



Netherlands Enterprise Agency

Style Guide

Netherlands Enterprise Agency English

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Introduction

The Style Guide Netherlands Enterprise Agency English helps you write and edit texts for British English B1 readers. For example: english.rvo.nl, [CBI.eu](https://cbi.eu), DGGF website and offline texts.

Our goal is to give English speaking readers correct and clear information. In this Style Guide you will find rules, tips and examples that are in compliance with Dutch government policies, our corporate communication vision guidelines and the British language. Furthermore, it helps the team to be consistent and use Netherlands Enterprise Agency's tone of voice.

Netherlands Enterprise Agency English uses British English grammar and spelling. Our readers come from various cultural backgrounds and speak English at varying levels of fluency. English might be their second, third or even fourth language. We strive to create content that is clear, concise and easily understood by all English readers. Therefore, we use English at B1 level.

Do you have questions or feedback about the Style Guide? Please contact content@rvo.nl.

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1 Language

The English name of RVO is Netherlands Enterprise Agency. We do not use the abbreviation RVO on english.rvo.nl. After the first introduction of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency, 'we/us' can be used instead.

1.1 British English versus American English

We use British English grammar and spelling at B1 level.

TIP!

How to recognise British English versus American English?

British English	American English
Organisation	Organization
Labour	Labor
Travelling	Traveling
Defence	Defense
Licence	License
Combatting	Combating

Easy trick to remember. British English is often the longer and more formal version. Pay attention when your word can be written in both ways:

- OU instead of O.
- Double LL instead of L.
- Double TT instead of T.
- S instead of Z.
- C instead of S.

TIP!

Make sure to set your Office Word spell check to British English.

1.1 B1 level - Taalniveau

Write in plain English or B1. B1 is a level of writing that most readers understand easily. It is based on 8th or 9th-grade school level. People with a university education also prefer a text that is easy to read and understand.

1.2 Tools – Hulpprogramma's (Grammarly, woordenboek)

We recommend the following tools:

Dictionaries

Collins Advanced Learners Dictionary ([website](#))

Merriam-Webster Dictionary ([website](#))

Translate and synonyms

Linguee ([website](#))

Reverso Context ([website](#))

Collins Advanced Learners Dictionary ([website](#))

Spell check

Grammarly – ask English editor in chief for account ([website](#))

B1 check

Hemingway App ([website](#))

Web FX readability test tool ([website](#))

Duolingo ([website](#))

1.3 Frequently used words and names

A short cheat sheet for frequently used words and names.

Dutch	English
eLoket	<i>eLoket</i>
eHerkenning	<i>eHerkenning</i>
eHerkenningsmiddel	<i>eHerkenningsmiddel</i>
E-mail	Email
Staatscourant	Government Gazette
Zzp'er	Self-employed professional
Belastingdienst	Dutch Tax and Customs Administration
KvK	Chamber of Commerce
Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland	Netherlands Enterprise Agency
Rijksoverheid	Government of the Netherlands
Ministerie van Economische Zaken en Klimaat	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy
Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken	Ministry of Foreign Affairs

TIP!

For the translation of other Ministries check [this website](#).

1.4 Standard phrases

English	
A short cheat sheet for standard phrases used regularly on subsidy and information pages. Blue = example text.	
Open	You can apply for this programme from 2 June until 1 July. You can apply for this subsidy from 2 January 2020 until 30 December 2021.
Closed for now	This programme is closed for now. You cannot apply for this subsidy at this time.
Closed	This subsidy is closed. You can no longer apply for this programme.
Apply via eLoket	You can apply for this programme via eLoket. You can apply for this subsidy via eLoket. We will accept applications between 15 January and 15 March 2020. To apply for this programme, you need eHerkenning (level 2).
Apply via mijn.rvo.nl	You can apply for this programme via mijn.rvo.nl. We will accept applications between 15 January and 15 March 2020. To apply for this programme, you need eHerkenning (level 2).
Annexes	You must attach several documents to your application. For more information on which documents to attach, go to the application page.
Apply	Start your application now. Complete your application now.
Application with concept note	You can apply for SDGP at eLoket. To submit an application, you must complete 2 steps:
Following your application	We will only process applications with all required documents received during the application period.

