Te Tira Tiaki
Government Communications
Security Bureau

PO Box 12209, Wellington 6144
P +64 4 472 6881, F +64 4 499 3701
www.gcsb.govt.nz

22 October 2024

R. C. Wilson
fyi-request 28529 6d08097e@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request of 4 October 2024 transferred from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) to the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) seeking the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) style guide.

I have found a document in scope of your request, which is attached. I am withholding names of staff members under section 6(a) of the OIA as the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand. These are the only items withheld in the document.

If you would like to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact information@gcsb.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi

Andrew Clark
Te Tumu Whakarae mō Te Tira Tiaki
Director General, GCSB

certnz ❯

Style guide for CERT NZ and Own Your Online

CERT NZ
National Cyber Security Centre

New Zealand Government

Document Control

Version history

Date	Version	Author	Description of change
17.11.2016	0.1	s 6(a)	First draft
30.6.2017	1.0	s 6(a)	Edits to doc and final approval
26.9.2017	1.1	s 6(a)	Additions to preferred spelling list
25.2.2019	1.2	s 6(a)	Edits to doc and updated voice and tone
12.11/2021	1.3	s 6(a)	Edits and updates
30/04/2024	2	s 6(a)	New version merged with Own Your Online style guide. Formatting changes to make it easier to use.

Approvals

Name	Title	Role	Date approved
s 6(a)	Manager Engagement, Communications and Partnerships	Channel owner	30 Jun 17

Last reviewed by

Name	Role	Version
s 6(a)	Senior Comms & Engagement Advisor (Comms & Media)	2

Contents

Introduction

This guide is for anyone who writes, reviews or edits content for CERT NZ or Own Your Online.

It'll help you create content that:

- is consistent in style, voice and tone,
- helps your target audiences find the information they need quickly and easily,
- is in line with best practice content principles, and
- enhances the CERT NZ and Own Your Online brands.

While the guide is mainly for content on our website, it also applies to any writing that may be viewed externally. This includes social media, press releases, reports and presentations.

This guide has four main sections.

1. Voice and tone.
2. Writing guides.
3. Rules for grammar and punctuation.
4. Words we do and don't use in our content, and specifics on spelling.

This guide should be used as part of initial content creation and as a check during the editing process.

Document Overview: 2024 editing process draft.docx (wd.govt.nz)

The CERT NZ style guide is based on the style guide created by Digital.govt.nz and the Chicago Manual of Style

Content design guidance | NZ Digital government

The Chicago Manual of Style

certnz ›

1. Our voice and tone

The voice and tone we use across all our communications represents CERT NZ's brand and supports our goal to help Kiwi individuals and SMEs build cyber resilience. We're here to empower people to improve their online security.

- Voice is what we say – does not change.
- Tone is how we say it – changes depending on context.

Audience

The CERT NZ website and reporting tool is for everyone in New Zealand. We break our audience into three categories.

- IT specialists.
- Small to medium businesses and organisations (up 50 staff).
- Individuals.

The Own Your Online audience is for "everyday New Zealanders". It is not meant for a technical audience.

- Small to medium businesses and organisations (up 50 staff).
- Individuals.

Always be aware of who you are writing for and make sure the wording you use is appropriate. For example, technical and straight to the point or guiding with more context.

Voice

Our voice is found in the way we write, the kind of words we use, and how we structure our sentences. It shows our personality, and no matter who we're talking to it's always the same.

- CERT NZ's voice can be characterised as 'approachable yet authoritative'.
- Own Your Online can best be characterised as 'human', it is inclusive and conversational.

We like to communicate with our users in a straightforward, informal way. Our content, regardless of audience, should be:

- approachable,
- clear,
- confident,
- courteous,
- friendly,
- helpful,
- human,
- impartial, and
- informative.

We avoid:

- being overly casual, and
- being overly formal.

Example

certnz ⟩

- Romance scammers are all, "ILU, send me money and I'll get you back tomorrow" and we think that's cap – Too colloquial and a dated reference.

