



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

**Girlguiding**

**As good as our word**  
Our tone of voice guidelines

# We'll cover...

## SECTION 1: Our tone of voice

Why tone of voice matters	4
Our tone of voice	5
How to sound straight talking	7
How to sound enthusiastic	9
How to sound in tune	11

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

Flexing our tone	15
Before and after examples:	16
• Webpage for parents	16
• Webpage for members	18
• Email to members	20
• From a newsletter	22
• From an annual report	24
• From a campaigning toolkit	26
• From an application pack	28

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style	31
Our house style	32
Inclusive language	37
Punctuation	39
Look and layout	41
Glossary of common terms	43
Girlguiding messaging	59
Good writing checklist	60
A helping hand...	61



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

**Girlguiding**

# Section 1

## Our tone of voice

## SECTION 1: Our tone of voice

Why tone of voice matters

Our tone of voice

How to sound straight talking

How to sound enthusiastic

How to sound in tune

[Back to contents page](#)

# Why tone of voice matters

Whenever we communicate for Girlguiding, we want to sound true to ourselves. We can do this by using language that lets our personality and humanity come through. Our words should consistently reflect who we are today.

We each give people an impression of the kind of person we are through the words we use. For example, you'd have a different view of someone who greeted you with this:



*Hello, it's a pleasure to meet you.*

Than you would if someone said this:



*Hey, how's it going?*

And it's the same with organisations. The language we use when we communicate plays an important role in the emotional connections people make with us. Or perhaps don't make with us.

There's another reason why our tone of voice is so important. It's vital to get our messages across clearly and consistently.

We want reading every Girlguiding communication to be a pleasant experience. Useful *and* enjoyable. So we need to keep our intended readers in mind and think about how best to communicate with them.

These guidelines will help you to write consistently in our tone of voice and house style. And this in turn will help our messages hit home and our personality and values shine through.

## SECTION 1: Our tone of voice

Why tone of voice matters

Our tone of voice

How to sound straight talking

How to sound enthusiastic

How to sound in tune

[Back to contents page](#)

# Our tone of voice

Our aim is to give everyone who writes for Girlguiding the confidence to communicate in a way that reflects our personality as a youth charity in today's world:

- We're **credible** - a solid organisation with a long and much-loved pedigree
- We're **adventurous** - full of fun and constantly adapting to help young women step confidently into their futures
- We're **welcoming** - we embrace all girls and young women. Their voices, dreams and worries are our guiding light

To bring who we are to life whenever we communicate, **our tone of voice has three characteristics:**

1. **Straight talking** - we tell it like it is
2. **Enthusiastic** - our writing has a spring in its step and a twinkle in its eye
3. **In tune** - we're empathetic and helpful

Let's look at each of these in more detail.

## 1. We're straight talking

We're honest and straightforward. We get to the point and say what we mean. We don't fluff things up or pad them out - or hide behind our own jargon. We tell it like it is - plain and simple. And this openness builds trust and credibility.

Sounding like real people when we write helps us come across as approachable and down to earth.

Being **straight talking** reflects our values of being **empowering** and **inclusive**. When our messages are clear and easy to follow, this helps everyone to find the information they need to get on with their day.

[See techniques for sounding straight talking](#)

## SECTION 1: Our tone of voice

Why tone of voice matters

Our tone of voice

How to sound straight talking

How to sound enthusiastic

How to sound in tune

[Back to contents page](#)

### 2. We're enthusiastic

Girlguiding is full of adventures, big and small. We play together; we laugh together. We inspire each other. We care about what we do, and this passion shows in the enthusiasm in our voice.

We have opinions, and we share them. We're not afraid to challenge or to talk about difficult things, but we do this from a place of love and respect.

We're not standing still as an organisation; and our communications have a certain pace and energy that reflects our drive.

Sounding **enthusiastic** helps us reflect our values of being **challenging**, **inspiring** and **fun**.

[See techniques for sounding enthusiastic](#)

### 3. We're in tune

We're welcoming and approachable - and tuned in to people's needs, especially young people's. We embrace all girls and young women. We listen; we empathise; we show we care. We have each other's backs. We're all in this together, and we like it that way.

So we always write with a clear sense of who we're speaking to, and why what we're saying matters to them. We show people that we know how they feel - and make sure our communications fit the audience and the situation.

Sounding **in tune** helps us reflect our values of being **caring** and **inclusive**.

[See techniques for sounding in tune](#)

Whatever we write, and whoever our audience is, we want these three voice characteristics to come through. Let's look at some techniques that will help us do this.

Why tone of voice matters

Our tone of voice

How to sound straight talking

How to sound enthusiastic

How to sound in tune

[Back to contents page](#)

# How to sound straight talking

Sounding straight talking is about being:

- Conversational
- Open and honest
- Refreshingly clear and simple

We don't take it too far. We never sound brusque, simplistic or rude.

## Three ways to sound straight talking

1. Use everyday language
2. Get to the point
3. Imagine it's a conversation

### 1. Use everyday language

We always want to sound approachable, and to have a certain energy to our words. We want to make readers feel like we're talking to them. So we write like people speak. This means using everyday words instead of formal language and Girlguiding jargon.

This applies to all of our communications - even things about serious subjects, like reports or job offers - and especially when we talk about our campaigning work. Using everyday language, instead of 'campaign-speak', is an important way of making our advocacy work feel accessible and inviting to all of our members.

Instead of...	We say...
amend	change
assist	help
contact	get in touch
enquire	ask
fundraising	raising money
provide	give

### So instead of this...

*Guiding within the United Kingdom is organised into a number of geographical areas to provide support, lines of two-way communication and opportunities for young members, leaders and commissioners to make decisions and take responsibility.*

### We'd write...

*We're organised along geographical lines in the UK to give our members clear lines of communication and support, and plenty of chances to act.*

## SECTION 1: Our tone of voice

Why tone of voice matters

Our tone of voice

How to sound straight talking

How to sound enthusiastic

How to sound in tune

[Back to contents page](#)

### 2. Get to the point

We don't beat around the bush. Whatever our message, we get right to it - with a healthy dose of empathy for the person at the other end.

We also respect people's time by being concise. This gives our writing clarity and confidence. We make every word count - if it's not adding anything to the message or the tone, delete it.

#### So instead of this...

*We continue to recommend that all girls and young women are supported to attend the programme most appropriate for their age however we recognise that for some members with disabilities transitioning to the next stage of Girlguiding may present additional challenges.*

#### We might say...

*We know that adjusting to the next stage of Girlguiding can be challenging for young people with disabilities.*

### 3. Imagine it's a conversation

Why does what you're writing matter to the other person? How might they feel about it? How would you put it to them if they were sitting right in front of you? Start with this in mind.

We ask the occasional question and address people directly with 'you'. We use contractions (such as 'don't' instead of 'do not' or 'we'll' instead of 'we will') in writing, like we do in speech. And we sometimes start our sentences with 'and' or 'but' if it helps the flow of what we're writing.

#### So instead of this...

**No matter what your guiding role, you will be working with data.**

*This means it's vital that you understand the core principles of data protection, and know how to implement them in everyday guiding.*

#### We'd write something like...

**Do you know how to keep everyone's data safe?**

*People trust us with their details and personal information. So it's vital to stay up to date on how to keep data safe in your day-to-day guiding work.*

## SECTION 1: Our tone of voice

Why tone of voice matters

Our tone of voice

How to sound straight talking

How to sound enthusiastic

How to sound in tune

[Back to contents page](#)

# How to sound enthusiastic

Sounding enthusiastic is about being:

- Confident
- Bold
- Energetic

We're careful not to go too far and sound brash, inappropriate or over the top. And sounding enthusiastic doesn't just mean adding an exclamation mark.

## Three ways to sound enthusiastic

1. Keep sentences focused and pacy
2. Put people first, using active language
3. Be yourself, and don't be afraid to show an opinion or use humour where it feels right

### 1. Keep sentences focused and pacy

Short, focused sentences will give your writing energy and clarity. Aim for no more than 15 to 20 words. Try to stick to one idea per sentence, as this helps to keep the meaning crystal clear. And put the most important information first.

