California Energy Commission

STAFF REPORT

Style Manual Addendum: 2017

Condensed Style Guide for California Energy Commission Reports

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DISCLAIMER

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ABSTRACT

This style guide is an addendum of the 2015 Commission Style Manual, to which it frequently refers. This guide is an abbreviated edition for ease of use.

Staff members and consultants should use the 2015 manual for:

- Commission reports.
- Lead Commissioner reports.
- Staff reports.
- Staff papers.
- Guidebooks.
- Consultant reports.
- Alternative and Renewable Fuel and Vehicle Transportation Program (ARFVTP) project reports.
- Energy Research and Development Division project reports (including natural gas research and the Electric Program Investment Charge [EPIC] Program).

This guide also features the top 10 common writing errors found in Energy Commission reports and expands on the use of references in Commission documents.

If you have questions about the information provided in this guide and the style manual, please phone the Energy Commission’s Media and Public Communications Office at (916) 654-4989.

Keywords: California Energy Commission, plain language, usage, executive summary, abstract, glossary

Please use the following citation for this report:

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CHAPTER 1: Templates and Styles

Report Templates
When writing the report, please use the Commission-approved format template for the type of document you are preparing. The style template and boilerplate cover and credits page templates for Commission reports, Lead Commissioner reports, staff reports, and staff papers are on the Energy Commission “EnergyNet” intranet website at: 


These templates are not public. They are for Energy Commission staff use.

Templates for consultant reports and final project reports for the Alternative and Renewable Fuel and Vehicle Technology Program are on the public Energy Commission main website at:

http://www.energy.ca.gov/contracts/consultant_reports/index.html.

Template for final Energy Research and Development Division final project reports may be found here: http://www.energy.ca.gov/contracts/pier/contractors/.

Staff members: If you need help formatting your report, please use the step-by-step instructions on EnergyNet at:


Other types of reports, such as guidebooks, instructions, manuals, preliminary and final staff analysis or assessments (of power plant licensing cases, presiding member proposed decisions of power plant licensing cases, and regulations, use the standard Commission staff report cover template. Change the “type” of report on the front cover to the applicable type.

The cover and credits page for each type of report differ. Use the correct template for the type of report.

Spell out abbreviations or acronyms in report titles.

Report Formatting Styles
Table 1 lists a summary of typeface styles for Energy Commission reports. (For this document, “reports” includes staff reports, staff papers, Lead Commissioner reports, Commission reports, Alternative Fuel and Renewable Vehicle Technology Program and Electric Program Investment Charge Program project reports, guidelines, and standards.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Summary of Formatting Styles for Energy Commission Reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body (Normal) Text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bullets (regular and numbered)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acknowledgments, Preface, Abstract, Table of Contents, List of Tables, List of Figures heading</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heading 1 (Chapter Titles)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Use shift + enter to create the next line in the chapter title.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heading 2 (Subheading)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heading 3 (Sub-subheading. Please use as subheading for executive summary heading.)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heading 4 (sub-sub-subheading. Please use as sub-subheading for executive summary.)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heading 5 (Sub-sub-sub-subheading. Use very sparingly.)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure and Table Titles</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caption Text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credits for Photos and Source Information</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Footnotes**                                                 | The footnote number is superscript at Lucida Bright 12 pt.⁵. At the bottom of the page it appears like this:  
5 California Energy Commission |

Source: California Energy Commission, Media and Public Communications Office

The detailed formatting style matrix is on pages 12 through 21 of the 2015 Commission Style Manual.
CHAPTER 2: Publication Steps for Papers and Reports

Reports and Papers

A table outlining the report and paper creation, review, and publication steps can be found on page 22 of the 2015 Commission Style Manual. The latest version of the Publication Approval Form (CEC Form 5) is available on the Commission “EnergyNet” intranet at:


Figure 1: CEC-5 Publication Approval Form Screen Shot

Source: California Energy Commission
CHAPTER 3:
Parts, Contents, and General Formatting of
Energy Commission Reports

Report Sections
Energy Commission reports contain the following sections, in the following order:

- Cover page (required)
- Credits page (required) with legal disclaimer (mandatory on lead commissioner and staff reports) on the reverse side of cover
- Acknowledgements page (acknowledgements are optional)
- Preface (optional)
- Abstract, keywords, and citation page (required)
- Table of contents (required, followed by list of figures and list of tables, if needed)
- Executive summary (optional but required on policy documents, consultant reports, and research and development [R&D] and Alternative and Renewable Fuel and Vehicle Technology Program [ARFVTP] project reports.)
- Body of the report
- References (if applicable)
- Appendices (if applicable) (Create a separate volume if very large.)
- Attachments (if applicable)

Information on the cover and credits pages of staff, lead commissioner, and commission reports may be found on pages 27-33 of the style manual. Information on other types of Commission reports, including guidebooks, manuals, staff analyses and assessments, and presiding member proposed decisions, may be found on page 33.