- "It is essential that individuals utilise these security tools to enable a more secure and resilient threat environment" – Too formal and repetition of 'security' and 'secure'.

Our voice as both CERT NZ and Own Your Online is consistent across the site, for every audience group. Whether we're talking to a millennial who's been online all their life, an older person who's less confident with technology, or a business owner who's just starting out, our content should always be recognisable no matter who writes it.

We write in plain English, regardless of the intended audience or their assumed level of literacy.

Plain language | NZ Digital government

We include commonly understood words in te reo Māori in our content, as part of our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi – these are detailed in the Word List section (below).

> **Tip**
>
> Read your work out loud to yourself. This helps highlight words that are unnecessary or repeated, ambiguous sentences, lengthy sentences or paragraphs, and the overall pacing of the content.
>
> Don't be afraid to check with colleagues. What you think is obvious, may be confusing for others.
>
> If a sentence can't be fixed with a single word change, try rewriting it.

Tone

While our voice is consistently the same, our tone changes depending on the situation our users are in, how they may be feeling, and what they need from us. Our users' needs help determine our tone.

At any given time, our tone may be:

- optimistic
- encouraging
- approachable
- inspiring
- supportive
- reassuring
- upbeat, or
- active.

If an individual is coming to us because they've been the target of a cyber attack, they will need helpful advice, but the tone needs to be reassuring and supportive. Whereas an IT professional may simply be looking for practical information about a new vulnerability and wants short, to the point information.

> **Example**
>
> - Think about online recipes. Sometimes you enjoy reading about why you should use clarified butter instead of oil, or the difference between sauteing and frying, or the author's memories of their grandmother in Sardinia... and sometimes you just want to read the recipe.

While we may adjust our tone to suit our users' needs in different situations, we are

never:

- scaremongering,
- negative, or
- patronising.

It's ok to be kind. We never want to make anyone who's been targeted online feel like it was their fault it happened. We're here to be supportive and helpful – to get through it together.

You don't want to be overly familiar but have a calming and reassuring tone is a good thing, especially when communicating to someone affected by a cyber incident.

Precision is vital in our writing.

We tell our users specifically and concisely what they can do or get. Where it's appropriate, we try to explain why something is a useful security measure instead of only telling them which things to implement.

Remember CERT NZ and Own Your Online are authorities, so writing definitive statements when giving advice is ok.

Example

- "You **can** apply for..." – not "You *may be able to* apply for..."

- "Your employer **must** pay you the minimum wage" – not "Your employer *has to* pay you...".

- "To protect your system, you **should** do the following" – not " To protect your system, you *can* do..."

---

2. Writing principles

This section covers how to construct your content to make it more readable for our audience.

Structure

Always put the active part of your message first when constructing a sentence, and the most important sentence goes first in a paragraph. This brings the reader to the point immediately.

Keep sentences short, if it goes over three lines it's too long. Paragraphs should also be short. Smaller chunks in a document are easier to read than large passages of text.

Avoid ambiguity and unnecessary repetition.

Use a comma or semicolon to separate clauses in a sentence.

Example

- "Evidence has shown that the majority of incidents occur outside of office hours, due to a series of factors where malicious actors try to hide their activity from administrators who may be monitoring at other times of the day" – Too long.

- "Research by CERT NZ in 2023 found that 55% of New Zealanders had suffered a cyber incident in the last six months" – The important information (55%) is buried in the sentence instead of being at the start.

- "More people are falling for scams as they become more sophisticated" – Ambiguous about what "they" is referring to.

- "There was an increase in romance scams and investment scams, as scammers found new targets following a series of phishing scams" – Repetition of the word scam.

Bold or *italics* can be used to accentuate words in a sentence, however, use this ***sparingly***.

Technical content

Much of the content on CERT NZ is intended for a specialist, technical audience – especially compared to Own Your Online. These specialists may *understand* complex or technical content, but they *prefer* a plain English alternative.

We use technical terms where we need to, but not jargon.