Keep your paragraphs snappy, too: around four or five lines max.

Varying the length of your sentences can help give your writing pace and rhythm. And the occasional short sentence can add impact. Like this.

#### So instead of this...

**What makes guiding special?**

*We are for all girls.*

*We are for all girls and young women, whatever their background and circumstances, offering them fun, exciting activities and the chance to make life-long friends.*

#### We'd say...

**We're for all girls**

*You're welcome here. Whoever you are. And wherever you're from. Girlguiding is for every girl and young woman who wants to have adventures, learn, laugh and make friends for life.*

## SECTION 1: Our tone of voice

Why tone of voice matters

Our tone of voice

How to sound straight talking

How to sound enthusiastic

How to sound in tune

[Back to contents page](#)

### 2. Put people first, using active language

Using active language (instead of passive) puts people front and centre. In practice, this means thinking about who the 'doer' is in a sentence and starting with them. Your sentences will sound livelier as a result, and you'll naturally use a lot more words like 'you', 'we' and 'our'.

- ✗ **Passive:** A toolkit has been created...
- ✓ **Active:** We've created a toolkit...

#### So instead of...

*The decision was made to review the structure of the national staff team in order to ensure that staff resource was concentrated on the priorities of the new strategy.*

#### We'd say...

*We restructured our national team to deliver our new strategy effectively.*

### 3. Be yourself

We want to come across as real people when we communicate - authentic and likeable. Using conversational language when we write will help to give our communications a human voice.

We can also show a little of our own personality - perhaps with a colourful phrase, a story, or even a little humour. Be yourself. Have fun (as long as it's appropriate). People will know and appreciate that you're a real person - and that you want to come across as one.

#### So instead of...

*As part of Girlguiding's commitment to maintaining a safe space in guiding, disclosure checks will be renewed every five years. We are contacting you to notify you that your disclosure check for your role(s) in guiding needs to be renewed by Friday 21 May.*

#### We might write...

*From time to time we have to do things in Girlguiding that might not be particularly enjoyable, but that are necessary to keep our girls safe. One of these is renewing our disclosure checks every five years.*

# How to sound in tune

Sounding in tune is about being:

- Welcoming
- Approachable
- Thoughtful

We take care to never come across as overly familiar, patronising or gushy.

## Three ways to sound in tune

1. Acknowledge why things matter using warmth and empathy
2. Show, instead of telling - with stories, real voices and specific examples
3. Help people find key info through good signposting: clear headings, lists, links and calls to action

### 1. Acknowledge why things matter using warmth and empathy

We show our readers we understand them by acknowledging what they're likely to be thinking or feeling, where we can. But we're careful not to make assumptions - it's a fine balance.

We also focus on the impact of what we're talking about on our audience. For example, if we're explaining a change in safety processes to parents/carers, we say clearly what's changing and why and how it will help.

Not only does this make it clear that we can see things from their point of view, but it also helps us make sure we're writing in a way that's meaningful and appropriate to our audience.

#### So instead of...

*Girlguiding offers fun, challenge and adventure to our young members in the UK. We know that young people thrive in safe surroundings so Girlguiding takes the safety of girls and young women very seriously and has an excellent reputation for providing a safe environment for members to enjoy both indoor and outdoor activities.*

#### We might say...

*Safety is at the heart of everything we do. So you can rest easy knowing that when you wave your young one goodbye on her next camping trip or weekly unit meeting, she's in safe hands. Because we know that when girls feel safe, they feel brave enough to do things they never thought they could.*

## SECTION 1: Our tone of voice

Why tone of voice matters

Our tone of voice

How to sound straight talking

How to sound enthusiastic

How to sound in tune

[Back to contents page](#)

### 2. Show, instead of telling

We always want to reflect and celebrate the fun, varied and inclusive experience of Girlguiding. One of the best ways to do this is to paint a picture of what Girlguiding is like - to use description and evocative language to make things specific and real for our audience. So instead of talking about something in the abstract, we give examples, tell stories and bring the real voices of our guides and volunteers to the forefront.

#### So instead of this...

*Being a guide is all about having the space to try new things. Through taking part in a range of different activities with girls their own age, Guides develop self-confidence and make lots of new friends.*

#### We might write...

*We run, slide, climb, row, walk, paddle, skip and whizz our way through challenging activities. We laugh all the way and encourage each other to keep on going, ignore the mud on our faces, and never mind which one of us capsizes the canoe or stumbles on the slack line.*

### 3. Help people find key info through good signposting

Think up front about the essential things you want your reader to know. Then make these stand out by putting them in places people will easily see them: at the starts of sentences and paragraphs - and in titles, headings, links and lists.

If you're writing something longer and more complicated, it's also useful to 'layer' your information - moving from a summary of the key points through to more detail. This gives people the option to read to the level of detail they need.

It also helps us keep our communications as accessible as possible for people with learning disabilities.

See the next page for an example:

## SECTION 1: Our tone of voice

Why tone of voice matters

Our tone of voice

How to sound straight talking

How to sound enthusiastic

How to sound in tune

[Back to contents page](#)

### So instead of writing this...

*Your unit's trial invoice is **now live**. You have until noon on Tuesday 7 March to check it. If the number or names of the girls shown on your invoice is incorrect please amend their records on GO! or speak to your commissioner if the volunteer records need changing. You'll be able to view the updated invoice from 10am the following day and the official invoice will be ready for you to download from noon on Thursday 9 March.*

### We'd write something like this...

Your unit's [trial invoice](#) is ready for you.

- Please check your invoice before noon on **Tuesday 7 March**.
- If you spot anything that needs correcting, update the girls' records on GO or speak to your commissioner about volunteer details straight away.
- You can recheck your corrected invoice any time from 10am the next day.
- Your official invoice will be ready to download at noon on **Thursday 9 March**.



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

**Girlguiding**

## **Section 2**

### **Our voice in action**

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

### Flexing our tone

#### Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

[Back to contents page](#)

# Flexing our tone

While we always want to sound straight talking, enthusiastic and in tune, we may sometimes want to ‘flex’ our tone, depending on what we’re writing and who we’re writing to. We can do this by putting more emphasis on one or two of the characteristics, while toning down others.

For example, in emails to members we might want to dial up the straight talking and in tune elements of how we sound. While on our website and social media, we can be more enthusiastic to help us capture people’s attention.

The following examples will help you see how we can apply our tone of voice to different types of writing.

**All the ‘before’ examples in this guide are genuine examples from Girlguiding communications.**

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

Flexing our tone

Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

Back to contents page

### Webpage for parents - original version

How guiding benefits girls | Girlguiding

WE DISCOVER, WE GROW  
Girlguiding

SHOP DONATE LOGIN TO GO! Search...

Home What we do Information for parents Get involved Making guiding happen Social action, advocacy and campaigns About us

## HOW GUIDING BENEFITS GIRLS

Whatever inspires your daughter, whatever her interests, Girlguiding offers the chance to develop her potential

Home > Information for parents > How guiding benefits girls. Share:

### Who does your daughter want to be when she grows up?

Whether she already has a clear idea, or if she is still looking to find out, we'll be there to support both of you on the journey.

When your daughter becomes a Rainbow, Brownie, Guide or Ranger she will join a group of girls her own age and will be led by our carefully trained and dedicated volunteers. Whatever inspires your daughter, whatever her passions and interests, Girlguiding offers her the chance to develop her potential, make friends and have fun.

[REGISTER YOUR DAUGHTER](#)

For example, through regular group meetings or at special events and trips she might:

- Conquer her fears on the abseil tower
- Gain a leadership qualification
- Try out new games and sports
- Attend her first ever sleepover
- Support other girls to learn about body confidence
- Campaign for the rights of girls all over the world
- Put up her first tent
- Go canoeing
- Go on an international adventure
- Learn skills that will boost her CV
- Do a musical performance
- Try her hand at car maintenance
- Or go to her first ever festival, [our girls-only event Wellies and Wristbands](#).

### Girlguiding is unique

We offer a safe, welcoming girl-only space for girls and young women to try new things, help other people and discover their passions and talents. All while having fun with a group of ready-made friends!

