IWF EDITORIAL STYLE SHEET

Dates

Dates are to be represented as [month] [day] [year].

Numbers

In Nontechnical Contexts (report narratives but not necessarily statistical analyses):

Spell out numbers that are:

• Whole numbers from one through ten.
• Any number beginning a sentence.
  
  *Examples:*
  
  Survey responses came from 252 high schools and nine colleges.
  Twenty states are involved in the project.

• Simple fractions—hyphenated when considered a single quantity:
  
  *Example:*
  
  Two-thirds (not 2/3rds)

• *Exception:* when numbers are part of a series:
  
  *Example:*
  
  1, 55, 130, and 300 (not one, fifty-five, 130, and 300)

In Statistical Analyses:

Use numerals for:

• Numbers of any size, especially when there are many numbers used in a single paragraph or section, *except* spell out numbers at the beginning of sentences.

Monetary amounts

• Isolated references to amounts of money are spelled out or expressed with currency symbols and numerals. If a number expressing an amount of money is spelled out, so are the words dollar(s) or cent(s); if numerals are used, they are accompanied by the dollar or cent symbol:

  *Examples:*
  
  Fifteen dollars or $15

• Very large monetary amounts may be expressed by a mixture of numerals and spelled-out numbers:

  *Example:*
  
  $3 billion (if a dollar sign is used, do not include the word dollars)
Punctuation

• Place commas and periods inside quotes.
• Place semicolons and colons outside quotes.
  
  Examples:
  The title of the report is “Improving Records Management.”
  The agency handbook defines “records management,” but does not indicate whether an archival program exists.
  Here is a list of “acronyms”:

• Use commas to separate series of three or more. Include an Oxford comma after the second to last item in the series, before “and.”
  
  Example:
  States with active programs include Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

• Don’t use apostrophes for plurals of years or other cases in which you don’t intend to make a word possessive
  
  Example:
  1970s (not 1970’s)
  DVDs (not DVD’s)

• Don’t use periods in postal abbreviations
  
  Example:
  Washington, DC (not Washington, D.C.)

• Other punctuation:
  Use a single space after period at end of sentences, not two.
  Use periods at the end of each item in a list only if the item is a complete sentence.

References to tables and figures

• Enclose references to tables and figures in parentheses and place inside sentence.
  
  Example:
  Total number of high school graduates varies widely (Table 5).
Dashes and hyphens [en dash = Alt+0150, em dash = Alt+0151]

- Use em dashes (with no spaces on either side) to set off phrases in text.
  
  Example:
  Dashes are used — with great effect — to emphasize points in text.

- Use an en dash (not a hyphen) in “K–12” when referring to kindergarten through 12th grade.


- Use en dash instead of a hyphen to separate page numbers, e.g., pp. 45–59.

Spelling and Word Usage

Usage notes

- “Data” is a plural word and, therefore, requires plural verbs in agreement, e.g., “The data suggest that . . . .”

Preferred variations for spelling specific words

- nonprofit (not non-profit)
- email (not e-mail)
- lifecycle (not life cycle or life-cycle)
- on site (not onsite)
- off site (not offsite or off-site)
- website (not web site or Web site), but “the Web” (initial cap)
- online (not on-line or on line)
- grantmaking (not grant making, grant-making)

Style variations

- percent or percentage (spell out in text unless there are many such references in a single paragraph or section; use % in tables)
- P.O. Box (not PO Box) [in the IWF address]

Proper names used frequently in IWF documents and correspondence:

- Dawn Oliver Wiand (not “Oliver-Wiand”)
- Alison Ames Galstad (one “L” in both Alison and Galstad)