Never assume a user will know a term or phrase. Best practice is to explain everything clearly when it is first mentioned. We may use tool tips or examples but avoid sending a user down a rabbit hole to explain a single term.

Note that a glossary list of terms has been created for Own Your Online, it includes single-sentence plain-English descriptions of technical terms. This can be used for CERT NZ content as well.

CERT NZ - OYO Glossary Final.docx - All Documents (sharepoint.com)

When we recommend a security measure on the Own Your Online website, we always explain:

- how to implement it
- why it's useful, and
- how it can help.

We make it clear that while we can give our users good advice, we can't guarantee the outcome of an online security issue.

NZ Government web standards

Like all agencies, CERT NZ needs to follow government web standards for accessibility and usability.

Accessibility | NZ Digital government

We also follow the government's best practice guidance around content design and user experience (UX).

Design and UX guidance

3. Special cases

Writing to someone

Sometimes you aren't writing for CERT NZ or OYO's usual audience. This can be writing business plans, contract details, or even to the Minister.

In these cases, the documents will usually have their own guidelines on style and construction. However, ensure you continue to use the CERT NZ voice.

Ministers especially have a lot of documents to read, so being brief and to the point is essential. Avoid words that sound formal but are unnecessary or jargon – for example, 'utilise' or 'learnings'.

Writing as someone

You may need to write as someone to quote them. In those cases, it's best to sketch out what you want them to say, then work with them to get their wording, tone, and cadence correct.

External reports

Any reports commissioned by CERT NZ or OYO will need to comply with the style guide if they will be made public. Reports for internal use can be in the style of the creator.

It is a good idea to share this document with the person writing the report ahead of time, so they are aware of our conventions.

certnz ⟩

4. Grammar and punctuation

Anything that's not covered in this section can be checked in the Chicago Manual of Style.

The Chicago Manual of Style

Abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviations, initialisms and acronyms are confusing for people who aren't familiar with them.

- Abbreviations are shortened versions or portmanteaus of phrases or titles.
  - Telecommunications company becomes 'telco'.
- Acronyms are words made by taking letters from the first letters of a phrase or title.
  - Computer Emergency Response Team is CERT.
- Initialisms are a type of acronyms where the letters are said individually.
  - Federal Bureau of Investigation is FBI.

In general, we expand them the first time we use them in a document and add the shorter form in brackets. From then on refer only to the short form.

Example
• The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) provides services to government agencies and critical infrastructure providers. NCSC are part of the Government Communication Security Bureau (GCSB).

However, if an acronym is better understood by our audience than the words or phrase it abbreviates, we use the acronym on its own.

Example
• CERT NZ is also part of the GCSB.
• It was reported on the BBC.
• Go talk to the IT team.

We use both NZ and New Zealand in our content. When we're using NZ, it's 'an NZ law' not 'a NZ law'. This is because NZ is pronounced with a vowel sound — 'en zed'.

Some acronyms have a convention around how to capitalise the word. We will still use lowercase when spelling it out the first time as it's not a proper noun.

Example
• operational security (OPSEC).
• software as a service (SaaS).
• virtual private network (VPN).
• The Pacific Cyber Security Operational Network (PaCSON)

Apostrophes

Apostrophes have a few different functions, so ensure you're using them correctly.

To denote possession, add apostrophe + s ('s) to:

- the end of singular nouns, or
- the end of plural nouns that don't end in 's'.

> **Example**
>
> - If CERT NZ owns a computer, it is CERT NZ's computer.
> - The manager's office.
> - The business's printer.
> - The children's laptop.

Just add an apostrophe if the plural noun ends in s.

> **Example**
>
> - My three friends have a home network, it is my friends' home network.
> - The U5 countries' meeting.

Apostrophes are also used to show contractions in words.

> **Example**
>
> - It is → it's.
> - Do not → don't.
> - Let us → let's.

In some languages an apostrophe is used to denote a glottal stop. Ensure you are using it correctly if you are unfamiliar with the language.