We're dedicated to girls leading the way - they choose activities, challenges and events that inspire them, and our volunteers support them to make it happen. Because girls shape and lead everything we do, we know that we're offering the best opportunities and experiences for girls today.

Is this kind of language likely to engage or create emotion?

We need to make sure every word and phrase is adding something – is this one? (Would we expect people to be uncared for? And aren't volunteers by definition dedicated?)

Slightly odd wording in 'support other girls to learn about' – does this mean to teach other girls?

Hasn't this point already been made on this page?

Speaking directly to parents, which is good – but where's the energy in 'develop her potential'?

And using 'daughter' may exclude some people (carers)

How many people join Girlguiding to help with career choices? This seems a slightly odd angle to focus on...

Feels a bit repetitive – haven't we read this before?

Do we need this level of detail here?

Do we want people to leave this page at this point? This link also takes us to an Activity finder page, not to a page about games and sports as you'd expect

The underlying message here is a good one. But the sentences could do with more energy and pace

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

Flexing our tone

Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

Back to contents page

### Webpage for parents - toned-up version

The image shows a screenshot of the Girlguiding website's 'Information for parents' page. The page features a teal header with the text 'GUIDING'S GOOD FOR GIRLS' and 'What she'll get out of guiding'. Below this is a section titled 'Adventures for life' with a list of activities. The page is annotated with callout boxes pointing to specific text elements, providing feedback on tone and clarity.

**Annotations:**

- Short, energetic heading** (points to 'GUIDING'S GOOD FOR GIRLS')
- To the point, clear and inviting** (points to 'What she'll get out of guiding')
- Concise and compelling heading that focuses on a key thing that girls get out of guiding** (points to 'Adventures for life')
- Short, impactful sentence** (points to 'And much, much more.')
- We're still speaking to parents here** (points to the 'Shaped by girls' section)
- Everyday, descriptive language gives this sentence energy and clarity** (points to 'Whether she joins as a bright-eyed little Rainbow, in her teens or in between, she'll learn, laugh, play, grow and make friends in Girlguiding.')
- A shorter, more manageable list that still paints a picture of the variety of activities** (points to the list of activities under 'Adventures for life')

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

Flexing our tone

Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

Back to contents page

## Webpage for members - original version

The image shows a screenshot of the original Girlguiding public liability insurance webpage. The page title is "PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE". The main heading is "Girlguiding's public liability insurance gives you cover for guiding activities". The page content includes sections for "Who is covered?", "Details of our policy", and "Why might I need to show I am covered?". The page is annotated with several callout boxes containing questions and observations about the tone and clarity of the text.

**Annotations:**

- Top left:** It's a small detail...but we can only learn more if we've already learned something. We don't really need 'more' in this phrase
- Left side (top):** Does this paragraph sound like Girlguiding or like something out of an insurance policy? It's long and full of jargon...
- Left side (middle):** The formal wording ('in respect of acts') is affecting clarity and tone
- Left side (bottom):** The voice on this page is switching back and forth from Girlguiding's (our policy) to the reader's (I need to)
- Right side (top):** The cost of legal action for who?
- Right side (middle):** Does this phrase add anything? Isn't the page speaking to members?
- Right side (bottom):** A missing contraction ('don't') gives this a formal, slightly stiff tone
- Right side (bottom):** Why not simply say 'for'?
- Right side (bottom):** So what does this really mean for members?

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

### Flexing our tone

#### Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

[Back to contents page](#)

## Webpage for members - toned-up version

Snappy and reassuring

Clear and to the point – if you click on this you know what you're going to be reading

Down to earth, inclusive start to the page

Natural, everyday language helps make messages easy to follow

A clear heading that's also a call to action

Public Liability Insurance | Girlguiding

WE DISCOVER, WE GROW  
Girlguiding

SHOP DONATE LOGIN TO GO! Search...

Home What we do Information for parents Get involved Making guiding happen Social action, advocacy and campaigns About us

# WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED

How we insure our members against public liability

Home > Making guiding happen > Running your unit > Finance, insurance and property > Insurance > Public Liability Insurance

## Accidents do happen...

Even to the best of us. So we have public liability insurance to protect us - and **you** - if someone (a **'third party'**) makes a claim for damages or injury caused by negligence. The policy covers legal costs, too.

### Who is covered?

Any member of Girlguiding who's acting on our behalf on a guiding activity. You don't have to be wearing a guiding uniform to be covered. But you do have to be working in line with our rules and policies for the insurance to be valid.

Members of other organisations joining us in activities should have their own insurance.

### Make sure everyone's protected

- If you're hiring a venue, check that the venue owner has their own public liability cover for up to £5 million. You may need to sign a hire agreement to confirm cover.
- If you're holding a joint event, make sure the other organisation has a similar level of public liability insurance to Girlguiding.
- When you're running an activity, always check that the activity provider has public liability cover for up to £5 million.

### Good to know...

- There's a £100 excess payable for third-party property damage claims.
- Any member can be considered a third party - in other words, you could make a claim if, say, your property is damaged during a Girlguiding activity.
- You can [download a certificate](#) to prove that you're covered by public liability insurance. This might be useful when you're hiring a venue or a stand at an event.

Immediately brings the reader into the picture (you), instead of talking about them as if they aren't there (members)

Keeps language conversational, but provides legal term where necessary

More helpful link wording

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

### Flexing our tone

#### Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

[Back to contents page](#)

## Email to members - original version

The image shows a screenshot of an email draft in a web editor. The email content is as follows:

To: [redacted]  
Cc: [redacted]  
Bcc: [redacted]  
Subject: Notification of Disclosure Check Required  
Signature: Signature #1

Dear <name>

As part of Girlguiding's commitment to maintaining a safe space in guiding, disclosure checks will be renewed every five years. We are contacting you to notify you that your disclosure check for your role(s) in guiding needs to be renewed by <date>.

Please contact your commissioner or local ID verifier to make arrangements for a new disclosure check to be undertaken. You can find their contact details using the Area Contact Details report on GO!. If you have not undertaken a re-check within the next two months, you will be sent another reminder email.

We encourage all volunteers to undertake a new disclosure check as soon as possible to ensure that you can continue in your role in guiding. If you have changed your role then please speak to your local commissioner who will ensure your GO! Record is updated. At this current time you are still able to attend residential events and unit meetings as relevant.

When completing a disclosure re-check you will be asked to show forms of identification to a local ID verifier. You can find the full list of identification you can use at [this link](#). You will never be asked to send these by post and the ID verifier will not keep a copy of these documents.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the organisation and if you have any questions about undertaking a disclosure re-check, please visit our FAQs on our website [here](#).

Kind regards,  
Membership and Recruitment Department

Annotations (in pink boxes) point to various parts of the email:

- Subject line:** "How will this subject line make people feel? For some, it might seem rather scary and offputting..."
- Dear <name>:** "Do we need such a formal sign-on in an email?"
- Paragraph 1:** "Why don't we just say 'our'? Using the organisation's name has a distancing effect"
- Paragraph 2:** "Does this phrase really add anything?"
- Paragraph 3:** "What are these phrases adding?"
- Paragraph 4:** "Better to use more specific, clear link wording: 'this link' could lead anywhere"
- Paragraph 5:** "Isn't this from a real person?"
- Paragraph 6:** "Without line spaces between paragraphs, this email looks like one heavy block of text"
- Paragraph 7:** "Quite a long sentence (and another vague link)"
- Paragraph 8:** "Renewed by who? (Passive verbs cloud meaning)"
- Paragraph 9:** "This phrase could put people off – it sounds vague and potentially time-consuming"
- Paragraph 10:** "Does the tone here feel like Girlguiding or like a corporate communication? Things like missing contractions ('you've') and formal, passive language ('undertaken', 'you will be sent') all add to the tone"
- Paragraph 11:** "This is very useful info, but it's slightly buried at this point in the email"
- Paragraph 12:** "Asked by who? (Passive language takes people out of the picture)"

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

Flexing our tone

Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

[Back to contents page](#)

### Email to members - toned-up version

The image shows a screenshot of an email draft in a web editor. The email content is as follows:

To: [Redacted]  
Cc: [Redacted]  
Bcc: [Redacted]  
Subject: **It's time to renew your disclosure check**

Signature: Signature #1

Hello <name>

From time to time we have to do things in Girlguiding that might not be particularly enjoyable, but that are necessary to keep our girls safe. One of these is renewing disclosure checks every five years.

