Writing for OCR

a short guide for authors

OCR

Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Writing for OCR – a short guide for authors
This booklet is produced by the OCR Resource Programmes Team

© OCR 2015

Writing for OCR? Here are some quick tips

But first ... why do we need this guide?

Our materials are intended to inform and educate – we don't want our readers to be confused and distracted by inconsistent layout, style, tone, grammar, spelling or punctuation.

All our written resources need to be clear and professional. This helps readers to understand our resources and enhances our reputation for quality.

Getting it right – or as right as it can be – first time reduces the time and cost of correcting content during the production process.

This short guide explains some of the common things to look out for when producing resources for OCR.

For more detailed guidance, refer to the 'House style guide for assessment materials'.

Tone and grammar

- Your main aim is to be clear and consistent. If you're not sure about a point of grammar, look it up.

- Refer to the 'House style guide for assessment materials' for more information.

Tip	✓	✕
Keep it simple – don't pad out sentences with unnecessary words or use jargon or complicated language unless necessary for the content. Keep sentences as short as you can.	Students will take part in practical and engaging activities that help them to know what it takes to be entrepreneurial and how to pitch their ideas.	Students will be able to participate in a range of different practical and engaging activities that will aid their knowledge with regard to the process of becoming entrepreneurial and fast-track the development of methods of pitching their ideas.
Write in the active voice where possible. This means the subject acting rather than being acted upon. A clue that the sentence is passive is the word 'by' before the subject, a verb ending with '-ment' or the phrase 'There are/is'.	OCR developed new resources. Subject specialists helped OCR to develop new resources.	New resources were developed by OCR. The development of resources by OCR was aided by subject specialists. There are new resources from OCR.
There is no rule about whether to use 'students', 'learners' or 'pupils' but use your chosen term consistently. In any case, consider addressing the reader directly as 'you'.	You will work with other students on this unit.	Students will work in groups with other pupils.

Spelling

- Word spellcheck is a useful tool but it will not pick up some misspellings or necessarily conform to these tips. Manually check your text before submitting it.

- If in doubt, check dictionaries and the OCR vocabulary guide in the 'House style guide for assessment materials'.

Tip	✓		✕	
Use UK English. In general this means using –ise (not –ize), -re (not –er), -our (not –or).	organise centre colour		organize center color	
Use 'e' after 'c' or 'g' before suffixes. Generally, if the verb ends with a soft sound leave the 'e' in; if the verb ends in a hard sound omit the 'e'.	judgement noticeable likable		judgment noticable likeable	
Generally, don't add '-st' to the end of words.	among while		amongst whilst	
Most words don't need hyphens. Generally, they are used after ex-, non- or self- but not after anti, counter, neo, pre, re or un. Check in a dictionary for exceptions.	email ex-husband non-conforming reactive	reorder self-portrait website	e-mail exhusband nonconforming re-active	re-order selfportrait web-site

Punctuation

For colons and semicolons, see 'Bullet lists'.

Tip	✓	✕
Always use single (not double) spaces after full stops and question marks.	There are many ways to commit your learning to memory. Here are just a few suggestions.	There are many ways to commit your learning to memory. Here are just a few suggestions.
Add a full stop after a website or email address if it ends a sentence.	Download the resources today from www.ocr.uk/cambridgenationals.	Download the resources today from www.ocr.uk/cambridgenationals
Don't add full stops to acronyms or abbreviations that contain the first and last letter of a word unless they end a sentence.	BBC Mrs Ltd	B.B.C. Mrs. Ltd.
Avoid the comma splice: a comma where a linking word or a semicolon, colon, en dash or full stop is needed.	We've created a range of resources – see our website for more details. We've created a range of resources; see our website for more details.	We've created a range of resources, see our website for more details.
Do not include a comma before the final 'and' in a list unless it makes a complex sentence clearer.	There have been changes to the specifications' structure, assessment and content. The unit includes an outline of legislation, relevant health and safety guidelines, and the theory of anatomy.	There have been changes to the specifications' structure, assessment, and content

Tip	✓	✗
Never use apostrophes in plurals	CDs, 1960s, GNVQs	CD's, 1960's, GNVQ's
Only add an apostrophe to 'its' if it is short for 'it is'.	The dog chases its tail. It's a long story.	The dog chases it's tail. Its a long story.
Dashes, when used as punctuation within the text, should be spaced 'en' dashes (–) *(Ctrl+minus key on the number keyboard)***,** not hyphens (-).	There is real flexibility and ease of delivery – it can be taught by non-specialist staff.	There is real flexibility and ease of delivery – it can be taught by non-specialist staff.
Don't add a hyphen after an adverb ending in –ly.	a practically focused test internationally recognised exams widely spaced rows	a practically-focused test internationally-recognised exams widely-spaced rows
Indicate missing or continuing information (e.g. within a quote) with an ellipses – a space, three dots and a space.	Translate lines 4–7 (*nam cum … reliquit*).	Translate lines 4–7 (*nam cum…reliquit*)
Don't use ampersands (&) unless they are part of a name.	Health and safety John Wiley & Sons	Health & safety

