



HOUSE STYLE GUIDE

The way we talk and write is a key part of Living Streets' personality. With lots of different people writing on behalf of Living Streets, it's essential that we demonstrate a voice that's consistent, clear, and easy to understand - embodying our tone of voice principles.

A house style guide provides a definitive guide for writing, grammar and editing for staff writing on behalf of Living Streets and will help you to achieve that consistency

Tone of voice principles

The tone of voice seeks to reflect our inclusive, positive and dynamic personality. It may involve some changes to the way you currently write but, by following the following 5 simple steps you will be up and walking in no time.

1. Inclusive

We are the experts but we are also part of a growing movement of people walking. Instead of 'us' and 'them', let's use 'we'. Involve your audience with what you're saying.

Be aware of different levels of ability when suggesting activities or planning events.

2. Positive and encouraging

Focus on solutions rather than getting bogged down in the problems. Avoid sounding preachy or judgmental and don't appeal to people's guilt to induce change. Instead, use encouraging language and ideas to motivate your audience.

3. Dynamic

We are an organisation on the move. Our writing should embody the spirit of walking and feel purposeful - having a sense of movement. Choose words that urge action and inspire your audience. Let your passion come through in your writing.

4. Clear, simple, succinct

Clarity is a prerequisite for understanding. Keep your message quick, straightforward, and direct. Check over your writing for any unnecessary repetition and eliminate it. No need to complicate or create detailed explanations. Never use ten words when five will do.

5. Expert, authoritative

Use one or two carefully chosen facts to drive home your message when appropriate. Your writing should sound confident and assured, without being stuffy or fact-heavy.

House style guide

At Living Streets we defer to the house style guide developed by the [Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/guardian-observer-style-guide-a) found at www.theguardian.com/guardian-observer-style-guide-a

This guide outlines some specific terms to Living Streets and is split into numbers and an a-z.

Refer to [Collins English Dictionary](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/) for guidance on anything that does not appear in the style guide below.

Numbers

Use figures for numbers 10 and above. Write out numbers one to nine in letters, except in the following cases.

Age ranges

Use 'to' and hyphenate '-year-olds'.

The room was full of **17-year-olds**. The room was full of **16-to-17year-olds**.

Between numbers

Use 'and'.

Between 15 and 20.

Centuries

The 21st century

Comparing numbers

This affects **1 in 10 people**, this takes **7-10 days**

An exception to this rule is when the sentence begins with a number.

Sixty users responded to the online survey.

For thousands, use commas not spaces.

1,000 not 1000 or 1 000

10,000 not 10000 or 10 000

Do not mix fractions with decimals. Write fractions in words.

Three-quarters

One and three-quarters

Use per cent, not percent or %, in text though you should use the symbol % in tables and headings/headlines of press releases.

81 per cent of people think communities should have a say on this issue.

When not quoting a figure, use the word percentage

There is a high **percentage** of older people in the area.

Dates

Write dates in full using the 'dd month yyyy' format. Use 14 September rather than 14th September.

14 September 2000

Only use st, rd and th when referring to centuries.

These are the challenges that local governments face in the 21st century.

When writing for the web it is important to remember that pages will be available for many years to come. Specify the year in question, rather than saying “this year”.

In 2015, we had our away day in Peterborough.

For financial years, write 2007/08 not 2007-08, 2007-8, 2007/8 or 2007-2008.

Funding is available for 2011/12.

Use the words from and to when referring to full stops of several years in full sentences.

She was a cabinet member from 1997 to 2004.

For tables you can use a dash between the dates.

Mon–Fri 9–5; the 1939–45 war.

Decades

The 1950s, the roaring 20s

Decimals

Use decimals for millions that are not a whole number.

3.41 million people live in Wales.

Financial sums

£3 million

Qualifications, levels, awards

key stage 1, NVQ level 4, Beacon Scheme round 9

Million

Always spell out million in copy. Whole numbers under 10 are written; over 10 million as numbers followed by million; others as decimals. Use m in tables and when you're tight for space.

Two million, 10 million, 4.52 million rabbits. £10m, 45m.

Phone numbers

London and other 020 numbers

020 7377 4900

Scotland

0131 243 2645

Other regional numbers

0191 245 7326

Mobile phone numbers

07969 664090

Time

Use digits for hours but spell out numbers under 10 for weeks, months, years.