	You will hear whether your application has been approved of within 22 weeks .
Progress report or process via eLoket	You can submit a progress report or project change via eLoket [of] mijn.rvo.nl . You can also apply for an advance or a calculation of the subsidy amount here .
Documents	You must attach the following documents:
	My application for DHI demonstration projects .
	You will receive a subsidy decision within 13 weeks of submitting your application.
	Have you applied for DHI ? If so, you can ask us to calculate the subsidy amount and notify us of progress or any changes via this page.

1.5 Tone of voice

Netherlands Enterprise Agency English uses a neutral tone of voice.

TIP!

Do	Please do not
Active sentences	Too formal
Use simpler words	Official language/jargon
Be polite	Too chatty
Keep it simple	Address readers directly
Keep it short & sweet	Use of !!

1.6 Contractions - Samentrekkingen

To keep the text at B1 level, avoid contractions in text and quotes.

TIP!

Do	Please do not
You will	You'll
Is not	Isn't
Cannot	Can't
Do not	Don't
They are	They're

2. Content lay-out, structure and format

2.1 Translation process

The process of the creation of English texts is as follows:

1. Receive Dutch input
2. Re-write input and make it content
3. Send NL content to translator (over 300 words)
4. Receive ENG content
5. Native check
6. B1 check
7. Create content in CMS
8. (Near) native editor in chief
9. Feedback and publish

2.2 Content type and formats

English.rvo.nl has several content types. For example:

- Subsidy page
- News article
- Dossierblokken page
- Event page

All content types require specific content formats. These can be found on the intranet. Use the formats and content type guides to create new pages in the CMS.

2.3 Writing for online platforms

Writing online content is different from offline content. Think of the reader being in a hurry. Therefore, the content should be:

- shorter than offline content, and
- scannable.

In the following paragraphs you can find more tips & tricks.

2.3.1 Title

A title is a promise. It sets the reader's expectation and tells them how they can benefit from the information. A title captures the context of the information that follows and is specific enough to highlight its value.

TIP!

Keep titles short and readable, about 5 to 8 words.

TIP!

Avoid stacking words in titles.

Do	Do not
Background to SDGP programme	Background programme SDGP

2.3.2 Paragraph

The first paragraph, the introduction or lead in bold, contains the most important information and answers the following questions:

- Who
- When
- What
- Where
- Why
- How

The following paragraph does not get a subheading. All other paragraphs do.

TIP!

Texts should be fold proof. Meaning: you could cut the last paragraph(s) and still keep the most important message.

2.3.3 Sentences

Write in active voice (vermijd lijdende vorm)

Keep sentences short, 10-15 words

Avoid proverbs and expressions (gezegdes en uitdrukkingen)

Avoid nominalisations/gerunds (naamwoordstijl)

Avoid second or third meanings of words

Use 'please note' only if there is really something noteworthy. Begin a sentence with Please note (bold) and the sentence that follows with a capital letter. Example:

Please note: This manual will be updated on 31 March 2020.

2.3.4 Different list styles

Use lists if you want to draw the reader's attention. Lists are also helpful to keep sentences short, keep the text scannable and highlight examples or elements.

2.3.4.1 Regular list style

Most text will have lists using the following style.

For the subsidy you will need:

- All required documents;
- A declaration of independence from your local government;
- Completed Quick Scan.

2.3.4.2 Continuous sentence

With a list that is part of a continuous sentence, put semicolons (;) after each point and start each bullet point with a lower-case letter.

If you can prove that:

- you were somewhere else at the time;
- you were not related to Mary; and
- you are over 21;

you should be all right.

2.3.4.3 Short points

For a list of short points, you have 2 options:

Option 1) Kevin needed to take:

- A penknife
- Some string

- A pad of paper
- A pen.

Option 2) Kevin needed to take:

- a penknife
- some string
- a pad of paper; and
- a pen.

2.3.5 Links

TIP!

To keep your text scannable and readable, use the following rule of thumb:

- Maximum of 5 internal links
- Maximum of 3 external links

2.3.5.1 Internal links

Internal links should open in the same window. The title of an internal link should be clear and match the source page as close as possible.

TIP!

Avoid links as:

- Click here
- Read more

2.3.5.2 External links

External links should open in a new window. The title of an external link should be clear and match the source page as close as possible.

