

06. Punctuation

Avoid overuse of punctuation

If you need to break up your text with commas, dashes or brackets, it is often a sign that your sentences are too long and complicated. Rather than splitting up the blocks of meaning with punctuation, split your sentences to a maximum of about 25 words with one idea per sentence.

Brackets (parentheses)

Round brackets can be used to explain the preceding item in the text, but use them only if truly necessary.

Square brackets can be used to make insertions in quoted material, e.g.: "*The ETS [Emissions Trading System] needs to be reformed*", says Commissioner XY.

Dashes and hyphens

Beware of using too many dashes. 1 dash or a set of paired dashes per paragraph is enough.

Hyphens (-) are used to join pairs: the Brussels-Paris route, the height-depth ratio, etc.

Short dashes (En dashes, –) may be used to punctuate a sentence instead of commas or round brackets. They are always preceded and followed by spaces.

Long dashes (Em dashes, —) are no longer used.

Exclamation marks

Use only for very serious warnings.

Quotation marks and apostrophes

use '**single quotation marks**' to signal direct speech and quotes and to flag a word as jargon, while explaining what it actually means: *The 'subsidiarity' principle, whereby decisions are taken at a level of authority as close to citizens as possible*

use "**double quotation marks**" for quotations within quotes.

Spaces

- colons, semi-colons and slashes are always joined up to the preceding word
- stops (. ? ! : ;) are always followed by a single space, not a double space

Bullet points

see [Formatting](#)

Contact and support

If you require further assistance, please contact:

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