> **Example**
>
> - The capital of Tonga is Nuku'alofa.
> - The southernmost US state is Hawai'i.

Don't use an apostrophe for the following.

- Making things plural —two directors, not two director's.
- Third-person possessives, such as whose, ours, yours, his, hers, theirs, its.
- Nouns that are plural but not possessive, such as CDs or 1960s.
- Any verbs, such as runs, sees, or finds.

Capitals

Use capitals for proper nouns (Aotearoa), acronyms (CERT) and initialisms (AI).

The only time we do anything different is if we're talking about a brand name, like RealMe.

Job titles generally don't use capitals, unless it is an acronym (CFO) or a singular title (for example, the Pope, the Prime Minister, or the Minister responsible for the Government Communications

Security Bureau).

We do not use capital letters for categories, including incident types.

Example
- You can report cyber security problems, large or small, to CERT NZ.   - We posted on LinkedIn.   - Acting manager of the Incident and Threat Response Team, Hadyn Green.   - We have a seen an increase in scam and fraud reports relating to IRD.

Note that 'government' is only capitalised when referring to the current elected Government. Regular government functions use lower case g.

Example
- CERT NZ received funding under the Government's initiative to lower cybercrime.   - CERT NZ is a government agency.

Commas

Commas separate clauses in sentences and items in lists. A good rule of thumb is to use a comma when the meaning of a sentence is unclear without it.

Use the Oxford comma *only* if it makes a list in a sentence easier to understand.

Example
"Let's eat Grandpa" compared to "Let's eat, Grandpa".   "I had dinner with my parents, David Attenborough and Cher" compared to "I had dinner with my parents, David Attenborough, and Cher."   - However, we had to reset the system.   - Ransomware and, to a lesser extent, DDoS attacks cause businesses major problems.

Contractions

Contractions (such as it's, aren't, you're, that's) can make your writing clearer and more conversational. However, avoid contractions involving 'have', like must've and could've.

## Documents, publications, products and references

Titles of publications or CERT NZ products (such as the Critical Controls) are written in title case. This is an Example of Title Case. We don't use title case when we're referring to a type of publication or product.

Example:

certnz

- The Chicago Manual of Style.

- Cyber Smart Week.

- CERT NZ's Critical Controls 2024 contains the latest critical controls for businesses to focus on.

- CERT NZ publishes a quarterly report known as Cyber Security Insights.

Tip

You can quickly change the case of highlighted text using this drop-down button in Word.
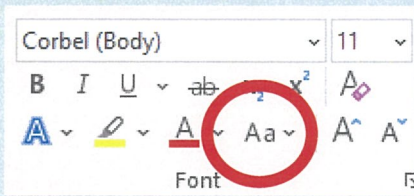
When we link to documents or publications, we:
- use the title of the document to create the link text,
- include information about the document's file type and size in square brackets at the end of the link, and
- round file sizes to one decimal point and use MB (not KB) for anything 1MB or bigger.

Example

- [Getting a Ship Into a Bottle [PDF 23.3MB]](#)

- [Taking That Ship Out Again [PDF 747KB]](#)

Referencing

In the instance where you need to officially reference another publication or document, follow the Chicago Manual of Style guide to citations.

Notes and Bibliography Style (chicagomanualofstyle.org)

Use either parenthetical or narrative citations (see example) in the body text. If you have a bibliography add the full citation there, otherwise, add the full citation in a footnote.

Example

- Parenthetical citations: (Green et al., 2019).

- Narrative citations: Green et al. (2025)

- Full citation: Green, H., Portman, N., & Erdös, P. (2025). Writing Style Guides Under Pressure. https://www.cert.govt.nz/link-to-the-document

---

When referencing legislation, include the name of the Act in title case with the year. When citing a

particular section use (s. XX), where XX is the section number. It's not essential, but you can add a link to the legislation as a footnote for more information.

New Zealand Legislation – a searchable database of New Zealand legislation.