Link to English-language pages or information only. If this is not available, there are 3 options:

2.3.5.3 Link to documents

If the link goes to a pdf/Word/Excel/Form free file, write (file type) in brackets behind the link. Examples:

Download the [WBSO Quick Scan](#) (pdf)
 Download the SDGP declaration (form free)
 Download the SDG7 budget tool (excel)

2.3.6 Naming downloads

Attachments on information pages need to be named consistently. Name files in English as follows:

Project name – date – type of data

Example: WBSO June 2017 Info sheet

Example: WBSO March 2017 Manual

2.4 Writing for offline documents

TIP!

Are you writing a letter on behalf of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency and you are not sure whether to use "we" or "I"? We asked a Netherlands Enterprise Agency lawyer!

"The decision is made by an administrative body, who is always a person. Not from an organisation. A ministry has no powers, the minister does. The use of "we" in a decision is therefore incorrect under administrative law."

Bottom line: use I in letters.

3. Style

We use the same style throughout our content. This makes it easier to check during edit rounds and keeps the website consistent.

3.1 Capitals

Use capital letter	Example
Professional and personal titles	His Majesty King Willem-Alexander
The official name of embassies and missions	The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
The official name of ministries	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Laws	Privacy Law
Titles of acts and decrees	The General Administrative Law Act
Names of official documents	WBSO Quick Scan
Abbreviations for Dutch educations	MBO
Do not use capital letter	Example
General names for ministries, embassies, missions and such.	In Dublin, the Dutch ministry was closed.
Job titles	Jan Jansen, police officer

3.2 Quotes

Quotes have a special function. They are personal, can represent what has been said and show emotion. Try to not change quotes too much. You can:

- Add punctuation
- Quotes have double quotation marks "..."
- Quotation marks follow after the full stop "The cat is gone."
- Make two sentences out of one
- Improve spelling
- Re-write contractions

3.2.1 Quotation marks

Use single quotation marks for the titles of 'publications' and such.
Use double quotation marks for "quotes".

3.2.2 (Official) job titles (in quotes)

In quotes, running texts, documents or articles we often refer to people.
Make sure to use the right format.

Important:

You cannot refer to people with only their last name without a title. Except in the case of criminals. When using direct speech, use a verb and comma instead of a colon. Example:

DO NOT: Jansen: 'Thanks to the coaching process,...

DO: Mr Jansen continues, 'Thanks to the coaching process,....

When	Format	Example
Introduction of person with official job title	[job title], [first name] [last name]	Minister of Economic Affairs, Jan Jansen
Introduction of person with regular job title	[first name] [last name], [job title]	Pietje Puk, school teacher
Second, third.. mention of person with official job title	[official job title] [last name] [verb],	Minister of Economic Affairs Jansen continues, "..."
Second, third.. mention of person with regular job title	[name] [verb],	Mr Puk continues, "..."

TIP!

Mr, Mrs, Ms do not have a full stop. It is:

Mr Smith and Ms Andrews.

3.3 Countries and cities

When in doubt, please check the website of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ) for official spelling of countries, cities and regions.

TIP!

The Netherlands starts with a capital 'T' only at the beginning of a sentence. Otherwise, write the Netherlands. This rule does not apply to The Hague.

3.4 Abbreviations and acronyms – afkortingen en acroniemen

Write the names of organisations, laws, decisions and taxes in full the first time, followed by the short capitalised version in brackets.

Example:

European Union (EU)

You do not have to share full names of acronyms when the acronym is more known than the full name. Think of organisations such as:

HEMA, NS and NASA.

TIP!

Frequently used abbreviations:

NGO

SMEs

AOW

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ)

UNESCO

the UK

TIP!

Keep in mind that abbreviations of subsidies do not need 'the'.

You can apply for WBSO (not: You can apply for the WBSO)

3.5 Foreign or non-English words

Write non-English (foreign) non-translatable words in *italic*. Use a short explanation of the term in English for the foreign word.

Example:

You can apply via the online platform *eLoket* from 31 March 2020 to 12 April 2020.

With laws, names and subsidies use the Dutch term in brackets after the term in English:

Example:

Environmental Management Activities Decree (Activiteitenbesluit Milieubeheer)

3.6 Hyphen – liggend streepje

Rule of thumb: hyphenate two or more words only when used as an adjective.