**Please renew your disclosure check by <date>** so that you can continue your Girlguiding activities uninterrupted. Here's what you need to do:

1. Contact your commissioner or local ID verifier - you'll find their details on GO under Area contact details.
2. They'll talk you through the next steps, one of which will be to show us [new ID documents](#).

Thanks so much for helping us with this important paperwork. Once it's done, you'll be all clear to enjoy Girlguiding for another five years.

If you have any questions at all about this, please come back to me or ask your commissioner.

Many thanks

<name>  
Membership team

Annotations (callouts) point to specific parts of the email:

- A clear, more energetic subject heading** points to the subject line.
- A much warmer and more natural way to start an email** points to the greeting.
- Very honest and down to earth – you can hear someone saying this** points to the opening paragraph.
- Acknowledges the effort this will involve – and takes the time to thank people. Much more 'in tune'** points to the thank-you paragraph.
- Gives this a human face** points to the sign-off name.
- A less bureaucratic-sounding team name** points to the sign-off team name.
- The main call to action is bolded to stand out – and is closely linked to the benefit of doing this** points to the bolded request and the reason for it.
- Actions are clearly laid out – and seem much less daunting** points to the numbered list.
- I know what I'm going to find if I click on this link** points to the link in the list.
- Another reminder of the benefits** points to the sentence about enjoying Girlguiding.
- Conversational language makes this sound much more real and heartfelt** points to the closing sentence.

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

Flexing our tone

Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

[Back to contents page](#)

### From a newsletter - original version

#### Reaching new heights

The fantastic courses at Blackland Farm will empower you to keep leading with confidence

You're probably aware that Blackland Farm offers great activities for young girls, but did you know about the variety of opportunities for adults too? The instructors at Blackland Farm excel in helping people to enhance their leadership skills - and offer training courses and qualifications that are recognised by national governing bodies. Whether you want to boost your personal development or be able to offer even more activities to your unit, there's something to suit everyone. For example, there are training courses for leaders in camping, first aid and navigation. Or, if you're keen to broaden your horizons, there's everything from archery instruction and British Canoe Union courses to Girlguiding Level 1 climbing and abseiling. Blackland Farm can also offer bespoke sessions if you fancy trying your hand at some more unusual activities, such as tractor driving or safely using a chainsaw!

The instructors will discuss your aims and the outcomes you hope to achieve before you make a start, to ensure that you learn in a way that suits and benefits you most.

Visit [girlguiding.org.uk/adventure-made-easy](http://girlguiding.org.uk/adventure-made-easy) to learn more about leadership training opportunities for adults

Quite a lot to take in at a glance

If everything is in one long, dense paragraph, it's harder for key messages to stand out

We're involving the reader (with 'you' and the question), but we could be more concise here

What does this really mean? Will people know what these 'national governing bodies' are?

Because it's so long, this sentence gets tangled up with its punctuation

Why not include the reader in this instead of talking about them in the third person? (For adults)

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

### Flexing our tone

#### Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

[Back to contents page](#)

### From a newsletter - toned-up version

**Learning without limits**

**Add new strings to your bow at Blackland Farm**

Blackland Farm isn't just for girls. We have courses galore that will give you new skills to lead with confidence. **Are you** after a qualification that's nationally recognised? We've got you covered. Want to develop your personal or leaderships skills? Covered. Looking to learn new things to add to your unit's activities? Look no further.

We offer training in everything from camping, first aid and navigation to archery, canoeing, climbing and abseiling - and can even teach things like tractor driving and using a chainsaw. And we tailor our training to your individual aims and learning style to make sure you get the most out of your time.

**Learn more about the training you can do at [girlguiding.org.uk/adventure-made-easy](http://girlguiding.org.uk/adventure-made-easy)**

**Callouts:**

- Much more engaging and energetic heading
- Short, focused sentences give this pace and punch. Colourful phrases like 'courses galore' make it sound lively
- Examples are more concisely worded and easier to grasp
- A heading that's closer to the subject matter
- Pulls the reader in (and structures the messaging) through questions
- The conversational language makes this more concise and confident
- A clear, inviting call to action
- The paragraphs help break up the information and make the whole thing much more reader-friendly

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

### Flexing our tone

#### Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

[Back to contents page](#)

## From an annual report - original version

Long, complex sentences like these create a heavy tone and are taxing on readers

Would this sound more confident without 'very'?

Another long, heavy sentence

We're saying very positive things here – can we do it in a more concise and energetic way? Do we need to make the point about staging the roll-out again?

2018 was another year of change in Girlguiding, with new quality standards and a completely redeveloped programme for young members, as well as new guidance and training for volunteers on safeguarding, managing information and GDPR compliance, and using our new programme.

We saw a drop in the percentage of girls and young women who would recommend guiding to a friend, but at 86% our net promoter score remains **very strong**. We anticipate that this will rise again in 2019 as our brand new youth programme beds in and young members experience the full range of innovative, exciting and stretching activities within it.

Keeping girls safe is our top priority and following the renewal of our safeguarding training programme 'A Safe Space' in 2017 we have continued to roll this out, as part of a three-year staged plan, to all our 100,000+ volunteers. By the end of 2018, 35% of our volunteers had completed level 1, 29% level 2, 36% level 3, and 35% of commissioners level 4. That equates to over 40,000 volunteers trained in the most up-to-date safeguarding practices during 2018. The size of our adult membership base means that refreshed mandatory training is rolled out in stages over multiple years and we are delighted to report that we are on track to train 75% of our adult volunteers by the end of 2020 in line with our target.

**What we will achieve in 2019**

- Continue the staged roll-out of safeguarding training programme to volunteers.
- Develop and update our first aid training in line with new policies and procedures.
- Further develop our offer for the 18-to-30 age group.
- Conduct a review of previous safeguarding cases to ensure we learn from the past.
- Deliver new resources that will help leaders to support girls who are experiencing mental health issues.
- Implement a learning and development strategy that will help volunteers to feel more confident and comfortable in their roles and support high quality guiding.

No need for full stops at the ends of these phrases

Are these different enough to merit using both words?

Why not simply 'review'?

Making points like these more concise will make them clearer and give them more impact

*"I feel lucky to be a part of the Guides and feel like if at times I feel sad or down I will always have someone to talk to"*



11

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

### Flexing our tone

#### Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

[Back to contents page](#)

## From an annual report - toned-up version

**Original text (left):**

Breaking this out as a shorter, summary sentence gives it impact and energy

The rest of this information is easier to follow in more focused, shorter sentences

We've put the main point first and the supporting figure at the end

Another short sentence with impact

2018 was another year of change in Girlguiding. We brought in new quality standards and a completely redeveloped programme for young members. And we introduced guidance and volunteer training on using this new programme, as well as safeguarding, managing information and GDPR compliance.

Although we saw a drop in the percentage of girls and young women who would recommend guiding to a friend, our net promoter score is still strong at 86%. We expect to see an uplift in 2019, as our young members start to enjoy the full range of innovative, exciting and stretching activities in our brand-new programme.

Keeping girls safe is our top priority. We've continued to roll out our safeguarding training programme 'A Safe Space' to all our 100,000+ volunteers, as part of a three-year staged plan. By the end of 2018, 35% of our volunteers had finished level 1, 29% level 2, 36% level 3, and 35% of commissioners level 4. That's over 40,000 volunteers trained in 2018 in the most up-to-date safeguarding practices. And we're on track to train 75% of our adult volunteers by the end of 2020, in line with our target.