> Example
>
> - The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 makes it clear that all employees must have training on the Act and understand their responsibility to improve safety in the workplace (s. 61).
>
> - Employers have a duty to provide a safe working environment for all employees (Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992, s. 6).

Using eg, ie and etc

We don't use any of these.
- e.g. or eg. – screen readers can read 'eg' as 'egg'.
- i.e. or ie. – is not often understood well by users
- etc – can usually be avoided.

Replace with appropriate phrases.
- For example.
- Such as.
- That is.

> Example
>
> - The risks for a business include a decrease in service availability. For example, your website might go down.

En dash and hyphens

En dash
En dash is a slightly longer hyphen – for a bit of trivia, it's the width of a capital N in the font you're using.

We use an en dash – with a space either side – to:
- separate thoughts in a sentence,
- show numerical ranges, and
- separate proper nouns of equal value.

We don't use an en dash when we're using the words 'between', 'to' and 'from' for a range.

> Example
>
> - Don't use generic passwords and logins — have a unique login for every user.
>
> - The New Zealand – Australia working group.
>
> - The survey respondents were in the 25 – 35 age group. They were usually online between 6pm and 7pm.

> **Tip**
>
> There are two ways to get an en dash using Word in Windows.
>
> - Pressing Control (ctrl) and the hyphen (-) on the number pad of your keyboard.
> - Typing two words separated by a hyphen should automatically change the hyphen to an en dash.

Hyphens

We sometimes hyphenate words to make sure their meaning is clear.

We only hyphenate the last word in lists of hyphenated adjectives.

Example

- '8-year-old children' clearly means children who are all aged 8.
- '8 year old children' could mean children who are all aged 8, or 8 children who are 1 year old.
- '3 or 4-year-olds' not '3- or 4-year-olds'.

Email addresses

We write our email addresses in full, in lower case, and link the entire address.

Example

- info@cert.govt.nz
- certmedia@cert.govt.nz

Note for external communications use generic emails, where possible, to contact CERT NZ. Do not give out the email (or phone number) of an individual CERT NZ team member, unless specifically agreed to.

Job titles

Titles should be written in the following format: [Organisation] [title] [name]. Refer to them by their surname after the first introduction. Refer to section on capitals for more info.

Do not use honorifics such as, 'Mr' or 'Ms', however, you must use official titles like 'Dr' or 'Admiral'.

Example

- CERT NZ director Rob Pope said that cyber security is a major issue for New Zealanders. "Our research shows more people need to be safe online," Pope said.

Links

Our links always open in the same browser window. Write descriptive links that tell you what you'll find when you follow them. Avoid using words like 'click here'.

We usually write links as words and not as full URLs. The exceptions to this are:

- if the content will be printed,

certnz ⟩

- if the link is inside a footnote, or
- in an email to someone affected by a cyber incident. (Refer to CERT NZ's Communications Framework for more information on this exception).
  Public communications for cyber security incidents: A framework for organisations | CERT NZ

Wherever possible, avoid embedding links in sentences, lists and headings. Put links directly below the sentence or list they refer to and don't use bullet points to format the links.

Keeping them separate also means that they're easy to click on all devices.

Example

- Adding another level of security with 2FA makes it harder for an attacker to access your online accounts — just knowing your password isn't enough. And, if you're running a business, 2FA can also help you keep your business systems and data safe.
  Implementing 2FA for business

Example URLs

If you need to use an example of a website or URL, only use sites and domains that are owned by CERT NZ or NCSC. You can also use example.com and example.org – these two domains have been set up for use by anyone as examples.

Lists

We use bulleted lists to list items or points, and numbered lists only for processes where the order of steps is important. Remember bullets are essentially a way to format – or emphasise – a list that would otherwise be a clumsy sentence.

We try to:

- keep our lists short (2–7 items),
- only use one level of nesting (where possible), and
- have a sentence introducing the list.

Bulleted lists

We use two types of bulleted lists — single-sentence lists and multi-sentence lists. Our preference is to use multi-sentence lists as they are easier to format and read.

