner,
that values the strengths of others;
a place where people can do their best
and be proud of their achievements.

An innovative and flexible leader

We will proactively change, seeking opportunities to do things in better ways. We will need to be more nimble than government has traditionally been. We want to be known as a leader in local government and beyond.

and a constructive partner

We recognise that by working together we achieve better outcomes. We will partner with others and others will want to partner with us because of who we are and how we work. We will partner with people, groups, organisations and governments.

that values the strengths of others

We see what people can do, not what they can't. We look for the skills, resources, expertise and commitment that others have and ask - how we can we complement this? If possible we prefer to help others to achieve their goals rather than doing it for them.

a place where people can do their best

We will be most successful if this is a great place to be, full of people committed to our purpose and direction and where everyone has the tools and opportunities to do their best.

and be proud of their achievements

We are about getting things done and delivering outcomes. We feel proud to wear the Surf Coast Shire Council logo and can explain the role we've played in fulfilling Council's purpose – to help our community and environment thrive.

Our Approach

We do what we say

We work together

We see opportunity

We make a difference

We do what we say

- We set clear expectations
- We are accountable for our actions
- We get things done

We work together

- We value strengths and differences
- We seek to work with others
- We help people to succeed

We see opportunity

- We look for better ways
- We are open minded
- We learn from our experiences

We make a difference

- We proudly represent Surf Coast Shire Council
- We act with the future in mind
- We go the extra mile

Notes

