

Global Communication Style Guide

For Associations and Global Organizations



Your Trusted Partner for Global Growth and Intercultural Development

1 Purpose

This guide ensures all communications:

- Are globally relevant, not country-centric
- Reflect a global and inclusive mindset
- Are clear, culturally neutral, and accessible across regions
- Can be easily understood, translated, and localized

2 Core Principle: Write for the World, Not One Country

If a reader in another country must reinterpret your meaning, you've already lost clarity.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR WRITERS

- Would someone outside the U.S. understand this immediately?
- Am I assuming a cultural norm that may not be universal?
- Is this term globally recognized—or locally specific?

3 Eliminate U.S.-Centric Language

AVOID

- “Here in the U.S.”
- “Domestic vs. international”
- “Overseas”
- “Foreign members”
- “Stateside”
- Defaulting to the U.S. as the reference point

USE INSTEAD

- “In the United States” (when relevant)
- “Across regions” / “globally”
- “Members outside [specific country]”
- “In different markets”

EXAMPLE

✗ “International members may find this challenging.”

✓ “Members in different regions may experience this differently.”

4 Use Globally Recognized Terminology

Replace U.S.-specific terms with their globally recognized equivalents.

U.S.-Centric Term	Global Alternative
ZIP code	Postal code
Fall	Autumn (or avoid altogether and use month)
Vacation	Holiday
Resume	CV
College	University / higher education institution
Federal government	National government
High school	Secondary school

5 Use Global Standards for Country & Currency Names

- Use official, current names of countries and territories ([United Nations Country Names](#); [World Bank Group List of Countries and Economies](#))
- Use official currency codes and names ([ISO 4217 currency codes](#))
- Consult the International Standards Organization (ISO) for all global standards ([ISO website](#))

EXAMPLE

- ✗ “Members in Holland will be charged \$500”
- ✓ “The fee for members in The Netherlands is USD 500.”

6 Avoid Idioms, Slang, and Cultural References

Idioms rarely translate well and often confuse global audiences.

AVOID

- “Hit the ground running”
- “Ballpark figure”
- “Move the needle”
- “Low-hanging fruit”

USE INSTEAD

- “Start quickly”
- “Estimated range”
- “Make measurable progress”
- “Easier opportunities”

7 Be Explicit with Geography

AVOID

- “International”
- “Global audience”
- “Abroad”

These are relative terms — what feels “abroad” to one reader is home to another.

USE INSTEAD

- “In Europe, Asia, and Latin America...”
- “Outside the United States...”
- “Across multiple regions...”

8 Write for Clarity and Accurate Translation

BEST PRACTICES

- Use simple words (see [The A to Z of alternative words](#))
- Use short, active verbs and clear sentences ([How to Write in Plain English](#))
- Limit idioms, jargon, and expressions
- Spell out acronyms
- Avoid phrasal verbs (e.g., “roll out,” “scale up”)
- Use consistent terminology

The word count coefficient indicates the difference between the word count of the original text and that of the translation. Keep this word count and the direction of sentences (right to left) in

mind when drafting content, particularly for web and social media, as a term that fits into your layout in one language may not in another.

Align with practices from the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) Style Guide](#), which includes:

- Commonly confused English words
- Commonly misused words in English
- Word count coefficients from English to other languages (e.g., French +30%)

9 Use Inclusive and Culturally Neutral Language

PRINCIPLES

- Respect how groups self-identify
- Avoid assumptions about culture, religion, gender roles, and family structures

EXAMPLES

✗ Chairman



✓ Chair

✗ Manpower



✓ Workforce

✗ Third World



✓ Low- and middle-income countries

10 Dates, Numbers, and Formats (Global Standards)

Dates

✗ 05/07/2026 (ambiguous)

✓ 7 May 2026

Time

✓ Use 24-hour format when possible

✓ 14:00 instead of 2 PM (or list both: 14:00 / 2 PM)

Numbers

✓ Use numerals for clarity (e.g., 10 000 instead of “ten thousand” in technical content)

✓ Use a space (rather than . or ,) to separate thousands (e.g., 1 000)

Units

✓ Use the metric system, or provide both: 10 km (6.2 miles)

Currency

✓ Always specify: USD 500, EUR 500

11 Avoid Cultural Assumptions

Do not assume:

- Workweek structure (not always Monday–Friday)
- Holidays (not everyone celebrates Christmas, Thanksgiving, etc.)
- Communication norms (direct vs. indirect varies globally)

EXAMPLE

✗ “After the holidays...”

✓ “At the end of the calendar year...”

12 Tone: Neutral, Clear, and Respectful

AVOID

- Humor that depends on cultural context
- Informal tone that may not translate
- Overly casual phrasing

USE

- A professional, straightforward tone
- Clear and respectful language across cultures

13 Visual and Content Considerations

Language is not the only factor — content also carries cultural meaning.

BE MINDFUL OF

- Images representing diverse regions and identities
- Examples that are not all from one country
- Case studies reflecting multiple global perspectives

14 Global Check Before Publishing

Before finalizing any content, ask:

THE GLOBAL CHECK

- ✓ Is this understandable without U.S. context?
- ✓ Are terms globally recognized?
- ✓ Are cultural references neutral?
- ✓ Would this translate clearly?
- ✓ Have I avoided assumptions?

References

OECD (2025), *OECD Style Guide (Fourth Edition)*, OECD Publishing, Paris,
<https://doi.org/10.1787/2ca15c7e-en>.

The **Plain English Campaign** helps organizations to ensure their public information is as simple and understandable as possible: plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides

The **Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)** supports clear communication in government writing: plainlanguage.gov/guidelines

About CultureWiz



CultureWiz is your trusted partner for global growth and intercultural development. We help associations, nonprofits, and organizations communicate clearly and respectfully across cultures — so your message lands the way you intend, wherever it travels.

C O N T A C T

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