Acronyms

Tip	✓	✗
The first time the acronym is used, the words should be spelt out in full. After that, the acronym should be used on its own.	The paper has been submitted to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) for approval. Once it has approval from the QCA, the paper will be processed.	The paper has been submitted to the QCA for approval. Once it has approval from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the paper will be processed. The drama was shown by the British Broadcasting Corporation.
If it is better known by its acronym (e.g. BBC, NATO), the acronym should be used every time.	The drama was shown by the BBC.	The drama was shown by the British Broadcasting Corporation.
When writing out the words represented by an acronym, the words only have initial capitals/upper case if they would normally take capitals, i.e. if they are proper nouns.	computer aided design (CAD)	Computer Aided Design (CAD)

Capital letters

Tip	✓	✗
Minimise capital letters, both in headings and within the text. Only use capitals at the start of headings or sentences, and for names of people, places, companies, organisations, institutions and movements, ships, brand names, legislation and official documents, religious names and acronyms.	The Australian, Alexander Finch. the Black Forest Southeast Asia the east coast of Scotland the Factory and Workshop Act 1911 Mini Cooper NATO Hoover	the East Coast of Scotland The Factory and Workshop act 1911 Nato hoover Awarding Body
Capitalise job titles, when used with a named person but not when used generally.	Please send all the correspondence to Beatrix Carter, Department Administrator. The administrator of the department sent out an important memo to the team.	Please send all the correspondence to Beatrix Carter, department administrator. The Administrator of the department sent out an important memo to the team.
Don't capitalise words like 'and', 'of', 'to', 'a', 'the', 'from', 'in' or 'of' in titles.	*Game of Thrones* *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*	Games Of Thrones Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Secrets

Dates and times

Tip	✓	✕
Do not use endings such as st, rd or th, as in 1st, 3rd or 8th December 2015, for year dates unless the date is quoted from a source.	The conference takes place from 22 to 29 June.	The conference takes place from 22nd to 29th June.
Put the numbers before the month.	The conference takes place from 22 to 29 June.	The conference takes place from June 22 to 29.
Use numbers with a half space and am or pm.	4 pm	16.00 hours 4pm

Italics

Tip	✓	✗
Italics should be used for the titles of books, plays, films, television, radio programmes, magazines, newspapers, booklets, periodicals, CDs, DVDs, visual art, names of ships, cars and planes.	*Waiting for Godot* *Pride and Prejudice* REM's *Out of Time*	
Use single quotation marks for the titles of songs and poems, chapters in books, shorter poems, articles in periodicals (not in bibliographies), unpublished theses and individual episodes in broadcast series.	'Roar' by Katie Perry 'The Wasteland' by T S Elliot The best chapters in this craft book are: 'Making cards', 'Crocheting' and 'Constructing models'.	"Roar" by Katie Perry *The Wasteland* by T S Elliot The best chapters in this craft book are Making cards, Crocheting and Constructing models.

Quotes

Tip	✓	✕
Don't change the spelling, punctuation or grammar of text quoted from a source.	Arguably the most famous is Hamlet's soliloquy, 'To be or not to be'.	Arguably the most famous is Hamlet's soliloquy, 'To be, or not to be'.
Use single quotation marks for quoted material and direct speech.	'I am here,' said Billy. In his preface to *The Secret Agent*, Conrad calls London 'a cruel devourer of the world's light'.	"I am here," said Billy. In his preface to *The Secret Agent*, Conrad calls London "a cruel devourer of the world's light".

Numbers

Tip	✓	✕
Spell out numbers one to nine. Use numerals after that. However, be consistent within a sentence.	There are nine subjects. There are 10 subjects. Between the ages of 8 and 15. Between the ages of eight and fifteen.	There are 9 subjects. There are ten subjects. Between the ages of 8 and fifteen. Between the ages of eight and 15.
Numerals should also be used with measurements. Insert a half space between the number and the measurement (*in Word, this is a 1/4 em space: Insert/Symbol/Special characters*)	8 mm	Eight mm 8mm 8 mm
For numbers with five digits or more, there should be a half space between each group of three whole numbers (no commas), working from right to left.	10 000 100 000 100 000 000	10000 10,000 10 000

Bullet lists

Use bullet or numbered lists to break up blocks of text or to display lists made up of single words or short phrases.