Multi-sentence lists are introduced by a complete sentence.

- Each point in the list must have at least one complete sentence.
- Each point can be up to three sentences long. So, you can add more information if needed.
- Each point begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop.

When we're writing a single-sentence list, we:

- start with a 'stem sentence' that all the points have in common,
- start each point with a lower-case letter and end with a comma,
- check that each point makes a full sentence when read with the stem,
- add the word 'and' or 'or' on the second-to-last point after the comma, and
- only use a full stop on the last point.

Numbered lists

We use numbered lists for processes where steps need to be done in order. These are formatted like

certnz >

a multi-sentence list.

> **Example**
>
> 1. First, you do this.
> 2. You do this next.
> 3. To finish the process, you do this.

Nested lists

Nesting bullets is fine but keep it to one level. If your bullets use paragraphs, consider re-structuring.

If you need to, you can create paragraphs in bullets by pressing shift+enter, this will preserve the formatting but not add a bullet.

Numbers, money, dates and times

Numbers

When writing numbers in text, we use words to write the numbers one to nine and numerals for anything else, including decimals.

This also includes the ordinals 'first' to 'ninth'. Ordinals above this are written with the number and the suffix is not added as regular text, not superscript.

> **Example**
>
> - The second email was received.
> - The 10th time this year.

If a number is at the start of a sentence also write it as a word, however, it's better to try and rearrange the sentence. If you have more than one number in the same sentence they must all be written either as words or numbers.

In numbers over three digits, use a comma to separate thousands. This removes potential confusion with dates and make it easier to read. Separate phone numbers using spaces, not hyphens.

Use 'million' and 'billion' instead of writing out the number in full. After the first usage of the word use 'm' or 'b' as an abbreviation.

> **Example**
>
> - Twelve companies registered yesterday – three were from Wellington.
> - There were 8,572 reports of malware last year, 4 of them came from Fiordland.
> - You can call CERT on Freephone: 0800 CERT NZ (0800 2378 69) or +64 4 123 4567.
> - New Zealand has 5.1 million people, 1.5m of them live in Auckland.

Note: numbers are always written as numerals in tables and diagrams and to refer to specific sections within Acts, Bills and regulations.

Decimals and money

We round percentages to the nearest whole number where possible, as these are easier for people to scan.

We use numbers to two decimal points to show money (unless it's .oo), and one decimal point for figures in the millions. If you need to refer to a sum less than $1, write it as '$0.xx'.

> **Example**
>
> - Over 870 incident reports were received in the last 6 months, up 18%.
>
> - We saw $2.9 million in direct financial losses, which is roughly $0.57 per person in New Zealand.

Dates and times

Write dates as [date month year] or [day, date month year], and don't use ordinals (such as 1st or 3rd). Days and months are written in full, and the year must be four digits.

Write time using a 12-hour clock, stating 'am' or 'pm'. Separate hours and minutes with a colon. Write midnight and midday or noon as words. If you are writing a start and end time, add 'am' or 'pm' to both times.

When sending dates and times to international partners, always use New Zealand Time and denote it as such with NZT in brackets.

Separate year ranges using a slash. We use 'to' and 'and' instead of an en dash (–) in date and time ranges.

> **Example**
>
> - The partial eclipse will at 5:30pm on Tuesday, 11 December 2057 (NZT).
>
> - This happened in the 2022/23 financial year.
>
> - The survey will run from March to June.

Organisations

Organisations are always referred to in the singular rather than plural, including CERT NZ. This means use 'it' and 'its' not 'they' or 'theirs'. A group of organisations can be referred to as a plural.

> **Example**
>
> - The business protected its intellectual property.
>
> - The businesses protected their intellectual property.
>
> - The charity did everything it could after a DDoS attack.
>
> - The charities did everything they could after a DDoS attack.

Quotation marks

Use 'straight' quotation marks — not 'curly' quotation marks. You may have to turn this off in Word's auto-proofing options.