1am, 6.30pm, 12 noon, 12 midnight; three weeks, five years

Time references

11.00 am to 3.00 pm

Years

2007, not 'the year 2007'; for spans, use a dash.

In **2007**, we made our plans for **2008-13**.

A to Z

accident

Don't use in the context of road traffic accident – use incident, collision or crash where appropriate.

Living Streets is calling for these measures because it wants to see a reduction in road traffic **incidents**.

acts and bills

Use initial caps when using the full name but lower case on second reference and in general terms.

The **Daylight Saving Bill** is going through parliament at the moment. The **bill** has got good support. We also need a walking **act**.

addresses

Someone is described as being "of" a road but "from" an area.

John Smith, of Hounslow High Street, works for the council.

But "John Smith, who lives in Green Lane, Hounslow"

affect / effect

Affect is a verb, as in "this does not affect you".

To effect means to bring something about or to cause something as in "It did not have the desired effect"

AM (assembly member)

Member of the Welsh assembly.

Carwyn Jones **AM**

amid

not amidst

among

Use among not amongst.

ampersand (&)

Do not use as a substitute for 'and'. Only use if part of an organisation's name.

Ampersands can be used on social media where space is limited.

We worked with **Marks & Spencer** this year.

awards

Use initial capitals when talking about a specific award.

The **Charles Maher Award**, the **Living Streets Neighbourhood Award**

awareness events

Use initial capital letters.

National Walking Month, **Walk to School Week**

biannual/biennial

Biannual means twice a year; **biennial** means every two years.

BAME/black and minority ethnic

Do not use BAME. Spell out Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities; note 'minority ethnic' not 'ethnic minority'.

Living Streets works with **Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups** across the UK.

book, report and magazine titles

Always italicised; use lower case for a, an, and, at, for, from, in, of, the, to (except first word of a title). The exception to this is on web pages when you are using the title as a hyperlink to the report.

A Tale of Two Cities, *Making the Case for Investment in the Walking Environment*, [Making the Case for Investment in the Walking Environment](#)

Britain, UK

Try to always use **UK**, although these terms are synonymous: Britain is the official short form of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Used as adjectives, therefore, British and UK mean the same. Great Britain, however, refers only to England, Wales and Scotland.

Living Streets works to create safe, attractive and enjoyable streets across the **UK**.

bulletpoint lists

In a bullet pointed list, only use a full stop (or 'terminal punctuation' – it could be a question mark, for example) at the end of the last item in the list. Use a capital letter at the beginning of each new line.

- **13,000 young people are now walking to school**
- **We're seeing a huge increase in the number of schools running WoW**
- **6,000 employers are encouraging staff to walk to work**
- **400 communities are now fitter for walking, all thanks to Living Streets' work in Peterborough.**

chief executive

Only capitalise when talking about a job title.

Stephen Edwards, **Interim Chief Executive** of Living Streets, is one of the most enthusiastic **chief executives** the charity sector has seen.

Christmas

Christmas, never Xmas.

City/city

City should only be capitalised when referring to London's financial centre.

commas

Used around sub-clauses in a sentence.

Tanya Braun, Head of Policy and Communications, started working with Living Streets in 2015.

Commas always come in pairs except where the second comma is replaced by a full stop at the end of a sentence.

compass points

Should be lower case north, south, east, west.

Compound nouns like south-west are hyphenated and lower case, as in south-west London.

contractions

Avoid contractions such as "don't" or "isn't" except within direct quotes.

CO₂

Subscript the 2.

Walking helps you reduce your CO₂ emissions.

collision

The word collision is not a synonym for crash and means the coming together of two moving objects.

Commons/House of Commons

The **House of Lords** is tabling our amendment after it went through the **Commons**.

coordinator

Matthew Cunningham is Living Streets' Digital Engagement **Coordinator**.

councils

Use lower case except for the place name.

Southwark council, Kent county council, Lancaster city council

dashes

A dash (–) is twice as long as a hyphen. It is used to separate a clause in a sentence – like this – and gives a clearer, longer break than commas.

Stephen, Living Streets' Chief Executive, went to visit Hull – the finest city in the northeast – before she travelled on to Wales.

To insert a dash, move the cursor between the words; add a space, type two hyphens, and another space and the next word.

days and months

Try to spell out days and months; but if you are tight for space, use three-letter abbreviations.

Mon, Tue, Fri, Jan, Feb, Apr, Nov.

D/deaf

The use of the small d deaf signifies that the person does not associate with other members of the deaf community, regarding their hearing loss solely in medical terms.