*"I feel lucky to be a part of the Guides and feel like if at times I feel sad or down I will always have someone to talk to"*

**Revised text (right):**

**In 2019, we'll:**

- Continue rolling out our safeguarding training programme to volunteers
- Update our first aid training in line with new policies and procedures
- Enhance our offer for 18- to 30-year-olds
- Review previous safeguarding cases to make sure we learn from the past
- Bring in new resources to help leaders to support girls experiencing mental health issues
- Introduce a learning and development strategy to support better guiding by helping volunteers feel more confident and comfortable in their roles

A more concise and positive intro phrase

More straight talking language makes these easier to follow

More natural language gives this a more positive energy

Removing unnecessary detail helps the main points come through

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

### Flexing our tone

#### Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

[Back to contents page](#)

### From a campaigning toolkit - original version

#### A few rules about your project

- Your project has to help at least one person other than yourself.
- Your project should aim to make change to something in the wider world, outside of Girlguiding
- Your project should be in line with Girlguiding's values and policies.
- Your project can involve fundraising as long as there are clear and justified reasons for how this will help you achieve the aim of your project, and it's not the sole aim of your project.
- Your project can't provide marketing for a business.
- Your project shouldn't attack or involve being abusive to other people or groups.

Once you have decided on your specific issue and solution you need to tell your Network Coordinator and talk through next steps with them before launching your project.

Talking about rules sets a school teacher like tone

'Your project' is repeated nine times here – could there be a more streamlined way of presenting this information?

Do we need to say this, if we've already mentioned Girlguiding values and policies? If we do, could we put it in a more positive way?

Language like 'has to' and 'should' add to the slightly bossy feel

This kind of language might be off-putting to some people

Again, words like 'launching' could be daunting for some people

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

Flexing our tone

Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

[Back to contents page](#)

### From a campaigning toolkit - toned-up version

A more positive, helpful heading

The information is grouped logically to avoid repetition

#### Set your project up for success

It should:

- Help at least one other person - **hopefully lots more!**
- Lead to some sort of change in the world (beyond just Girlguiding)
- Be in line with our values and policies

Things to check:

- If you're raising money, **is this for good reasons?** This should only be part of what your project is trying to achieve.
- Are you helping a business to market itself? Your project really shouldn't be doing this.

As soon as you're clear on your project's focus and goals, **talk things over** with your network coordinator. She'll help you with your planning, so that you can go ahead and get started.

Little conversational asides like this sound human and encouraging

Questions help to engage people and get them thinking

The shift from 'you need to tell' to 'talk things over' makes this sound much less daunting

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

Flexing our tone

Before and after examples:

• Webpage for parents

• Webpage for members

• Email to members

• From a newsletter

• From an annual report

• From a campaigning toolkit

• From an application pack

Back to contents page

### From an application pack - original version

Chair of Finance Committee  
Application pack



#### How to Apply

In order to express your interest in the role of Chair of the Finance Committee, please send your CV with a covering letter of **no more** than four sides of A4 outlining the following:

- how you fulfil the person specification
- why you wish to be considered for the role of Chair of the Finance Committee

Please give examples of your skills and knowledge. These may have been gained from your work, or from volunteer roles inside or outside of guiding.

**(Please note those people employed by Girlguiding cannot apply for a trustee position.)**

Please send your CV, covering letter, reference details and completed equal opportunities monitoring form by email to [hrvacancies@girlguiding.org.uk](mailto:hrvacancies@girlguiding.org.uk).

The closing date is **Sunday 6 January 2019 at midnight**.

#### Referees

Please provide by email details of two referees who should be able to evidence your ability to work strategically at Board level and your specialist knowledge in relation to the person specification above.

**Girlguiding** will take up references for relevant candidates following the interview stage.

11 [www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk)

Out of line with the Girlguiding capitalisation principles

Using more direct and everyday language would help this sound more human and straight talking

Perhaps this should have been mentioned before now?

Referring to Girlguiding in the third person keeps people at arm's length

This is what jumps out at the reader from this sentence – do we really want to emphasise a negative in this way?

Does this need to be specified to someone we're considering for such a critical role?

Could be much more concise

## SECTION 2: Our voice in action

Flexing our tone

Before and after examples:

- Webpage for parents
- Webpage for members
- Email to members
- From a newsletter
- From an annual report
- From a campaigning toolkit
- From an application pack

[Back to contents page](#)

### From an application pack - toned-up version

Chair of Finance Committee  
Application pack



**If you'd like to apply...**

Involves the reader

Please send us your CV and a covering letter (four sides of A4 maximum) explaining why you're the right person to chair our Finance Committee, including:

- how you meet the requirements of this role - with specific examples of relevant skills and knowledge
- why you're interested in contributing to Girlguiding in this way

Natural, more conversational language makes this clearer and genuine

Please give examples of your skills and knowledge. These may have been gained from your work, or from volunteer roles inside or outside of guiding.

**(Reminder: trustee positions aren't open to Girlguiding employees.)**

Please email your CV, covering letter, reference details and completed equal opportunities monitoring form to [hrvacancies@girlguiding.org.uk](mailto:hrvacancies@girlguiding.org.uk) by **midnight on Sunday 6 January 2019**.

**Referees**

Please give us contact details for two referees who can verify that you can work strategically at board level, as well as your specialist knowledge relating to this role. We normally contact referees after the interview stage.

Much more to the point and inviting

Offered here as a reminder and mentioned at the start of the application pack

Being more concise and straight talking makes all of this much more readable – and helps Girlguiding come across as a more authentic, modern and open organisation

11 [www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk)



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

**Girlguiding**

# Section 3

## Our style guidelines

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

# Writing with style

Whenever we write, we need to be consistent and error-free. Some people really notice the details and expect us to get them right, so this guide will help you make sure you're always using the right style for Girlguiding.

If you need to look something up that isn't included here, check the *Guardian/Observer* style guide online:

[theguardian.com/styleguide](https://theguardian.com/styleguide)

This is our default guide for advice on how to handle things like punctuation, capitalisation, spelling and grammar.

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

# Our house style

## Abbreviations and acronyms

Try not to use internal abbreviations in external communications. Always think about whether people will understand them, and if there's a more natural way to say it.

If you have to use an acronym that people might not be familiar with, always spell it out the first time and put the abbreviation in brackets, like this:

We ask all volunteers to have a criminal record check before working with our girls - called the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

A note on plurals: to create a plural of an acronym, simply add an 's' to the end without an apostrophe, as in 'there are several PDFs'.

A note on capitalisation: usually, when you pronounce each letter of an acronym it's written in all capitals, like HIV. When you say an acronym like a word it only takes an initial capital, like 'Aids'.

However, Girlguiding acronyms that are said like a word still appear in all capitals, like 'GOLD', 'ICANDO' and 'WAGGGS'. Only use block capitals for acronyms like these - otherwise, try to avoid them.

Here are some acronyms that we frequently use at Girlguiding and what they stand for.

<b>BGO</b>	British Girlguiding Overseas
<b>GOLD</b>	Guiding Overseas Linked with Development
<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans
<b>NYA</b>	National Youth Agency
<b>WAGGGS</b>	World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Capital letters

Capitals draw attention to a particular word, but they also make sentences slower to read and are best minimised. We try to use them consistently and avoid overusing them. If in doubt, use lower case.

#### Use initial capitals for:

- Names of things ('proper nouns')
  - Brands: Adidas, Twitter
  - Places: London, Europe, Waddow Hall
  - People: Prince William, Beyoncé
  - Unique projects, events and initiatives: Big Gig, Future Girl
- Publications: *Girls' Attitudes Survey* and *The Guardian*
- The first words only of headings, subheads, labels, banners and navigation - not every word
- Job titles on a business card or in an email signature
- Job titles in body copy when they precede and form part of someone's name, or are immediately after it between commas: Chief Executive Angela Salt and Jonathan Whitehead, Operations Director, attended the meeting on behalf of Girlguiding.

#### Don't capitalise:

- Things in general (common nouns): uniforms, insurance policy, training materials, volunteers
- Job roles in body copy:
  - We'll be sending a free resource pack to all unit leaders.
  - Our chief executive is Angela Salt and our operations director is Jonathan Whitehead.
- Any word simply to make it feel more important
- The words we use to describe Girlguiding areas, such as 'regions', 'counties', etc: our Lanark district, our Tamworth division
- The words 'award', 'badge', 'qualification' or 'team' when naming one:
  - Laurel award
  - Mindfulness badge
  - Leadership qualification
  - Safeguarding team
- Every word, except the first one, in headings, titles, labels, navigation, etc
  - Child safety information

If you want to check capitalisation for a particular Girlguiding term, go to our [glossary](#).

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Conjunctions

There's nothing wrong with starting sentences with conjunctions like 'and', 'but' and 'or'. It's perfectly grammatically correct and is more common these days - in fact, it can be a useful way to add a bit of energy to your writing. But use them sparingly and make sure they're followed by complete sentences.

### Contractions

Contractions like 'it's' or 'isn't' shorten two words by adding an apostrophe. We use contractions to give our writing a more natural, human tone - words like 'I've', 'we've' and 'you'll'. The trick is to read your text out loud to make sure it sounds natural and flows properly.

### Dates

We use this format for dates: day, month then year. We don't use suffixes (12th, 20th, 1st).

12 September 2019

It's often helpful to say the day too - and you only need to specify the year when it's not obvious:

Thursday 12 September

If you're using dates in a table, it's fine to abbreviate the longer names of months:

12 Sept 2019

For decades, we talk about the 1990s, the nineties or the '90s, never the 1990's, and make sure we're consistent.

### Email addresses

Write email addresses in lower case. If you're writing an email address at the end of a sentence, it's fine to follow it with a full stop.

### Hashtags #

Use initial capitals for each word in hashtags:

#GirlsAttitudes

### Headlines and headings

Only the first letter of the first word should be capitalised, unless it's a proper noun.

How to use the brand

### ie and eg

Remember: ie means in other words, while eg means for example. It's usually best to write out these phrases instead of using the abbreviations. If you do use the abbreviation, no full stops are necessary.

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Money

Use the £ symbol instead of writing out the word 'pounds'. And don't use decimals unless there are pence to include:

Instead of...	Use...
£45.00	£45

### Numbers

Use words for one to ten, and write numbers for 11 and above. (To remember this, think '11 plus'.)

There are ten counties in Girlguiding Ulster.

There are 19 counties in our London and South East England region.

Don't mix the two in the same sentence:

There are 4 men and 12 women on our board of trustees.

If you're writing a headline or space is limited (like in a table), then you can write one to ten as digits.

We usually write **ages** in numbers and hyphenate the compound:

12-year-olds

Contrary to the above, for web writing it is best practice to use digits for all numbers.

### Percentages

Use the symbol instead of spelling out the word. They should be written as numerals:

Instead of...	Use...
50 per cent	50%

### Phone numbers

Break these after the area code:

020 7834 6242

0161 941 2237

028 9042 5212

not 0289 042 5212 (Northern Ireland)

Break UK mobile numbers into groups of five and six digits:

07XXX XXXXXX

### Singular/plural

Girlguiding and The Guide Association take a singular verb:

Girlguiding is...

### Spelling

We use British spelling (not American). If in doubt, check the [Guardian/Observer online style guide](#) or the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*: [oxforddictionaries.com](http://oxforddictionaries.com).

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Times

Write times like this:

9.30am, 10pm

Use the 12-hour clock (11pm) rather than the 24-hour clock (23.00).

### Websites

We don't include the 'www' when writing website addresses:

girlguiding.org.uk

Avoid giving links or breadcrumbs in printed text, as these can easily become outdated and impossible to follow. Instead, say:

search for <X> on our website

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

# Inclusive language

We want everyone to feel welcome and included at Girlguiding. So we try to avoid language that defines or excludes anyone - or that makes assumptions about them. Please take this advice as a guide to current good practice. It's by no means exhaustive, and language changes quickly.

## General principles

- Use the pronoun 'they' when gender is unknown or mixed. If you're not sure what pronoun to use when referring to an individual, it's always best to ask them.
- When describing someone with a particular characteristic (such as religion or disability), ask yourself first if you even need to mention it. Is it relevant?
- If it is relevant, take their lead if possible and use the language they use. If in doubt, check with them - people appreciate this.
- It's always better to be specific where you can - try and use the correct language but don't tiptoe around something. Instead of 'we want our imagery to show diversity', say 'we want our imagery to show racially diverse people'.
- Don't use an adjective as a noun when describing a person's characteristic. For example, instead of 'Muslims', say 'Muslim girls'.
- Try not to make too many assumptions, or you may exclude certain groups and people. For example, it may not always be a parent who takes a Rainbow to their meeting.
- Be as specific as you can when talking about an individual or a community. For example, say 'the Bengali community' rather than 'the Asian community'.
- When referring to the wider black, Asian and minority ethnic group we use the acronym BAME. As with all acronyms, think about whether you'll need to explain it for your audience.
- And when talking about socio-economic barriers, say 'lower income area' or 'areas of deprivation' rather than 'disadvantaged area'.

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

Instead of...	Use...
disabled toilets/lifts	accessible toilets/lifts
elderly person/volunteer	older person/volunteer
female	woman/young woman/girl
a girl/young woman with disabilities	a disabled girl/young woman
mum or parents	parents/carers
additional needs	disabilities and long-term conditions

### More on inclusive language

The government guidelines on talking about disability:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability)

The Chartered Insurance Institute's inclusive language guidelines:

[www.cii.co.uk/media/10120292/inclusive-language-guidelines.pdf](https://www.cii.co.uk/media/10120292/inclusive-language-guidelines.pdf)

The inclusive language section of the NHS digital service manual:

<https://beta.nhs.uk/service-manual/content/inclusive-language>

# Punctuation

## Ampersands (&)

Only use ampersands in brand names (M&S), unless you're struggling with space (for example, in a table). In normal sentences, spell out the word 'and'.

## Apostrophes

Apostrophes can be tricky. But they're important - getting this basic punctuation wrong can irritate people.

We use an apostrophe for two reasons:

1. To show that a letter or letters have been left out: don't forget, I'm afraid. See contractions.
2. To show possession: this month's publication. If the owner is plural, the apostrophe usually comes after the 's'. If the plural doesn't end in an 's', you can treat it as singular.

So, the bees' knees is talking about more than one bee. And the bee's knees? Just the one bee.

There are two situations that can cause problems, so watch out for them:

1. Ordinary plurals don't need apostrophes. 'We sell apple's and pear's' is **wrong**.
2. It's or its? It's means it is or it has. Its means belonging to it, which is unusual because it shows possession but doesn't need an apostrophe: the company is confident about its future.

## Brackets

Use brackets (like this), not square brackets [like this].

If you're putting a whole sentence into brackets, put the full stop inside too. (This is a full sentence in brackets, so it has its full stop inside.)

If you're only putting part of a sentence inside the brackets then you need to put the full stop outside (like this).

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Dashes

These can be used between parts of sentences instead of commas or semicolons. They add a little more emphasis and can also be a useful way of breaking up long sentences - but be careful not to overuse them.

### Exclamation marks

Use exclamation marks sparingly, as they can give your writing a slightly hysterical tone. (We don't throw in exclamation marks as an easy way of sounding enthusiastic.)

Whenever you find yourself using one, always check how it reads without. Then only use it if you think it adds an important emphasis.

### Full stops

We use these at the ends of sentences, and that's it.

### Hyphens

When referring to young people by their age, we hyphenate the compound:

14-year-olds

And when two or more words join together as a description before a noun, it's best to hyphenate them where there's any chance of confusion:

You need to make three monthly payments.  
(three payments over three months)

You need to make three-monthly payments.  
(one payment every three months)

Tip: when the first word ends in -ly, you don't hyphenate the compound: specially designed uniforms.

### Quotations

Use single quotation marks. For quotes within quotes use double quotation marks.

The chief guide told the girls, 'My mum always used to say to me "you can be whatever you want to be."'

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

# Look and layout

## Bold

Use bold sparingly to emphasise words, numbers and dates. It's a great way of making something stand out at first glance, so bold text is ideal for key information such as URLs or email addresses.

Don't use bold too often, though. And never use it for an entire paragraph - when everything is in bold, nothing stands out.

## Bold italic

Bold italic makes text hard to read, so stick with bold alone.

## Headings and subheadings

Don't use end punctuation, except when you need a question mark. Don't use a full stop at the end, and think long and hard about using exclamation marks.

Use a capital letter only at the start and lower case after that, except for proper nouns.

- ✗ What Adults Do in Guiding
- ✓ What adults do in guiding

## Italics

We put publication titles in italics, except on our website.

Otherwise, use them sparingly - they make writing look cluttered and are hard to read online.

You can use them for a gentle emphasis. Words in italic will stand out as important when someone reads what you've written, but they won't stand out at a glance like bold. This means that italics are best for a softer emphasis, like a note or reminder.

## Links

We avoid using phrases like 'click here' when linking. Instead we make our links clearer and more meaningful so that they stand out and indicate where they lead to.

- ✗ If you have any questions about undertaking a disclosure re-check, please visit our FAQs on our website [here](#).
- ✓ You'll find more information about disclosure re-checks in [our FAQs](#).

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Lists/bullets

Introduce lists with a colon, and use bullet points like this:

- Item 1
- Item 2

Start each item in the list with a capital letter.

- If the items in the list are full sentences, put a full stop at the end, just as you would on a normal sentence.
- If it's not a full sentence, there's no need for a full stop at the end.
- And each list should be one or the other, not a mixture of the two.

Start your lists off with bullets. Only use numbers if you're listing a sequence or starting your list off with a number phrase (such as 'Ten great reasons to join Girlguiding').

### Spaces

Use a single space after a full stop. Like this.

Use a single line between paragraphs.

There should be no space on either side of a forward slash:

**Instead of..**

and / or

**Use...**

and/or

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

# Glossary of common terms

Our organisation is full of language that's unique to Girlguiding and the guiding movement. We need to be mindful that this is our own very special jargon, and it can sometimes feel exclusive. This glossary will help you write consistently for and about Girlguiding.

## Our style

## Comments

1st Response

Not First Response (our first aid training scheme)

## A

activities

Use in relation to the programme only - when referring to Future Girl say initiatives or opportunities

activity centres

Lower case; use for internal audiences or after first use of Girlguiding Activity Centres; we no longer use TACs (training and activity centres)

activity theme

Lower case

*Adventure Made Easy*

Initial capitals and italics for publication

Adventurers

Initial capital for the Future Girl topic

adviser

Not advisor; lower case for role

Advocate; advocate

Initial capital for the name of our panel, but lower case for its members

Anglia region

Initial capitals for place names; lower case on 'region'

annual subscription

Lower case

area

Lower case (a broad term for our districts, regions, counties, countries and divisions)

A Safe Space

Initial capitals for the name of our safeguarding scheme; initial capitals and italics when referring to the resource

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

assistant leader

Lower case for the role

award

Lower case when referring to awards in general and when giving the name of a specific award:  
Laurel award

### B

Baden-Powell Adventure

Initial capitals for the name of this scheme

badge

Lower case when talking about badges in general; upper case for the first word of the badge name  
eg Active response badge

badge secretary

Lower case for the role

BAME

Acronym for talking about people who are black, Asian and minority ethnic

barbecue

Not barbeque or BBQ

Barrier Breakers

Initial capital for the Future Girl topic

Be Well

Upper case for the name of the programme theme

Beaver Scouts; Beavers

Initial capitals (Scouts aged 8-10)

Being Our Best

Initial capitals (our strategic plan for 2015-19)

Big Gig

Initial capitals for the name of this event

Blackland Farm

Initial capitals

board of trustees; the board

Lower case

branch associations; branches

Lower case

Bronze award

Initial capitals for name of the award, lower case for the word 'award'

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

Brownie; Brownies

Brownie buddy

Brownie helper

Brownie holiday

Brownie unit

Initial capital on Brownie only

Initial capital on Brownie only

Initial capital on Brownie only

Not Brownie pack

### C

chief commissioner

chief guide

Climbing and Abseiling scheme

commissioner

cooperate

coordinator

country; county

Cub Scouts; Cubs

Girlguiding Cymru (Wales)

Lower case in body copy unless used as part of name

Lower case in body copy unless used as part of name

Lower case on the word scheme

Lower case in body copy unless used as part of name

Not co-operate

Not co-ordinator

Lower case, even when referring to the Girlguiding area

Scouts aged 8-10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

#### D

DBS check; disclosure check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Either use the abbreviation (stands for Disclosure and Barring Service check) or the simple term</li><li>• Only the abbreviation uses capitals</li><li>• (Used to be the CRB check)</li></ul>
disabled person	Instead of person with disabilities - see page 37 for more information
<i>Discover, grow</i>	Lower case 'grow'; newsletter in italics
district	Lower case, even when referring to Girlguiding area
district assistant; district commissioner	Lower case in body copy unless used as part of name
division	Lower case
Doing Our Best	Upper case for our standards for good guiding
Duke of Edinburgh's Award	Spell out with initial caps at first mention, then DofE

#### E

e-card; e-learning; e-newsletter	With hyphen
email	One word, no hyphen
emergency file	Lower case
Explorer Scouts; Explorers	Scouts aged 14-18
Express Myself	Upper case for the name of the programme theme

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

#### F

fair trade

Lower case and two words when describing the general movement

Fairtrade

One word with initial capital to refer to the official trademarked name

first aid; first aider

Lower case

Five Essentials

Initial capitals for the name of our principles

Forum for Young Women

Initial capitals for this externally run project

founders

Used to refer to our founders, Robert Baden-Powell and Agnes Baden-Powell; lower case

Foxlease

Initial capital for the place

Free Being Me

Initial capitals for name of this jointly run programme; the resource is also in italics

fundraising

One word, lower case

Future Girl

Initial capitals

Future Girl Acts

Initial capitals for this week of action

#### G

Girlguiding

- Girlguiding is who we are (noun and adjective)
- Use Girlguiding when referring to the charity or our name
- One word, initial capital; don't shorten to GG or Guiding

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

Girlguiding Activity Centres	Brand name for activity centres for external audiences; initial capitals; don't abbreviate
Girlguiding HQ	We no longer say CHQ or Commonwealth Headquarters
Girlguiding UK	Use only in a global context
Girlguiding shop	We can also refer to this as our volunteer shop; don't use the term trading
Girlguiding qualified trainer	Lower case; someone who delivers training and has their Trainer qualification
Girls' Attitudes Survey	Initial capitals (and italics for the publication); don't use the abbreviation GAS externally
GO	Initial caps for the name of our membership system (Guiding Organiser)
Go for GOLD	The selection event for GOLD
<i>Going Away With Guiding</i>	Initial capitals and italics for the resource
Going Away With licence Going Away With scheme	Initial capitals, except on the words licence and scheme
GOLD	Abbreviation for Guiding Overseas Linked with Development
Gold award	Initial capitals for name of the award, lower case for the word 'award'
good turn	Lower case
government	Always lower case

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

Guide; Guides

- Initial capital when referring to the 10-14-year-old section
- Use only in relation to the members of this section - when referring to everyone say 'all girls in Girlguiding'

The Guide Association

The legal/financial entity - only use when necessary: 'please make cheques out to The Guide Association'

Guide camp permit

Initial capital on Guide only

Guide International Service (GIS)

Initial capitals for the name of this project

Guide Law

guiding

- Guiding is what we do (verb)
- Lower case, except when it's in a sentence with Scouting (Guiding and Scouting) or a global context (World Guiding)

*Guiding Essentials*

Initial capitals, in italics

*The Guiding Handbook*

Initial capitals, in italics

*guiding* magazine

Lower case, in italics

### H

Have Adventures

Upper case for the name of the programme theme

home contact

Lower case for the role and system

### I

ICANDO

All capitals for our activity centre in London

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

innovate	Lower case for the skills builder topic - see skills builder for more info
interest badges	Upper case on first word only; eg Fitness interest badge, Book lover interest badge
International Scout and Guide Fellowship (ISGF)	Spell out with initial caps at first mention, then ISGF
International Women's Day	Initial capitals and apostrophe before the 's'
internet	Lower case