We use single quotation marks for:
- single words or short terms (especially jargon terms) when used the first time,
- short pieces inside another sentence, or

- nested quotes.

We use double quotation marks for:

- full quotes.

We don't use quotation marks around document or publication titles.

Full stops go inside the quote marks when the full sentence is encapsulated by the quote. They go outside when the quote is only part of the sentence. Commas are used inside the quote before writing the name of the quoted person.

Example

- "Password strength is something we take seriously here," said CERT NZ director Rob Pope. "As our Cyber Smart Week robot says, 'Upsize your passwords to make them harder to crack'."

- This messaging is all part of CERT NZ's campaign to 'get New Zealand to Cyber Up'.

- Keep an eye out for 'smishing', which is phishing via text message.

Starting sentences with 'And' or 'But'

This can be used to draw attention to an important point.

Example

- The attacker will assume that it's easier for you to pay the ransom than to get someone to fix the problem. But it's important to know that paying a ransom doesn't guarantee you'll get your data back.

This style should be used sparingly — and only if you're confident you know how to use it.

Symbols and currency

Symbols
We use:

- % — not 'percent' or 'per cent',
- & — only if it's part of a brand name, and
- KB for kilobyte, MB for megabyte, and GB for gigabyte.

If writing a word, or name, in a non-English language, ensure you are using the correct diacritical marks and other symbols.

Example

- Café.

- El Niño.

- Façade.

Currencies
If you're referring to New Zealand dollars write '$' only. Otherwise, put both the currency code and

currency symbol before any monetary amounts.

Example
• This scam asks you to pay $99 for a security check.
• The company lost AUD$890 to the cyber attackers.
• British citizens paid GBP£420,000 for the response to the cyber security incident.

Using 'that' in sentences

This word can creep in unnecessarily, making your writing sound clumsy. Sentences often make sense without it — read the sentence aloud without 'that' to check if you need to add it.

5.   Word list

These are specific words we use and our way of spelling or style them.

We default to New Zealand English over American English (for example, 'recognise' not 'recognize'). This also allows us to use localised idioms.

The fall back is the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) for English words and the Bishop Fox cyber security style guide for the technical words we use in our content.

Cybersecurity Style Guide V2.0 | Bishop Fox

Tip
Set your default dictionary to 'English (New Zealand)' in Word and other Office products.
You can also search for spelling using the Oxford English Dictionary online. Oxford English Dictionary (oed.com)

Te reo Māori words

Ensure all Māori words are spelled correctly, with correct macrons and capitalisation. For example:
- Māori,
- Whānau,
- ngā mihi,
- Pākehā, and
- tēnā koe.

Plurals in te reo Māori do not have 's' at the end. For example, 'we consulted many iwi' not 'iwis'. This includes using 'Kiwi' to refer to New Zealanders (see below).

Avoid using 'Māori' by itself to refer to the language. Similarly, the words 'te reo' are often used as shorthand for 'te reo Māori', however, be careful as it means 'the language' and could be ambiguous in some situations.

The *Te Aka Māori Dictionary* is a good online resource to check spelling.

- Māori Dictionary (maoridictionary.co.nz)

Tip
For macrons and spellchecking:

certnz ›

> Install the Māori keyboard and dictionary for Windows if you haven't already. You can swift between them by pressing Win+[space]. You will see the change as a pop-up on screen and in the bottom left corner a three-letter code will remind you which keyboard/dictionary combo you are using.
>
> Manage the input and display language settings in Windows - Microsoft Support
>
> After switching to Māori (MRI), you can type ` + [vowel] and get a macronised version of the letter.
>
> If you are using an Apple product (such as an iPhone), pressing and holding the letter on the keyboard will give you a full range of accents, including macrons.

We don't usually refer to technical terms using Māori, however, if you do then use Te Reo Hangarau (Ministry of Education, 2022).

New Zealand and New Zealanders

When we talk about the country, we use either:

- Aotearoa,
- New Zealand, or
- NZ.