People who use a big D Deaf tend to identify themselves as culturally deaf, and have a strong Deaf identity.

We use D/deaf to encompass both aspects.

decision-making/decision-makers

Use a hyphen.

Decision-makers are a key audience for Living Streets.

departments of state

Use initial capitals.

Cabinet Office, Treasury, Home Office, Foreign Office, Ministry of Justice.

devolved administrations

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should be referred to as either 'devolved administrations' or 'devolved governments' or by the individual names.

Downing Street

is an acceptable synonym for a government spokesman

Downing Street said. You can also use **No 10.**

NB Whitehall and Downing Street/Parliamentary spokesman are not the same.

Whitehall is the Civil Service and is not interchangeable

Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly, northern Ireland Assembly

Always remember that England is one of four nations that make up the United Kingdom. The term England is not interchangeable with either the United Kingdom or Great Britain.

A lot of our policy work may apply to legislation in England only, or Scotland only, but we campaign across the UK.

disabled

Use 'disabled people' rather than 'people with disabilities'.

People without a disability should be described as 'not disabled' or 'non-disabled' rather than able-bodied. Keep your language positive and enabling when talking about disabled people.

Pavement parking reduces the mobility of many pedestrians including pregnant women, parents with buggies, disabled people and people with shopping bags and trolleys.

Avoid using **the disabled.**

effect/affect

To effect means to bring something about or to cause something as in “It did not have the desired effect”.

Affect is a verb, as in “this does not affect you”.

elderly/older people

Don't use 'elderly' – use 'older people' or 'older adults' instead.

One of our key audiences is **older people**.

email address

Do not use a full stop when an email or website address ends a paragraph. Always use lower case for Living Streets email addresses.

If you have any questions about this style guide, email

kathryn.shaw@livingstreets.org.uk

England, English

Take care not to offend readers from other parts of the UK by saying England or English when you mean Britain or British.

Living Streets supporters aren't just **English** people!

exclamation marks

Use sparingly and only when really necessary.

first name, forename

Use rather than Christian name.

Her **first name** was Petrolea, but she changed it to Petra.

gender

Avoid terms such as businessmen, housewives, male nurse, woman pilot, woman doctor, etc, which reinforce outdated stereotypes.

Sexuality, race or disability should not be mentioned unless they are relevant to the subject matter.

general election

Lower case

government

Lower case when talking generally about the government but upper case when used with British, Scottish etc.

The **government** is in the middle of another scandal.

The **Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly Government** and **Northern Ireland Assembly Government**.

Great Britain

Not interchangeable with United Kingdom/UK.

Great Britain is made up of the countries of England, Scotland and Wales but not Northern Ireland, which is, however, part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK).

handicapped

Use disability or learning disability rather than handicapped. [See etiquette guide for more information.](#)

headteacher

One word.

Headteacher Sue Johnson said the scheme had transformed walking to school levels.

high street

Lower case. Capitalise only when referring to a specific high street.

Hounslow High Street.

Holyrood

Home of Scotland's parliament, in Edinburgh.

Stuart took our manifesto on pavement parking to **Holyrood.**

hyphens

A compound word is a word made up of two words, where their use in a sentence would be ambiguous if they were not hyphenated or written as one word.

The general rule is to avoid hyphens where possible: eg coordinate, not co-ordinate.

Words may be hyphenated to turn them into adjectives.

Living Streets campaigns for **walking-friendly** neighbourhoods.

Its/it's

Its is possessive and does not need an apostrophe.

It's is a contraction of it is.

job roles and job titles

Always use initial capitals when referring to a person by name and job title, but not when referring to the job title alone.

Stephen Edwards, Chief Executive of Living Streets, is our new chief executive

kilogram/s, kilojoule/s, kilometre/s, kilowatt/s

Abbreviate as kg, kJ, km, kW.

The abbreviation for kilometres an hour is km/h.

Less/fewer

Use 'less' when referring to a quantity rather than a number. **The committee is calling for less bureaucracy.**

Use 'fewer' when referring to something you can count. **The committee wants to have fewer meetings next year**

Local authorities

Lower case, but use 'council' in general comms.

We talk to local authorities in our Expert Help materials, and councils in our campaigns packs.

Local Groups/Living Streets Group

Local Groups, not local groups or branches.

Living Streets has many **Local Groups**, such as the **Islington Living Streets Group**.