Tip	✓	✕
Introduce a bullet list with a colon or question mark, not a semicolon or a hyphen.	Here is a bullet list: • Example bullet.	Here is a bullet list; • xxx Here is a bullet list:- • xxx
If it follows a heading or complete sentence, start each bullet point with a capital letter and end it with a full stop.	We have a style for bullet lists: • This is a full sentence. • This is a full sentence.	We have a style for bullet lists: • this is a full sentence. • This is a full sentence
If the bullets are part of a sentence, start them with a lower case word. Do not include full stops, commas or semicolons at the end of the bulleted lines except for the final bullet.	We have a style for bullet list because: • it makes things consistent • everyone knows what to do • it makes lists easier to read.	We have a style for bullet list because: • It makes things consistent; • Everyone knows what to do; • It makes lists easier to read
Ensure each bullet point makes sense in relation to the introductory sentence.	We have a style for bullet lists because: • it makes things consistent • everyone knows what to do • it makes lists easier to read.	We have a style for bullet lists because it: • it makes things consistent • everyone knows what to do • easier to read.

References

- It is important that readers can easily source referenced books so try to provide as much information as possible in a consistent way.

- Use the author–date, or Harvard system.

- Reference books as: Author(s)/Editor(s). (Year). Title of book. Edition. Place of publication: Name of publisher. ISBN (where available).

- Reference content found on websites as: Authorship or Source. (Year). *Title of web document or webpage.* [type of medium] (date of update if available). Available at: include website address/URL [Accessed date].

- Refer to 'House style guide for assessment materials' for detailed guidance.

Tip	✓	✕
Alphabetise by surname of main author or editor (regardless of the number of authors/editors), ignoring accents and treating Mc as Mac. When the surname has a prefix (e.g. de Gaulle), alphabetise by the prefix and ensure that the prefix is also included in the text citation	Bevis, P. and Murray, M. (2008). *AQA Physical Education AS: Student's book.* Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes Ltd. ISBN: 9781408500156. de Ball, A. (2014) *Anatomy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN:9781697495148.	de Ball, A. (2014) *Anatomy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN:9781697495148. Bevis, P. and Murray, M. (2008). *AQA Physical Education AS: Student's book.* Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes Ltd. ISBN: 9781408500156.

Tip	✓	✕
Multiple works by the same author or group of authors should be listed in date order (by year of publication)	Smith, F. (1983). *Reading.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 9780521312851. Smith, F. (1985). *Another book about reading.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 9780521312967.	Smith, F. (1985). *Another book about reading.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 9780521312967. Smith, F. (1983). *Reading.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 9780521312851.
Alphabetise works with no author by the first significant word in the title.	*Longman dictionary of contemporary English* (1978). London: Longman.	–
If the author is a corporate body, then alphabetise by the first significant word of the name.	The Association of Language Testers in Europe would come under A Ofqual. (2009). *A levels: The official student guide to the system.* Coventry: Ofqual. ISBN: 9781847219305.	–
If no date is given for a work, use (nd)	*Longman dictionary of contemporary English* (nd). London: Longman.	–
Page numbers should be included for all articles in journals and in collections.	Abercrombie, D. (1968). *Paralanguage.* British Journal of Disorders of Communication, 3, 55–59.	–
Normally, publishers' names should be spelled out in full.	Cambridge University Press	CUP
For published books, give the 13-digit ISBN at the end of the entry if you have it. It will normally start with 978.	Smith, F. (1985). *Reading.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 9780521312851	Smith, F. (1985). *Reading.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0521312851.

Checklist

It's worth taking a few minutes to do a quick check of your work to ensure it is consistently presented. This will reduce queries coming back to you and save time and costs later in the production process.

	✓
Have you kept sentences short?	☐
Have you used simple, clear language?	☐
Have you used the active voice where possible?	☐
Have you used terms like 'students' consistently?	☐
Have you checked spellings you're not sure about?	☐
Is there only one space after full stops and question marks?	☐
Have you avoided comma splices?	☐
Have you checked your use of hyphens and en dashes?	☐
Have you ensured acronyms are clear?	☐
Have you used capitals appropriately?	☐
Have you used the correct format – italics or quotation marks – for the titles of written resources, art, music and other items?	☐
Are numbers and numerals used consistently?	☐
Have you followed the guidance for bullet list capitals and punctuation?	☐
Are any references given in the correct format?	☐
Have you given your work a final read-through to catch any remaining issues?	☐