Hyphenate
3-year old
High-quality products
But do not hyphenate
<u>I work at a startup</u>
This product has <u>high quality</u>

3.7 Synonyms, the first meaning of a word

Synonyms can be used for readability, but when used incorrectly or too often texts will confuse readers. Keep using the same term for important words: sustainable. Not: sustainable, green and eco-friendly.

Different words can mean the same thing. But, all words have their first, second and third meaning that can confuse readers. To keep the text at B1 level use whenever possible the first meaning of a word.

For example:

Want to say	Use	Do not use (1st meaning)
Maximale hoogte subsidie	Limit	Ceiling (plafond)
Uitvoeren/doen	To do	Execute (liquideren)

Niet aanwijsbare regio	Place	Space (de ruimte)
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3.8 Keep it positive

Choose positive words over negative. And avoid double negatives.

Example:

Focus on positive word: He is not successful

Focus on negative word: He is unsuccessful

4. Spelling & Grammar

4.1 Singular and plural

Even though a country sounds plural, it is treated as singular. For example:

The Netherlandss, but “the Netherlands is a small country”.

Referring to a specific decade is done as follows:

In the 1970s we had a blast.

The 1990s were fabulous.

TIP!

There is no 's plural in English, so write photos, euros, NGOs, SMEs.

4.2 B1 words versus B1+ words

Many English words are familiar to us. But not to B1 readers. Use the most common and simple form.

B1 level	B1+ level
About	Regarding
Before	Prior to
Buy	Purchase
Complete	Fill in (samenvoeging)
End	Terminate
Extra	Additional
If	In the event of
More than	In excess of
Send	Forward
So	Consequently
Start	Commence
Tell	Advise
Under	In accordance with
You	Applicant

4.3 False friends

The following words in English and Dutch look similar but have different meanings:

Dutch	Correct	False friend
actueel	current	actual
declarative	return	declaration
dispensatie	exemption	dispensation
eventueel	possible	eventual
format	form	format
realiseren	handle	realise
structureel	regular	structural
training	workshop/course	training
voordeel	benefit	profit

4.4 Date, time, numbers, measurements, currencies

The correct use of date, time, numbers, measurements, currencies is important for our readers. They do not want to miss a deadline, submit the wrong details or expect a different amount. Use the following rules:

4.4.1 Date

[day] [month] [year] and when relevant add the day of the week + comma

Examples:

You can apply from 31 March 2020 on.

The event takes place on Friday, 13 April 2020.

4.4.2 Time

We use the 24-hour clock. The Netherlands has summer and winter time. Therefore we use both Central European Time (CET) and Central European Summer Time (CEST). Use the following rules:

31 July 2020 09:00 CEST

21 January 2020 17:00 CET

You can apply from 1 March 09:00 CET to 1 April 17:00 CEST 2020.

4.4.3 Measurements

Since our readers come from all over the world we need to be clear about measurements. In the Netherlands and in British English we use the metric system as a standard. Even though we have this standard, do not forget to add the measurement to the number.

Examples:

41,450 km²

16,038 square miles (wijkt af, dus volledig)

50 m²

25%

90° C

70° Fahrenheit (wijkt af, dus volledig)

4.4.4 Numbers

Write numbers as figures. Try to avoid a number at the beginning of a sentence. When using a number at the beginning of a sentence, the following word is not capitalised.

In English we use commas instead of full stops to separate thousands:
1,000 or 33,647

In English we use full stops instead of commas to specify decimals:
1,000.99 or 33,647.00

To shorten a large number, write:
3.5 million, not 3½ million or 3.5M

TIP!

Write ordinal numbers (1st and so on) without superscript. To make sure digital devices read the number out loud correctly. Even better: write out the full word. Such as first, second up until 20.

4.4.5 Currencies

The euro is our standard currency. To avoid confusion always mention the currency. Use the following rules:

- There should be no space between the currency sign and the number: €10,000 or US\$9.99

- The word euro (plural: euros) is written with a lower case letter
- Specify US dollars (US\$) to distinguish from Australian/Canadian dollars
- When the options above are not suitable and you want to name the currency, use the ISO standard abbreviations (EUR, USD, GBP)

Examples:

The costs are €1,000 for the car.

The return was 2.7 million euros.

Our company needs 8.6 billion GBP.