Other Report Sections
If there is an acknowledgements page, numbering begins on this page with lowercase Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, and so forth.)

The preface, which is also optional, comes after the credits page and acknowledgements (if used) and before the abstract page. If there is no acknowledgements page, numbering begins on this page with lowercase Roman numerals.

The abstract page, which includes the abstract, keywords, and citation, is mandatory for all reports. The abstract, which is a concise, informative summary of the report, should be no more than 300 words – about a half page, single-spaced. It should address the
report purpose, scope methods, and major findings, including the report results, conclusions, and recommendations.

The abstract page must contain five or more keywords that will help search engines and other databases find the report subject matter. The keywords are spaced about five lines below the end of the abstract.

The mandatory citation goes below the keywords on the abstract page (pages 35-38 of the style manual).

The table of contents goes on a separate page after the abstract page. To generate a table of contents, place the insertion point in your document where you want the table of contents to appear. Click the References tab. Click Table of Contents. The Table of Contents gallery appears. Click a table of contents layout.¹

Update the table of contents, list of figures, and list of tables after all editing has been completed. Proofread to ensure that the entries are complete and correct. Appendix and attachment listings must be entered by hand.

The executive summary is a final report in miniature, containing all the key information. It should be no longer than 10 pages and use “plain language.” Assume a nontechnical readership, including ratepayers, journalists, and legislators and their staffs.

The executive summary must not repeat the abstract. Do not cite references in the executive summary. If you must use acronyms or abbreviations in the executive summary, limit use to those listed on pages 55 and 56 of the style manual.

The first page of the executive summary will always be page 1 (Arabic numbering) of the report (page 41 of the style manual).

CHAPTER 1 always begins on an odd-numbered, right-hand-facing page. Other chapters may begin on an odd- or even-numbered page. The chapter title goes at the top of the page.

Only R&D and ARFVTP project reports may use scientific or technical section numbering.

The Media and Public Communications Office Editing Unit recommends preparing a report outline before writing the report. The outline will determine the headings, subheadings, and sub-subheadings used.

The references section at the end of the report must list all documents cited in the body of the report (page 42 of the style manual).

If a report uses 10 or more acronyms and abbreviations, please include a **glossary** with definitions for each. Use the Microsoft Word table feature to create a three-column format with the acronym or abbreviation in one column, the spelled-out word in the second column, and the definition in the final column.²

The **bibliography**, which is optional, includes references used in preparing the report that were not cited in the report.

An **appendix** is supplementary material that is usually produced by the report author(s). Designate appendices by capital letters (Appendix A, Appendix B, and so forth. The pages should be numbered according to the letter of the appendix (A-1, A-2, A-3, and so forth) (**pages 44 and 45 of the style manual**).

**Attachments** are supporting documents that usually were not written by the author of the main report. An attachment may also be supplementary material that may not relate directly to the report. Attachments are designated with Roman numerals rather than letters (Attachment I, Attachment II, and so forth) (**page 50 of the style manual**).

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² For example, use this format: Btu – British thermal unit – the standard measure of heat energy. It takes 1 Btu to raise the temperature of 1 pound of water by 1 degree Fahrenheit at sea level.
CHAPTER 4:
Rules for Good Writing and
Report Content Styles

Writing Style
The Energy Commission style manual and addendum are based primarily upon the
following books and guides:

  http://www.eia.gov/about/eiawritingstyleguide.pdf.

Report Errors to Avoid

1. **Passive vs. Active Voice**

   **Strive** for the active voice. In active-voice sentences, the subject does the action of the
   verb. In passive-voice sentences, the target of the action is moved to the subject
   position.³

   PASSIVE VOICE: New storage facilities are built by the petroleum industry.

   ACTIVE VOICE: The petroleum industry builds new storage facilities.

   The Energy Commission Editing Unit allows the passive voice *sparingly* for these
   purposes:

   - To emphasize the object of the action, not the doer.
     - Example: The forecasted Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS)
       procurement targets *may be adjusted* to reflect specific RPS provisions,
       such as voluntary green pricing programs or qualifying hydroelectric
       generation.

at www.eia.gov/eiawritingstyleguide.pdf.
• When the subject of the sentence (the doer) is unimportant or unknown.
  ○ The Southern California Gas Company/San Diego Gas & Electric Company natural gas system is divided into 10 new geographic end-use transportation curtailment zones known as “local service areas.”
• To structure a headline, blurb, or lead sentence, place key words at the beginning.

2. Subject-Verb Agreement
Most writers know that singular nouns go with singular verbs and plural nouns go with plural verbs. But if the noun is a collective noun like “staff,” use a singular verb. For plural nouns like “savings,” use a plural verb.

3. Avoiding Jargon
Avoid using jargon in Energy Commission documents. The audience of your document may not understand technical terms. If you must use jargon, immediately explain what it means. Use a footnote to explain the term if the definition is long.