London office

Not head office.

Living Streets' London office is based in Tower Hill.

Lords/House of Lords

The **House of Lords** is tabling our amendment after it went through the **Commons**.

media

is a plural. **The media are in angry mood**. Note however that the press is singular. **The press hates the government**.

ministers

Only use initial capitals if talking about a named minister and their job title.

Grant Shapps, Minister for Local Government, said: "We need a new housing minister."

mph

No space. We are calling for **20mph**.

MP/MSP/MEP

Member of Parliament/Member of Scottish Parliament/Member of European Parliament. No apostrophe for plural.

Living Streets speaks to MPs and MSPs to get them on board with our agenda.

national curriculum

Lower case. Refers only to state schools in England.

near miss

What we really mean is a near hit, so best avoided.

NHS

Always capitalised.

National Health Service in full or shortened to **the health service**.

NICE

Always capitalised.

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence.

Office for National Statistics

Not the Office **of** National Statistics.

page numbers

Preferable to spell out and use digits. For spans use a dash. If tight on space, use p for one page and pp for more than one.

See page 4; from pages 13-56. See p5, see pp13-14.

Parliament/parliament

Lower case. **The parliament in Edinburgh is to be recalled for an emergency session.**

Only capitalise when referring to Westminster or in a title. **The Scottish Parliament was the scene of a fierce debate.**

political parties

Use capital letters for named political parties.

Political parties like the **Green Party** and the **Conservative Party** hold party conferences.

prime minister

Lower case as a description following name

Boris Johnson, the prime minister, said he thinks the Living Streets Walk to School campaign is brilliant.

principal/principle

Principal means first in order of importance. **A school head is sometimes known as the principal**

The word **principle** means a rule or belief governing one's personal behaviour. **It is against his principles to kill animals.**

private member's bill

Lower case.

Apostrophe before the s where only one MP is involved. **A private member's bill often falls at the first hurdle.**

Otherwise, apostrophe after the s. **The ballot for private members' bills will be held on Monday.**

quotation marks/speech marks/inverted commas

Use single inverted commas for quotations within quotations.

"When I say 'immediately', I mean some time before April," said the spokesman.

Use quotation marks (or speech marks) to enclose a direct quotation.

The chair of Friends of Magnificent Park said: **"The work Living Streets did with us was incredible."**

Use quotation marks when talking about a word or phrase.

Someone I know uses the word **"pedestrian"** to mean **"awesome"**.

schools

Names of schools have capitals for the specific part of the title only.

Grange Hill comprehensive school, Galfast high school

Scottish executive, parliament and government

Lower case.

Living Streets works in Scotland with the **Scottish government** to get children walking to school.

seasons

All seasons are lower case.

We're currently marketing our Walk to School resources for the **autumn** term.

semi-colons

Semi-colons are best avoided as they are difficult to read on screen.

statistics

Use digits for stats that compare numbers. Use % for stats that feature percentages. Make sure they are accurate and part of our central stats database.

1 in 3 people would like to walk more. 33% of people would like to walk more.

(This is an example and doesn't have to be accurate!)

swear words

should generally be avoided unless considered integral to the story. We do not adopt the convention of using asterisks. If possible, omit the offending term from a direct quote or use indirect speech.

type 1 diabetes

Lower case and no hyphen.

United Kingdom

Abbreviate to UK. The UK is made up of Great Britain (England, Wales and Scotland) and Northern Ireland but not the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.

walking-friendly

With a hyphen.

Living Streets stands up for **walking-friendly** neighbourhoods.

web, webpage, website, world wide web

When you reference a website/url in running text, lose the http://.

Find out more about Living Streets Local Groups at www.livingstreets.org.uk/localgroups

Welsh assembly/government

Use upper case for full title **National Assembly for Wales**.

Use lower case for abbreviation. **The problems facing farmers will be discussed by the Welsh assembly.**

The **Welsh government** should be written with a lower case.

which/that

Which informs the sentence whereas *that* defines.

The house that Jack built is to be knocked down. *That* differentiates his house from the house built by Jill.

The house, which Jack built, is to be knocked down. *Which* indicates Jack was the builder of the house.

while

Use while and not whilst.

who's/whose

Use apostrophe to represent missing letters from two contracted words; who is or who has.

Use whose to indicate possession. **Whose parrot is this?**

WOW - the walk to school challenge

Write out in first reference, then use WOW abbreviation.