We use them interchangeably, depending on what works best in the content. However, we never say 'Aotearoa New Zealand' – it's either one or the other.

When we talk about people, we use:

- New Zealanders,
- NZers, or
- Kiwi.

Again, we use whatever sounds best in the context of our content. If we use Kiwi to talk about people:

- it's always capitalised – Kiwi, not kiwi
- it's the same whether you're talking about one Kiwi or many Kiwi. We don't add an s to pluralise it as Kiwi is a Māori word, and te reo doesn't use an s to show plural.

We use Kiwi as it's conversational and informal, and it's inclusive – anyone for whom Aotearoa is home can be considered a Kiwi.

Word list

This is a list of specific words we use, clarifying how we use and spell them. (Note this list is written using lower case to emphasise any capitalisation).

- attacker – an aggressive term we only use if there is an actual attack involved (for example, a romance scam is not an attack).

- back up (*verb*) – when you're talking about the act of backing up your computer, for example "Don't forget to back up your computer regularly".

- backup (*noun*) – when you're talking about the data created when you back up your computer, for example "Store your backup on an external drive".

- Bluetooth – capital B for a registered trademark.

- bring-your-own-device, not Bring Your Own Device – can be shortened to BYOD.

- CERT NZ, not CERT or CERTNZ.

certnz

- COVID-19 or COVID, not Covid.
- Cryptocurrency – not crypto currency.
- cyber security – not cybersecurity.
- cybercrime and cybercriminal – not cyber crime.
- device or mobile device – to refer to laptops, computers, phones, and tablets.
- denial of service (*noun*) and denial-of-service (*adj.*) – stylised as DoS after first usage in both cases.
- distributed denial-of-service – stylised as DDoS after first usage.
- end-of-life or end-of-support.
- log in (*verb*) – for the act of logging into an account online.
- login (*noun*) – for the details you use to log in to an account online.
- multi-factor – not multi factor or multifactor.
- one-time password.
- read only – not read-only.
- scammer – only for situations where there is a scam (for example, DDoS is not a scam).
- Smartphone – not smart phone or cell phone.
- software as a service (*noun*) and software-as-a-service (*adj.*) – stylised as SaaS after first usage in both cases.
- two-factor – not two factor.
- username – not user name.
- WiFi – not wifi or Wifi. Wi-Fi is a registered trademark but only use this styling if referring to the Wi-Fi Alliance or its products.

Words we don't use.

This is a list of specific words we **do not** use, as they go against our voice and tone.

- Cyber – on its own doesn't mean anything specific and it is also an old slang term for 'sexting'. Cyber can also be dropped from most contexts if it's already implicit.

Example
- Cyber security expert not Cyber expert
- CERT NZ and NCSC are aware of a new cyber security threat.

- Investing – when talking about cryptocurrency or other decentralised finance products. Specifically, CERT NZ can't imply that buying these products is an investment.
- Please – 'please call', 'please email' should be 'call' or 'email'.
- Utilise – this sounds more official, but 'use' is better, shorter and clearer.
- Victim – can be harmful language. Use 'target' or 'person affected by'.

- Vector – when you're talking about the origin of a cyber attack.

Technical terms with multiple variations.

Multi-factor authentication vs two-factor authentication.
Multi-factor authentication (MFA) is a catch-all term that includes two-factor authentication (2FA). Our default is to refer to 2FA rather than MFA, unless the audience is technical then we can use either.

Online platforms use varying versions with 'verification' instead of 'authentication' or 'step' instead of 'factor'.

Patching vs updating.
Patches and updates are technically the same thing. In general, we refer to updates as regular releases, while patches are released in response to a particular issue. However when writing an advisory, to avoid confusion, use the same terminology as the software vendor.

Certain audiences can be confused by 'updating' when it refers to physical devices. 'Update' can be read as needing to buy a new device. Ensure the sentence is written to remove that ambiguity.

Example

- Update your phone to the latest software.

- Palo Alto has released a new patch to fix a vulnerability.