



A Checklist to Style Guides for the Department of the Interior Writer

All writers are bound by the rules of grammar. Creative writers have the freedom to make a wide range of stylistic decisions based upon their personal preferences and the goals of their artistic expressions. Scientific and technical writers need to write with more clarity and rely on style guides to help them produce it.

The *Government Printing Office Style Manual*, 2008 serves as a reference for all government writers, who are also subject to the Plain Language Act of 2010 (see PlainLanguage.gov for guidance). Writers with the Department of the Interior also have a range of guidance depending on the type of documents they write.

If you write for the Department of Interior, use the table below to check the statements that apply to you. Then follow the guidance provided. Remember to ask your supervisor and reviewers to be sure that your choice accurately reflects their expectations for the document's purpose, context, and audience.

A list of References can be found at the end of this article.

If you find this information useful, please visit my website and sign up for my blog using the form on the homepage: <http://conservationwritingpro.com>

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|--------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I need more information about how to implement the Plain Language Act. | Review Service Manual 116 FW 1 Service Manual 116 FW 1 " Plain Language in Fish and Wildlife Service Documents ." Then go to PlainLanguage.gov and refer to the Federal Plain Language Guidelines . |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | My document has citations. | For the citations ONLY, use the Council of Science Editors' Scientific Style and Format, 8th ed. For the rest of the document, follow the other guidance as specified here. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I am writing a Section 7 document. | The Endangered Species, Consultation Handbook outlines template components and standard language for a formal consultation in section 4.5. |

The Handbook also tells writers to use the guidelines for writing scientific prose, found in the Council of Science Editors' [Scientific Style and Format, 8th ed.](#)

Although the Handbook contains plain language resources, they are superseded by the guidance offered on PlainLanguage.gov, specifically the [Federal Plain](#)

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Language Guidelines.

Finally, the Handbook outlines formatting for citations at section 1-8, "Writing and bibliographic style."

I am writing a Recovery Plan.

For the template and standard language to be used in a Recovery Plan, refer to Section 5.0 of the National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [Interim Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery Planning Guidance](#).

Section 4.7 of the Guidance outlines the physical and digital formatting requirements for a Recovery Plan.

Section 4.8 makes a few general comments about the use of plain language, then refers authors to [PlainLanguage.gov](#).

For questions of style, refer to the [Government Printing Office Style Manual, 2008](#).

I am writing a NEPA document.

[NEPA for National Wildlife Refuges: A Handbook](#) provides writing guidance for NEPA documents in Section 4.

The Service's NEPA handbooks do not include writing guidance. Service writers should use the [Government Printing Office Style Manual, 2008](#) for style guidance and [Scientific Style and Format, 8th ed.](#) citations.

My document will be published in the Federal Register.

Start with the Service Manual 202 FW 3 "[Composition and Content of Rulemaking Documents](#)." Then see Chapter Four of *How to Prepare Regulations and Federal Register Notices Handbook. (318 DM)*, "Requirements for Rulemaking Text" (see Bibliography, below, for citation).

Thereafter, use the [Government Printing Office Style Manual, 2008](#) for guidance regarding style questions such as capitalization, punctuation, presentation of numbers, etc.

Use the [Federal Register Document Drafting Handbook](#) for questions regarding formatting, such as margins,

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headers, headings, and subheadings.

For citations, see Director's Memo, "[Guidance for References for Endangered Species for Federal Register Documents](#)." 2 May 2006.

For guidance regarding plain language, refer to [PlainLanguage.gov](#), and also see [the "Plain Language Tools"](#) provided by the Office of the Federal Register.

I am writing correspondence that will EITHER be sent to the Washington office OR signed by one of the following people:

- the Secretary of the Department of the Interior
- the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
- other officials of the Department of the Interior
- the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Use the [U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Correspondence Manual 2011](#) for the parts of the letter and its formatting.

Use the [Government Printing Office Style Manual, 2008](#) for all other style questions.

I work for External Affairs.

Use the [Associated Press Stylebook](#).

Bibliography

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U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service *Correspondence Manual 2011*. Online. <http://www.fws.gov/policy/2011%20Correspondence%20Handbook.pdf>

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