

Report writing guidance

ADVANCE REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS

Background

- To guide quarterly and annual reporting
- Or any external communication document
- To standardize our “style”
- Adapted from ACIDI/VOCA style guide and other good practices

Key points

- **Focus on effects and only key activities**
- Review consistency across paragraphs/sections
- Verify consistency with figures from the databases
- Re-read
- Verify all activities are captured by M&E unit
- Respect submission deadline – plan on time
- **Send feedback, questions**

Formatting

- Word normal template
- Calibri: 11
- Line spacing: 1
- Paragraph justified
- Space before and after paragraph – except for bullet points, and tables (Calibri 10)

Content

- Use short sentences
- Always put amounts in GHS (not GHC, not in \$ unless billed in \$)
- Use graphs and pictures
- Label pictures
- Use quotes (in text box – italic, Calibri 9)



Content (2)

Unless you have a reason not to, use the active voice

- Passive: It was earlier demonstrated that adoption of technologies can increase yield
- Active: The study earlier showed that adoption of improved technologies improves yield
- Good reasons to use the passive voice
 - To emphasize the action rather than the actor
 - To keep the subject and focus consistent throughout a passage
 - To be tactful by not naming the actor
 - To describe a condition in which the actor is unknown or unimportant
 - To create an authoritative tone



Content (3)

Put the action of the sentence in the verb

- Watch out especially for nominalizations
 - An evaluation of the collection procedures needs to be done.
 - The collection procedures need to be evaluated
 - The M&E team needs to evaluate the collection procedures

Reduce wordy verbs

- Is aware, has knowledge of -----> knows
- Is taking -----> takes
- Are indications -----> indicate
- Are suggestive -----> suggests

Content (4)

- Use expletive constructions ("It is," "There is," "There are") sparingly
- Try to avoid using vague, all-purpose nouns, which often lead to wordiness (e.g., factor, aspect, area, situation, consideration, degree, case)
- Eliminate unnecessary prepositional phrases



Content (5)

Use wordy phrases sparingly

- The reason for, for the reason that, due to the fact that, owing to the fact that, considering the fact that, on the grounds that, this is why → because, since, why
- Despite the fact that, regardless of the fact that → although, even though
- In the event that, if it should transpire/happen that, under circumstances in which → if
- On the occasion of, in a situation in which, under circumstances in which → when
- As regards, in reference to, with regard to, concerning the matter of, where . . . is concerned → about



General A/V rules

- Spell out the full name or term with the acronym in parentheses the first time it appears
- Do not capitalize the words that form an abbreviation or acronym unless they are part of a proper noun
- Generally use lowercase with east, west, north, and south, but capitalize when referring to regions
- Capitalize all specific titles before a person's name, do not capitalize without the person's name or if the title is placed after the name
- Avoid *s/he*, *he/she*, or *him/her*, write *she or he*, *him or her*

General A/V rules (2)

- Do not use semicolons at the end of each bullet or “; *and*” at the end of the penultimate one
- Do not use periods at the end of each bullet, unless they are complete sentences
- The sentence introducing the bulleted or numbered list should be a complete sentence if it includes colons
- Numbers one through nine should be spelled out, same for ordinal numbers
- Numbers greater than nine should be written as numerals
- Use numerals with percentages: 5 percent
- **Spell out any number at the beginning of a sentence**

General A/V rules (3)

- Written-out numbers use hyphens following words ending in –ty, the word *and* before such words is usually omitted
 - *Twenty-two organizations, five hundred ninety-five beneficiaries*
- Date:
 - General ACIDI/VOCA style calls for March 6, 2012
 - Do not use ordinals for dates (e.g., they left on January 6)
- Use \$ for amounts in dollar
- Spell out any fraction standing alone, use numerals for mixed numbers (e.g., two-thirds of the missions, 4½ inches in diameter)
- *Etc.*, *i.e.*, and *e.g.* are always set off in commas

General A/V rules (4)

- Periods and commas fall inside the quotation marks
- The colon and semicolon fall outside the quotation marks
- Dash, question mark, and the exclamation point fall
 - Inside the quotation marks when they refer to the quoted matter only
 - Outside when they refer to the whole sentence

Example: *He asked, “When did she leave?” What is the meaning of “the open door”?*

Example: *The sergeant shouted “Halt!” Save us from his “mercy”!*