### J

jamboree	Lower case, unless referring to the name of one (Jamboree Denmark)
joint unit	Lower case

### K

Know Myself	Upper case for the name of the programme theme
-------------	--

### L

large bus permit	Lower case
LaSER	Abbreviation of London and South East England region
leader	Lower case for role
leader in training	Lower case; no hyphens
Leadership qualification	Initial capitals for name of qualification; lower case for the word 'qualification'

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

leadership team

Lower case

lend a hand

Lower case

LGBT

How we refer to the lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans community

Little Giggle

Upper case for the event

local authority

Lower case

London and South East England region

Initial capitals for place names; lower case on 'region'. Often abbreviated to LaSER

Long Service award

Initial capitals for name of award; lower case for the word 'award'

### M

Magic and Mayhem

Initial capitals for the name of the event

Marketing and Audience  
Engagement department

Initial capitals for the name of the team;  
lower case for the word 'department' itself

members

Lower case; avoid using externally: say volunteers and girls instead

members' area (on the website)

Lower case with apostrophe

member organisation (of WAGGGS)

Lower case

mentor

Lower case for the role

mentoring

Lower case

Midlands region

Initial capitals for place names; lower case on 'region'

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

#### N

no one

No hyphen, two words

North East England region  
North West England region

Initial capitals for place names; lower case on 'region'

#### O

occasional helper

Lower case

online design centre

Lower case

online shop

Instead of web shop

order code

- Lower case
- Girlguiding order code, not Trading Service order code
- Put code before price when describing items

#### P

parent/carer

Lower case; not parent/guardian

Patrol

Initial capitals when talking about a Guide grouping

Patrol sleepover

patron

Lower case; our patron is HM Queen Elizabeth II

Pax Lodge

Initial capitals for place name

Peer Education

Upper case when referring to the Girlguiding project; lower case if talking about it generally

peer educator

Lower case for role

peer group residential events

Lower case

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

Planet Protectors

Initial capitals for the Future Girl topic

plastic promise

All lower case unless in hashtag #PlasticPromise

programme

Lower case

programme renewal

Lower case

Promise

Always capitalised when talking about the Girlguiding Promise

Promise badge

Initial capital for Promise (see note above), but not for 'badge' itself

Promise celebration

Not enrolment

Promise sign

### Q

the Queen

Always capitalised; we can initially say Her Majesty The Queen, then HM the Queen or the Queen on subsequent mentions

Queen's Guide

Queen's Guide award

Initial capitals

### R

Rainbow; Rainbows

Initial capital when referring to section for girls aged 5-7

Rainbow chat

Rainbow helper

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

Ranger; Rangers	Initial caps when referring to section for ages 14-18
recognised volunteer	
recruitment checks	
region	Always lower case
residential	Lower case
Respect Makers	Initial capitals for the Future Girl topic; no hyphen

### S

Safeguarding team	Initial capital for the name of the team; lower case for the word 'team' itself
Girlguiding Scotland	
Scouting Scouts The Scout Association	Always capitalised; in sentences that refer to both, guiding always comes first and is upper case: Guiding and Scouting
Scout Network	The Scout section for 18-25-year-olds
Scouts	The Scout section for 10 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> -14-year-olds
second	Lower case when referring to the deputy leader of a Patrol or Six
section	Lower case
Self Believers	Initial capitals for the Future Girl topic; no hyphen
Silver award	Initial capitals for name of the award, lower case for the word 'award'
Silver Fish award	Initial capitals for name of award; lower case for the word 'award'

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

Six	Initial capitals when talking about a Brownie grouping
sixer	Lower case for the role
skills builders	Lower case; skills builder names have initial capital for first word only: eg First aid skills builder, Innovate skills builder. Stages are in upper case: eg Stage 1 Innovate skills builder
Skills For My Future	Upper case for the name of the programme theme
Sparkle and Ice	Initial capitals for the name of the event
social services	Lower case unless referring to a specific body: Hertfordshire Social Services
South West England region	Initial capitals on place but not the word 'region'
survival skills	Lower case for the unit meeting activity topic
<b>T</b>	
Take Action	Upper case for the name of the programme theme
task and finish group	Lower case
Theme award	Initial capitals for name of the award, lower case for the word 'award'
they	Use as a gender-neutral third-person pronoun
trainer	Lower case; someone who delivers training but is not Girlguiding qualified

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

Trainer qualification	Initial capitals for name of qualification; lower case for the word 'qualification'
training opportunities	Lower case
trans (adj)	Lower case, preferable to transgender; don't use transsexual
Travelling Abroad training programme	Initial caps only on the name of the module
trefoil	Lower case
Trefoil Guild	Initial capitals for name; lower case when talking generally about individual guilds
trustee	Lower case
tweet	Lower case (for verb and noun)
Twisted Tech	Initial capitals for the event name
Twitter	Initial capital on the brand name

### U

UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland</li><li>• Avoid saying 'this country' or 'this nation' when you mean the UK</li><li>• Don't say 'the capital' or 'the national anthem' without specifying which one</li></ul>
Girlguiding Ulster	
unit	
unit helper	Lower case for role
unit leader	Lower case for role; we don't say guider

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

unit meeting

Lower case

unit meeting activities

Lower case; also for unit meeting activity topics:  
eg survival skills

unit meeting activity cards

Lower case

### V

volunteer

Lower case

volunteer shop

Lower case; we can also say Girlguiding shop

### W

Waddow Hall

Not just Waddow

webpage

One word

wellbeing

One word

Wellies and Wristbands

Initial capitals for event name

World badge

World Centres

These are Our Chalet in Switzerland,  
Our Cabaña in Mexico, Pax Lodge in the UK,  
Sangam in India and Kusafiri in Africa

world chief guide

Lower case in body copy unless using as part  
of name

World Conference

World Flag

World Guiding

Guiding has an initial capital in this context

## SECTION 3: Our style guidelines

Writing with style

Our house style

Inclusive language

Punctuation

Look and layout

Glossary

[Back to contents page](#)

### Our style

### Comments

World Thinking Day

Initial capitals

### Y

young leader

Lower case for role

Young Leader qualification

Initial capitals for name of qualification; lower case for the word 'qualification'

# Girlguiding messaging

## Our vision

An equal world where all girls can make a positive difference, be happy and safe, and fulfil their potential.

## Our mission

Through fun, friendship, challenge and adventure we empower girls to find their voice, inspiring them to discover the best in themselves and to make a positive difference in their community.

## Who we are

### In one sentence

Girlguiding is the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK.

### Short version

Girlguiding is the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK. We build girls' confidence and raise their aspirations. We give them the chance to discover their full potential and encourage them to be a powerful force for good. We give them a space to have fun.

### Full version

Girlguiding is the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK. Thanks to the dedication and support of 100,000 amazing volunteers, we are active in every part of the UK, giving girls and young women a space where they can be themselves, have fun, build brilliant friendships, gain valuable life skills and make a positive difference to their lives and their communities. We build girls' confidence and raise their aspirations. We give them the chance to discover their full potential and encourage them to be a powerful force for good.

## Our key messages

- We are for all girls.
- We give girls their own space.
- We give girls a voice.
- We change as the lives of girls change.

# Good writing checklist

- ✓ Does the writing sound **straight talking, enthusiastic and in tune**?
- ✓ Is the language **everyday and active**, with plenty of you, we, our, your, etc?
- ✓ Does it sound **conversational**, like a real (likeable) person talking?
- ✓ Are **sentences and paragraphs** focused, concise and manageable?
- ✓ Have you **focused on what matters** (and why) to your audience?
- ✓ Do the **main points** stand out?
- ✓ Where possible, have you used descriptive language, examples and real voices to **paint a picture**?
- ✓ Are the details (such as capital letters and punctuation) in line with our **house style**?



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

**Girlguiding**

## **A helping hand...**

If you have any questions about our tone of voice and writing style or would like to add a term to our glossary, please get in touch with [M&AE@girlguiding.org.uk](mailto:M&AE@girlguiding.org.uk).