4. Acronyms and Abbreviations
Spell out a term before using an acronym or abbreviation. The use of acronyms should benefit the reader. Do not make up acronyms.

5. Needless Capitalization
Do not capitalize words to make them stand out in text, such as, “The Department offered its services.” The word “department” in this context is lower case. Just because acronyms and abbreviations are capitalized does not mean you must capitalize the terms when they are written out.

6. Long Sentences
Shorter sentences are easier to read. Aim for a maximum of 20 to 30 words. Consider breaking a long sentence into two shorter sentences or eliminating unnecessary words.4

7. Unnecessary Words
Pages 66 through 74 of the 2015 Commission Style Manual list terms that can be substituted for more reader-friendly ones. The Media and Public Communications Office

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Editing Unit recommends *To the Point: A Dictionary of Concise Writing* by Robert Hartwell Fiske to cut the clutter in writing.

The 2015 *EIA Writing Style Guide* also lists bureaucratic or clichéd words and simpler counterparts.

8. **Misplaced Modifiers**
When a modifier has no clear relationship with the “headword” – the word or word group it describes – it is said to be *misplaced*. Misplaced modifiers can provide unintended interpretations. Place modifiers as close as possible to the word or words they are intended to modify.5

Wrong: The Mohave ground squirrel *only resides* in portions of the Mojave Desert in Southern California.

Right: The Mohave ground squirrel resides *only in portions of the Mojave Desert* in Southern California.

In the first sentence, “only” modifies “resides.” In the second sentence, “only” modifies “in portions of the Mojave Desert.”

9. **Who Is Your Audience?**
When writing reports, consider who may read them. According to the Literacy Project Foundation website,6 50 percent of adults cannot read a book written at an eighth-grade level, and 44 percent of American adults do not read a book in a year. The reader immediately understands plain language.

10. **When Not to Use the Colon**
A common mistake in government documents is using a colon between a verb or a preposition and the direct object.

Wrong: The workshop covered: demand response; existing buildings, industrial, agriculture, and water issues; and market facilitation.

Right: The workshop covered demand response; existing buildings, industrial, agriculture, and water issues; and market facilitation.

Avoid using a colon between a verb or a preposition and the direct object unless the object appears on a separate line.7


**Acronyms and Abbreviations**  
See pages 54-56 of the style manual.

A few quick reminders:

- Unless used within a publication number or a graphic, do not use the abbreviation “CEC” in reports or other written materials. Use “Energy Commission” on subsequent references.
- Don’t make up acronyms.
- Introduce acronyms by first using the full term, followed by the acronym in parentheses.

**Bulleted Lists**  
See pages 57 and 58. If a bulleted item completes a sentence, use a period, not a comma or a semicolon, at the end of the item. Don’t use “and” for the next-to-last bulleted item.

**Capitalization**  
Do *not* capitalize words to emphasize them in a text. Capitalization *should* be reserved for proper nouns, which are names of *specific* persons, places, things, or events.

Because acronyms and abbreviations are most often capitalized does not mean that you must capitalize the terms when they are written out.

For more information, see pages 58 and 59.

**Adjective Phrases and Adverbs**  
See page 59.

**Commonly Misused Words**  
See pages 66-74.

**Compound Adjectives**  
See page 59.

**Internet and Email Addresses**  
Note: *Email* in Energy Commission documents should be spelled without a hyphen.

**Italics**  
Please italicize, not underline, titles of books and reports.

**Language of Report**  
See page 60. When writing the report, use American, not British, English.
Legislation

See pages 60 and 61. When referencing state legislation for the first time, use the following format:

Bill number (Author, Chapter number, Statutes of “year”)

Examples: Senate Bill 350 (De León, Chapter 547, Statutes of 2015); Assembly Bill 32 (Núñez, Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006)

Numbers

Use numerals for numbers 10 and above. Spell out all numbers one through nine except when identifying:

- Percentages (2 percent).
- Dates (June 2, 2017).
- Page numbers (page 6).
- Chapter numbers (Chapter 4).
- Energy increments (1 megawatt, 9 kilowatt-hours).
- Sentences that include a list of identical items, some of which are fewer than 10 and some are more: “We ran 2 trials in April, 5 in May, and 14 in June.”
- Table and figure numbers (Table 4, Figure 6).

See pages 61 and 62 for more information.

Percentages

Always spell out the word “percentage” instead of using the % symbol, except when used in a chart or graph. (See page 62.)

Punctuation

Use brackets for parenthetical material within parentheses or within a quote.

Use a single space after a colon, a semicolon, a comma, and a period.

Use quotation marks around titles of chapters, sections, article titles, or a coined word or phrase.

See pages 63 and 64 for details.
References Within the Report Body

When referencing a report, book, or other document within the body of the report, use the following format, which borrows from *The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th Edition.*

Report with a single author:


Report with multiple authors: