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1. Introduction to the Guide

1.1 Purpose

The National Government Services Portal (NGSP) of India is designed to meet the needs of Indian citizens and residents. It enables a single window access to services provided by the various Indian Government entities (central and state governments) and provides information about the work of the government. It also provides information for the foreign nationals looking to visit or live in India.

The portal has been built to make interacting with government as simple and quick as possible. It is regularly being updated and improved to meet user needs. The National Government Services Portal of India is for services, information and guidance regarding public services provided at the levels of central, state, city and panchayat to the citizens and residents.

This document is designed to assist all designated NGSP Nodal officers and Contributors to publish a new service for the public through the NGSP¹. It helps department officers to decide which services should go on the portal and how they should be organised. It also helps to structure the title, description and keywords of the service making it simple and easy to discover by citizens. This guide is based on the learning from good practices followed by the leading countries of the world, with contextualization of these practices for Indian context.

1.2 How to Use

This guide contains a variety of information and instructions necessary for successfully publishing a new service on the NGSP. The content is based on a mix of International best practice and **services.india.gov.in** knowledge. It is divided into five sections as described below:

- ❓ **Introduction to the Guide** – introduces the document and outlines its main sections.
- ❓ **The Services Portal** – provides information on the selection criteria and steps that should be followed before publishing a new service.
- ❓ **Portal Organisation** – presents services taxonomy and its preferred location on the portal. It also provides help and guidance in case of any doubts in placing the service.
- ❓ **How to Publish a Service** – gives detailed description on how to create a new service. It provides a set of recommendations on how to write a good title and description illustrated with examples. It also describes how to enter the descriptive metadata and how to choose appropriate tags. A list of sample keywords for each subcategory is provided.
- ❓ **Appendix A: Style Guide** – covers style, spelling and grammar conventions for all content published on the portal, arranged alphabetically.

¹ www.services.india.gov.in

2. The Services Portal

2.1 Steps Before Publishing Services on the Portal

A service, or information, should only be included on the services portal if there is a clear, evidence-based user need for it. Without knowing what users are looking for, it is not possible to build the right service. Identifying user needs therefore means working out what individuals or businesses visiting the portal need and expect from government service – not what government thinks is right for them.

People use a government service to either fill a knowledge gap, avail of a service or benefit or complete a specific task, such as register to vote, submit an online form, lodge a complaint or request more information. To know which service people want to see and use on the portal it is important to first understand:

- (a) who the users are (and aren't);
- (b) what information they are looking for and why;
- (c) what task(s) they are trying to do and why;
- (d) what problems users may encounter in (b) and (c); and
- (e) what factors may have an influence on (d) – are they government-related or part of user's life?

Research thus plays a key role in delivering services that people want and need, and so must be carried throughout the development stage of a service. Special attention must be paid to those users with the lowest level of digital access, skills and literacy. A mix of research techniques can be used to get information about user needs. These include:

- desk research involving the analysis of available data and findings, for example from published reports, analytics, call centre data and complaints database
- interviews with end users
- focus group discussions with end users
- paper based and online questionnaires
- interactions with people who deal with end users interactions with third parties that manage, in one way or another, any aspect of the service delivery

Any opinions or suggested needs not coming from end users themselves should be treated as assumptions that have yet to be proven. Team members, colleagues from other departments, service providers and other third party representatives may have theories about what users want and need, but these can only be validated by doing research with end users directly. Note that citizen engagement has now been mandated by government of India as a compulsory component of all service delivery projects. Latest guidelines on citizen engagement may be accessed from the website of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeiTY).²

² Approved Framework for Citizen Engagement in e-Governance. Source;
http://meity.gov.in/sites/upload_files/dit/files/Approved%20Framework%20for%20Citizen%20Engagement%20in%20N eGP_0.pdf

2.2 What Should Be Included on the Portal

Taking into account user needs, service managers should also consider several other things before publishing a service on NGSP. If at least one of the following requirements is met, a service can be advertised on the government portal.

What you are about to publish concerns	
<p>Government service</p> <p><i>Something that is done or provided only by the government, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applying for a scholarship through national scholarship portal • applying for Indian visa • applying for Indian passport 	✓
<p>Government interaction with citizens</p> <p><i>Activities or information that increase government's transparency and help it become more responsive to citizens, including by clearly explaining policies, procedures and legal obligations, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • government spending • management structure • service A-Z • government blog • Ministry specific instance of MyGov for citizen interaction³ 	✓
<p>Legal duties of citizens and legal entities</p> <p><i>Services that help people and businesses meet their obligations to government, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • registering for Adhaar Card • VAT registration for commercial entities • paying excise, duty and service taxes • applying for Director Identification Number • registering as dealer with Trade and Taxes Department 	✓
<p>Policies and regulations</p> <p><i>Time-sensitive policies, regulations and related information for professionals and specialists, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment protection policies • Procurement guidelines • rules on skills development and make in India policies • historical tax rates e.g. income, corporate, sales, social, GST etc. 	✓

³ www.mygov.in

<p>Support schemes</p> <p><i>Information and services that help people find and access support schemes funded by government, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educational scholarships provided by central government • LPG Subsidy 	✓
<p>Awareness building</p> <p><i>Something that supports government campaigns aimed at raising awareness about important issues, for example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting organ donation • Benefits of cashless transactions 	✓

Table 1: What Should be Included on the National Services Portal

2.3 What Should Not Be Included on the Portal

What you are about to publish	
Is too general to be of much use for people, businesses or specialists	X
Has a commercial purpose	X
Is meant for internal use by civil servants, such as services workflow	X
Is information or services that can be better supplied by organisations outside government	X
Is legislation available at indiacode.nic.in	X
Concerns organisations and companies that are not publicly owned	X

Table 2: What Should Not be Included on the National Services Portal

3. Portal Organisation

3.1 Services Taxonomy

The Services Taxonomy for the NGSP is built up of three layers:

1. Service Categories

These are the categories that users will see when they visit the Home page of the NGSP.



Figure 1: Service Categories on the National Services Portal

2. Sub Categories

These are the service area choices a citizen will see when they select a service category from the Home Page. When selecting a sub-category a user will be presented with a list of A-Z services.

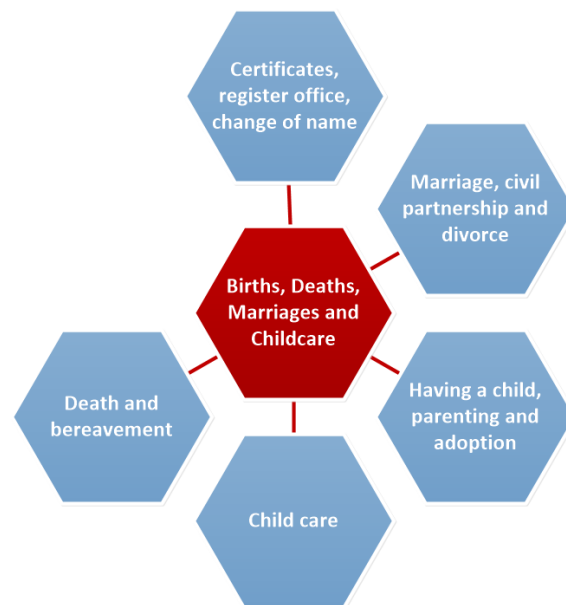


Figure 2: Sub-categories (in blue) for the Births, Marriages, Deaths and Childcare Service category

3. Filter Categories

These are only used where the list of services in the sub-categories will causing too much scrolling for the end-user. When selecting a filter category the user will be directed to a shorter list of services.

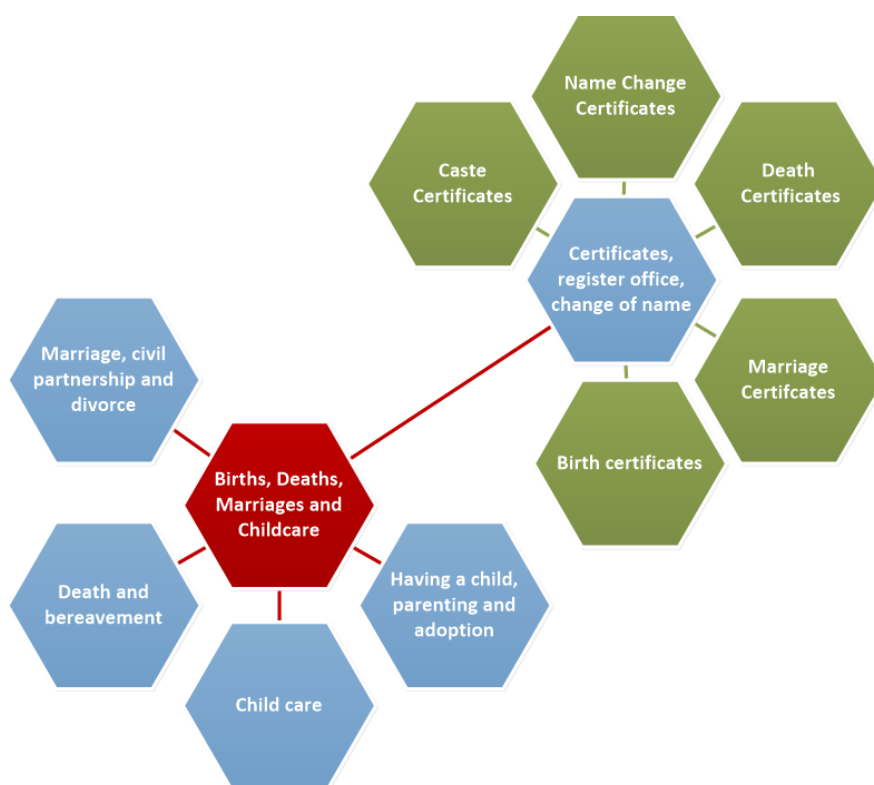


Figure 3: Filter categories (in green) for the Certificates sub-category

A full list of service categories and sub-categories can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 Providing Service's

As the service categories have been developed according to user needs, rather than by government department, it is expected that States/UTs/Gol Ministries will have services that will fall into a range of categories.

4. How to Publish a Service

4.1 Requesting Access to Publish a Service

The NGSP is designed, developed and maintained by National Informatics Centre (NIC). However, NIC is not responsible for providing services to the citizens. The services are owned, maintained and modified by respective States/UTs and Gol line ministries/departments who are the owners of these services. It is important to note that this guide book is about listing the published online services by the designated Nodal Officers and Contributors onto the national government services portal. The States/UTs/line departments may or may not need to change the design of their individual portals. However, each State/UT/Gol ministry/department is encouraged to publish as many services as possible on the NGSP. To do this, the following process needs to be followed:

- Send an official communication to NIC for sharing a user ID and password on services.gov.in for your State/UT/Gol ministry/department. The communication can be sent by the designated State/UT/Gol ministry/department contributor/s who are responsible for appending services to NGSP.
- The designated contributors are provided the required training as Master Trainer who in turn are required to provide training to other designated contributor/s from the State/UT/Gol ministry/department. The contributor may also seek training support from DARPG designated UNDP Consultants.
- Nodal/Contributor can use the process described in this guide along with the “NGSP- Guide for content creators_NIC_V1” to create services description and append the services on national services portal.

4.2 How to Write a Good Service Title and Description

A good title and description allow people to quickly and easily find the service or information available from the government. It helps to improve the quality of the user experience and changes the perception of how government talks to its citizens.

Duplicate content produces poor search results, confuses the user and damages the credibility of **services.India.Gov.in** as a brand. Users end up using offline channels, like calling a helpline, because they aren't sure they have all the information or the right information.

Writing great content clearly, in plain English, and optimised for the web helps people understand and find the information they need quickly and easily.

As government, we must ensure that **services.India.Gov.in** is accessible to anybody who is interested enough to look. Note that Service users have different reading abilities and check **services.India.Gov.in** on a range of devices. That means that we need to write plainly, clearly and directly, using the guidance in this chapter and the Style Guide in Appendix A.

As many people start with a search engine, use the same vocabulary as your audience so they can find your service. This starts with a good title and description.

How to write a title?

Think about how the title will look in search on **services.India.Gov.in** and on search engines.

1. **Keep all titles to 65 characters or less** (including spaces). This is because search engines truncate (cut off) titles in Google search results over that number. Words or parts of words will be cut off so don't go past this limit.
2. **Make sure your title is unique.** It's not helpful for people if search results show a list of pages with the exact same title. If there are several pages with a repeated phrase in the title (e.g. 'Import and export regulations for the automotive sector', 'Import and export regulations for the chemical

sector') change the title so that the most important area is front-loaded, e.g. 'Automotive sector: import and export regulations' or 'Chemical sector: import and export regulations'. This is more descriptive and useful for search.

3. **Titles should be clear and descriptive.** The title should provide full context so that people can easily see if they've found what they're looking for, e.g. 'Guidance for potato growers', not 'Potatoes'.
4. **Front-load your titles.** The most important information and the words the user is mostly likely to have searched should be at the beginning of the search result.
5. **Make titles active where possible** - avoid gerunds and participles e.g. 'Submit Statutory Declarations' not 'Using and submitting Statutory Declarations'.
6. If you need to use a separator to break up long title, **use a colon** (it helps users to scan). E.g. 'Planning appeal procedures: technical review' works better than 'Technical review of planning appeal procedures'.
7. **Only use an acronym** in the title **if it is a commonly used** search term (like DARPG).
8. **Avoid puns or wordplay** since these can make the content difficult to find.

Good example: Banking Ombudsman Reserve Bank of India: complaints

Bad example: Lodge complaint with Banking Ombudsman of RBI

Good example: Pension Fund Haryana Govt: check final payments

Bad example: Check status of final payment of government pension fund of Haryana Govt employees

Good example: Indian Currency Banknotes: check security features

Bad example: Check security features of Indian Currency Banknotes

How to write a description?

Along with the title, the description is usually what users see in search results. Make sure people can see quickly whether this page will have the information they want.

1. **Keep summaries where possible to 140 characters** (including spaces) as Google only shows 140 characters for the summary. Make sure you cover the main point of the page in the first 140 characters of the summary.
2. **Summaries must end with a full stop.** This is for people who use assistive technology like screen readers.
3. **Keep summaries active and include a verb.**

4. **Include keywords** - especially ones you haven't included in the page title
5. **Use plain English** (no require, obtain etc.) - write with words that you use every day.
6. **Only use acronyms if they are very common**, e.g. GoI, NIC, CDAC, PMO etc.
7. **Lower case** - use lower case as much as possible as it speeds up comprehension and speed of reading.

Good example Check the security features and design of each of the Reserve Bank of India notes. Protect yourself against the fake currency. Learn about differences between real and fake banknotes. (182 including spaces)

This summary follows all the rules. It is short and within the character's limits. It finishes with a full stop and is built of active verbs such as check, protect, learn. It includes relevant keywords such as security features, Reserve Bank of India, notes, fake currency, real / fake banknotes.

Bad example: The Reserve Bank of India has provided this online facility for users to check the security features of Indian currency banknotes online. There are images of Rs. 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1000 banknotes, one needs to just click on the note to find out the security features to identify fake currency. Detailed information is provided for users to identify differences between real and fake banknotes. (399 including spaces)

This description is too long, 400 characters. Sentences are complex and very long. Passive voice and different tenses are used instead of simpler active verbs. There is plenty of unnecessary information such as denominations of banknotes whereas keywords are missing.

Writing a good title and the description take time and a lot of practice. But the reward is a portal that is **simpler, clearer and faster** for both government and citizens to use.

4.3 Migrating Your Service (Structural Metadata)

Each Ministry should have a representative who will migrate your service(s) to the National Services Portal. This will involve entering information into a back-office system. The data fields you will be expected to fill will form the metadata (description) for the service. The actions include:

- Choose **Service Category** – see appendix B
- Choose **Service Sub-category** – see appendix B
- Enter Service **Title** – follow instructions in chapter 4.2
- Enter Service **URL** – ensure it is for the exact service page the user will need
- Enter Service **Description** – follow instructions in chapter 4.2
- Enter **Keywords** – very important so read chapter 4.4 below
- Choose **Topic** – you will be provided with a choice, choose the one that best aligns

- Choose **Category** – you will be provided with a choice, choose the one that best aligns
- Choose **Audience** – Choose all
- Choose **Service Maturity** – basically is the service informational or online (i.e. transactional)
- Choose **Coverage** – is it State provided or National
- Enter **Coverage State** – if provide by State, which one
- Choose **Owner Type** – choose from choice provided
- Enter **Ministry** – which Ministry is responsible
- Enter **State Department** – which State Department (if any) is responsible

4.4 Choosing Appropriate Keyword Tags (Descriptive Metadata)

Descriptive metadata is another term for keywords or tags that describe a service. These tags are important because they improve service’s discoverability on both the portal and the world-wide web, and so should resonate between the title and description of a service. Successful service discoverability means that users can find what they are looking for faster by simply including the right keywords in a search query. It is therefore important to ensure that each individual service is rich with relevant keywords. The table below provides some examples of descriptive metadata that could be used to describe services in different second level categories (service groups).

India Service Categories	Sub-Categories	Example Keywords
Education and learning	Early childhood	Schools, secondary education, primary school, elementary education
	Universities and higher education	University, higher education, college, institute, academic degree, undergraduate, postgraduate, bachelor’s master’s
	Scholarships and student finance	Student finance, student loan, educational scholarships, grants, fellowships, awards, funds, funding, pay fees
	Skills Development and training	On the job training, courses, job skills, apprenticeships
	Education and training grants	Financial assistance, training grants, student educational funding, bursaries, financial help
	Resources for schools	National repository, open educational resources, lesson plans, free educational material, school books textbooks, syllabus, curriculum
Health and Wellness	Children’s health and immunisation	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Disease and conditions	Obesity, fat, overweight, fertility, conceiving, periods, getting pregnant, trying for a baby, hearing tests, deaf, deafness

	Health care providers and access	Central Government Health Scheme, health services, health portal, healthcare, health card, hospitals, nursing homes, doctors, blood donation, medical council, sex selection
	Medicine and health products	Medicines, drugs, vaccinations, travelling abroad, immunisation, pharmacy, chemistry, drug store,
	Mental health	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
Electricity, Water and Local Services	Electricity	Electricity bill, pay for energy, bill payment
	Water	Water bill, pay for water, bill payment
	Local services	Local services, local administration, community services, community centres, halls, local housing, common spaces, parks
Money and Taxes	Banking and money	Bank, Bank of India, banking, Reserve Bank of India, money, bank account, financial services, loans
	Financial regulation	Ministry of Finance, expenditure reports, electronic clearance scheme, financial corporation, treasury
	Insurance	Insurance, policy, life insurance, life cover
	Income Tax	e-Pay tax, online tax payment, pay income tax, income certificate, tax refund, tax return, tax credit, tax deductions, tax deduction account number TAN, permanent account number PAN, annual return, tax liability calculator
	VAT	VAT registration, VAT verification, VAT payment, e-filing VAT, fill your VAT, Tax identification number, professional tax calculation, sales tax, commercial tax
	Court claims, debt and bankruptcy	Debt, bankruptcy, owing money, no money to repay debts
Jobs	Career information	Career, career advice, career guidance, what job, types of career, training
	Employment services and jobs	Job seeking, job vacancies, job centre, job portal, career centres, where to find a job, career counselling placement, recruitment
	Information for employers	Hiring staff, employees, being employer, training, labour, recruitment, recruiting people, Employees Provident Fund Organisation, Establishments Registry

	Retirement	Retirement, Government Pension Fund, Pensions
Justice and Law	Reporting crimes and getting compensation	Crime, report, complaint, women abuse, missing child, police, police stations, getting help, emergency services, corruption, fraud, terrorism, dead, death, accident, stolen car
	Your rights and the law	Grievance, complain, complaint, feedback, supreme court, case, national commission, appeal, corruption, women abuse, victim, arms licence
	Courts, sentencing and tribunals	Case, decision, appeal, complaint, sentence, tribunal, information, commissioner, hearing, law, lawyer, armed force, judge, order, petition,
	Prisons and probation	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Young people and the law	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Online safety	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
Travel and Tourism	Tourism in India	Travel agents, tourism, travelling, holidays, vacations, accommodation, tourist transport operators, hotels, where on holidays, how to book hotel, visit India, where to eat, where to stay
	Embassies and consulates	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Customs and quarantine	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Travel abroad	Air India, Travel information, Flight schedule, Airlines, Plane Tickets, Flying
Business and Self-employed	Setting up	Registration, entrepreneur, investment, sale, company, VAT, business
	Employee management	Contractor, rights, law, firing, hiring, staff, employee, management
	Licences, trademarks and copyright	Trade, license, patent, registration, product, logo, property, copyright, trademark
	Imports and exports	Trade, shipping, international, imports, exports, commerce, license, law, customs
	Sales of goods, services & data protection	Commerce, goods, services, product, sale, citizen, feedback, grievance, law, data, protection, wholesale, purchase, trading
	Waste and environmental impact	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Closing down	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
Births, Deaths,	Certificates, register offices, change of	Certificate, registration, verification, birth,

Marriages and Child Care	name or gender	death, caste, marriage, nationality, change, name, gender
	Marriage, civil partnership and Divorce	Marriage, registration, certificate, information, application, eligibility, partnership, civil, divorce
	Having a child, parenting and adoption	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Child care	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Death and bereavement	Death, certificate, registration, information, bereavement, application
Pension and Benefits	Pension	Pension, payment, calculator, provident, fund, account, employee, status, claim, complaint
	Carers	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Crisis	Ration, card, fair, shop, price, public, distribution, beneficiary, complaint, helpline
	Job seekers	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Families	Family, card, application, identity, proof, residence
	Students	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	People with disabilities	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Migrants refugees and visitors	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Older people	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
Transport and Infrastructure	Public transport and private vehicles	Train, railway, bus, train, metro, transport, public, private, timetable, fare, schedule, booking, ticket, complaint, travel
	Roads and Road transport	Road, traffic, transport, safety, permit, contract, issue, sign, driving, car, vehicle
	Aviation	Aviation, airline, plane, flight, ticket, international, standard, information, book, air, transport
	Maritime	Maritime, transport, ferry, ship, schedule, timetable
	Registration and licences	Licence, driving, vehicle, motor, registration, application, permit, plate
	Infrastructure	Infrastructure, condition, grievance, complaint, feedback, information
Citizenship, Visa's and	Citizenship and living in India	Vote, election, citizenship, immigration, visa, registration

Passports	Passports	Passport, application, status, appointment, identity, verification, instructions
	Travel abroad	Travel, international, appointment, vaccination, risk, information
	Living abroad	Overseas, application, electoral, roll, visa, citizenship, card
Agriculture, Rural and Environment	Farming	Farming, agriculture, animal, horticulture, crop, development, fertilizer, animal, certificate
	Fishing and hunting	Vessel, registration, fishing, craft, fisheries
	Land and water resources	Water, environment, forest, map, natural, resource, land, geography, village, soil, record
	Wildlife and biodiversity	Animal, wildlife, conservation, adoption, zoo, support, donate
	Climate change	<i>To be appended by respective department</i>
	Environmental grants	Environment, grant, financial, assistance, scheme, development
	Environmental management and protection	Environment, biodiversity, management, protection, monitoring, performance
	Weather	Weather, forecast, centre, meteorology, information
	Pollution and waste management	Pollution, waste, management, air, quality, smog
	Rural services	Rural, service, commodities, price, market, export, import, purchase, wholesale, retail, agriculture

Table 3: Example Keywords

Appendix A: Style Guide

A-Z Style Guide

A

Abbreviations and acronyms

The first time you use an abbreviation or acronym explain it in full on each web page unless it is well known, for example UN, UK, USA, EU or VAT. Avoid using full stops in abbreviations, so USA not U.S.A. Do not use an acronym if you're not going to use it again later in the text.

B**Bold**

Do not use bold as it can distract the user and makes the text longer and more confusing for users of screen readers. Use headings or bullets instead if you want to emphasise particular words or sections.

Brackets

Use round brackets () instead of square ones []. The only acceptable use of square brackets is for explanatory notes in reported speech, like so: “Thank you [Foreign Minister] Mr Smith.”

Do not use round brackets to refer to something that could either be singular or plural, for example ‘Check which document(s) you need to send to send to Public Works Department.’ Always use the plural instead, as this will cover each possibility: ‘Check which documents you need to send to Public Works Department.’

Bullet points and steps

You can use bullet points to make text easier to read and information easier to understand. When using bullets make sure that:

- you always use a lead-in line
- the bullets make sense running on from the lead-in line
- you use lower case at the start of the bullet
- you limit your bullet to one sentence - use commas or dashes to expand on an item
- if you add links they appear within the text and not as the whole bullet

Use numbered steps instead of bullet points to guide a user through a process.

C**Capitalisation**

NEVER USE BLOCK CAPITALS FOR LARGE AMOUNTS OF TEXT AS IT IS QUITE HARD TO READ.

Use capitalisation for:

- government departments e.g. Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
- ministers’ titles e.g. Minister of Tribal Affairs
- place names
- brand names
- faculties, departments, institutes and schools
- names of groups, directorates and organisations
- titles of specific acts or bills e.g. The Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act
- names of specific government schemes e.g. Digital India Programme, Indira Awaas Yojana, Integrated Rural Development Program

Don’t capitalise:

- government not Government, even when referring to an elected administration
- minister unless part of a specific job title e.g. Minister of Railways

- department or ministry, unless referring to a specific one like Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation
- white paper, green paper, statement, review etc., unless referring to and using the full name of a specific document e.g. Budget 2013-2014
- policy themes like sustainable communities or promoting economic growth

CO2

Use capital letters and a regular 2.

D

Dates

- use upper case for months e.g. January, February
- when space is an issue - in tables or publication titles, for example - you can use truncated months e.g. Jan, Feb
- do not use a comma between a month and a year e.g. 14 June 2012
- avoid using quarters for dates and use months instead, e.g. Jan to Mar 2016, not Q1 2016
- when referring to today (as in a news article) include the date e.g. "The minister announced today (14 June 2012) that..."

E

email

One word without a hyphen.

F

FAQ

Don't use FAQs (frequently asked questions) on the portal. If you write content by starting with user needs, there will be no need for FAQs.

G

Geography and regions

Use lower case for north, south, east and west, except when they are part of a name or recognised region e.g. North Goa

Always write out the full name of the area the first time you use it. You can use a capital for a shortened version of a specific area or region if it is commonly known by that name, like the Pole for the North Pole.

H

Holocaust

Upper case.

Hyphenation

Hyphenate:

- re- words starting with e, like re-evaluate
- co-ordinate
- co-operate

Don't hyphenate:

- reuse
- reinvent
- reorder
- reopen
- email

International Baccalaureate

Upper case.

J

Job titles

Specific job titles and ministers' role titles are upper case e.g. Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Minister of State for Textiles. Generic job titles and ministers' role titles are lower case e.g. director, minister.

L

Legal content

Legal content can still be written in plain English. It is important that users understand content and that complicated information is presented in a simple form. If you have to publish legal jargon, it will be a publication so write a plain English summary. Where evidence shows there is a clear user need for including a legal term (like bona vacantia), always explain it in plain English.

M

Maths content

- Use a minus sign for negative numbers: –6
- Ratios have no space either side of the colon: 5:12
- One space each side of symbols: +, –, ×, ÷ and = (so: 2 + 2 = 4)
- Use the minus sign for subtraction. Use the correct symbol for the multiplication sign (×), not the letter x.
- Write out and hyphenate fractions: two-thirds, three-quarters.
- Write out decimal fractions as numerals. Use the same number format for a sequence: 0.75 and 0.45

Measurements

- Use numerals and spell out measurements at first mention.
- Don't use a space between the numeral and abbreviated measurement: 3,500kg not 3,500 kg.

- Abbreviating kilograms to kg is fine - you don't need to spell it out.
- If the measurement is more than one word, like kilometres per hour, then spell it out the first time it's used with the abbreviation. From then on, abbreviate. If it's only mentioned once, don't abbreviate.
- Use Celsius for temperature: 37°C

member states of the EU

Lower case.

memorandum of understanding

Lower case.

metaphors

Avoid using metaphors – they don't say what you actually mean and lead to slower comprehension of your content. For example:

- drive (you can only drive vehicles, not schemes or people)
- drive out (unless it's cattle)
- going forward (it's unlikely we are giving travel directions)

Middle East

Upper case.

military

Lower case.

Millions

- Always use million in money (and billion): £138 million.
- Use millions in phrases: millions of people.
- But don't use £0.xx million for amounts less than £1 million.
- Don't abbreviate million to m.

minister

- Use upper case for the full title, like Minister for Home Affairs, or when used with a name, as a title, like Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar.
- When used without the name, shortened titles are lower case: The defence minister welcomed the research team.

mixed-age class

Hyphenated.

mixed-sex schools

Hyphenated.

money

- Use the ₹ symbol: ₹1000
- Currencies are lower case.

MP

Don't use Member of Parliament, just MP.

N**N/A**

Separate with a slash. Only use in tables.

non-executive director

Lower case in text, upper case in titles: Spencer Tracy, Non-executive Director, GDS.

the north, the north of India

Lower case.

north-east, north-west

Lower case, hyphenated.

Numbers

- Use 'one' unless you're talking about a step, a point in a list or another situation where using the numeral makes more sense: 'in point 1 of the design instructions', for example.
- Write all other numbers in numerals (including 2 to 9) except where it's part of a common expression like 'one or two of them' where numerals would look strange.
- If a number starts a sentence, write it out in full (Thirty-four, for example) except where it starts a title or subheading.
- For numerals over 999 - insert a comma for clarity: 9,000
- Spell out common fractions like one-half.
- Use a % sign for percentages: 50%
- Use a 0 where there's no digit before the decimal point.
- Use '500 to 900' and not '500-900' (except in tables).
- Use MB for anything over 1MB: 4MB not 4096KB.

- Use KB for anything under 1MB: 569KB not 0.55MB.
- Keep it as accurate as possible and up to 2 decimal places: 4.03MB.
- Addresses: use 'to' in address ranges: 49 to 53 Cherry Street.

Ordinal numbers

- Spell out first to ninth. After that use 10th, 11th and so on.
- In tables, use numerals throughout.

O

online

One word.

online services

Lower case unless part of a proper noun.

order

Lower case unless used as the full title: Standing Order 22.

Organisations

All organisations are singular: The government has decided to sell assets.

P

Parliament

Upper case.

Parliamentary committees

Parliamentary is upper case and committees is in lower case.

Per cent

Use per cent not percent. Percentage is one word. Always use % with a number.

plain English

Lower case plain and upper case English unless in a title.

All content should be written in plain English. You should also make sure you use language your audience will understand

police

Lower case, even when referring to 'the police'.

policy note

Lower case.

policy statement

Lower case.

PowerPoint presentation

Upper case because PowerPoint is a brand name.

Prime Minister

Use Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Prime Minister.

Q

Quotes and speech marks

In long passages of speech, open quotes for every new paragraph, but close quotes only at the end of the final paragraph.

Single quotes

Use single quotes:

- in headlines
- for unusual terms
- when referring to words or publications, for example: 'Download the publication 'Understanding Capital Gains Tax' (PDF, 360KB)'

Double quotes

Use double quotes in body text for direct quotations.

R

References

References should be easy to understand by anyone, not just specialists.

They should follow the style guide. When writing a reference:

- don't use italics
- use single quote marks around titles
- write out abbreviations in full: page not p, Nutrition Journal not Nutr J.
- use plain English, for example use 'and others' not 'et al'
- don't use full stops after initials or at the end of the reference

If the reference is available online, make the title a link and include the date you accessed the online version:

Corallo AN and others. ['A systematic review of medical practice variation in OECD countries'](#) Health Policy 2014: volume 114, pages 5-14 (viewed on 18 November 2014)

regulations

Upper case in the full title: Licensing of Animal Dealers (Scotland) Regulations 2009. (No comma before the date.) Lower case when referring to them: the licensing of animal dealers regulations.

S**seasons**

spring, summer, autumn, winter are lower case.

section

As in part of an act or a strategy.

self-employment

Hyphenate this noun.

Sentence length

Don't use long sentences. Check sentences with more than 25 words to see if you can split them to make them clearer.

services

Lower case, even when referring to the armed forces services or the services.

sign in or log in

Use sign in rather than log in (verb) for calls-to-action where users enter their details to access a service. Don't use login as a noun - say what the user actually needs to enter (like username, password).

SMEs

This acronym means small and medium-sized enterprises. Use SME for the singular.

south, the south of India

Lower case.

south-east, south-west

Lower case, hyphenated.

spaces

One space after a full stop, not 2.

strategy

Lower case. Don't capitalise a named strategy: national health and welfare strategy.

Summaries (short descriptions)

Summaries should:

- be 140 characters or less
- end with a full stop
- not repeat the title or body text
- be clear and specific

T**tax returns**

Upper case when referring to proper titles for the first time: Company Tax Return, Partnership Tax Return, Employer Annual Return. General references to tax returns are lower case

team

Lower case: youth offending team, Behavioural Insights team.

teamwork

Lower case. One word.

technical terms

Use technical terms where you need to. They're not jargon. You just need to explain what they mean the first time you use them.

Telephone numbers

Use Telephone: 011 111 111 or Mobile: - not Mob:.

Use spaces between city and local exchange. Here are the different formats to use:

- 01273 800 900
- 020 7450 4000
- 0800 890 567
- 07771 900 900
- 077718 300 300
- +44 (0)20 7450 4000
- +39 1 33 45 70 90

Times

- use 'to' in time ranges, not hyphens, en rules or em dashes: 10am to 11am (not 10-11am)
- 5:30pm (not 1730hrs)
- midnight (not 00:00)
- midday (not 12 noon, noon or 12pm)
- 6 hours 30 minutes

Midnight is the first minute of the day, not the last. You should consider using “11:59pm” to avoid confusion about a single, specific time.

For example, “You must register by 11.59pm on Tuesday 14 June.” can only be read one way, but “You must register by midnight on Tuesday 14 June” can be read in two ways (the end of Monday 13, or end of Tuesday 14).

Titles

Titles should:

- be 65 characters or less
- be unique, clear and descriptive
- be front-loaded and optimised for search
- use a colon to break up longer titles
- not contain dashes or slashes
- not have a full stop at the end
- not use acronyms unless they are well-known, like EU

Trade marks

Avoid using trademarked names where possible - so tablet not iPad.

Trade mark is 2 words but trademarked is one word.

Trading Standards

Upper case.

Twitter account

Upper case. Twitter is a trademarked name.

V

VAT online services

Used when referring to all the online services for VAT.

VAT-registered

Hyphenated when used as a compound adjective: VAT-registered business.

VAT registration number

Lower case, except when it refers to a field within a form.

W

webchat

One word. Not ‘web chat’.

webpage

One word.

the west, western India

Lower case.

Wi-Fi

Upper case and hyphenated (trade mark).

Word document

Upper case, because it's a brand name.

Words to avoid

Plain English is mandatory so please avoid using these words:

- agenda (unless it's for a meeting)
- advancing
- collaborate (use working with)
- combating
- commit/pledge (we need to be more specific - we're either doing something or we're not)
- countering
- deliver (pizzas, post and services are delivered - not abstract concepts like improvements or priorities)
- deploy (unless it's military or software)
- dialogue (we speak to people)
- disincentivise (and incentivise)
- empower
- facilitate (instead, say something specific about how you're helping)
- focusing
- foster (unless it's children)
- impact (don't use this as a synonym for have an effect on, or influence)
- initiate
- key (unless it unlocks something. A subject/thing isn't key - it's probably important)
- land (as a verb only use if you're talking about aircraft)
- leverage (unless in the financial sense)
- liaison
- overarching
- progress (as a verb - what are you actually doing?)
- promote (unless you're talking about an ad campaign or some other marketing promotion)
- robust
- slimming down (processes don't diet)
- streamline
- strengthening (unless it's strengthening bridges or other structures)

- tackling (unless it's rugby, football or some other sport)
- transforming (what are you actually doing to change it?)
- utilise

World War 1, World War 2

Upper case and numbers.

Y

year 1, year 2

Lower case.

Appendix B: Service Categories and Sub-Categories

India Service Categories	Sub-Categories
Education and learning	Early childhood
	Universities and higher education
	Scholarships and student finance
	Skills Development and training
	Education and training grants
	Resources for schools
Health and Wellness	Children's health and immunisation

	Disease and conditions
	Health care providers and access
	Medicine and health products
	Mental health
Electricity, Water and Local Services	Electricity
	Water
	Local services
Money and Taxes	Banking and money
	Financial regulation
	Insurance
	Income Tax
	VAT
	Court claims, debt and bankruptcy
Jobs	Career information
	Employment services and jobs
	Information for employers
	Retirement
	Working Women
Justice and Law	Reporting crimes and getting compensation
	Your rights and the law
	Courts, sentencing and tribunals
	Prisons and probation
	Young people and the law
	Online safety
Travel and Tourism	Tourism in India
	Embassies and consulates
	Customs and quarantine
	Travel abroad
Business and Self-	Setting up

employed	Employee management
	Licences, trademarks and copyright
	Imports and exports
	Sales of goods, services & data protection
	Waste and environmental impact
	Closing down
Births, Deaths, Marriages and Child Care	Certificates, register offices, change of name or gender
	Marriage, civil partnership and Divorce
	Having a child, parenting and adoption
	Child care
	Death and bereavement
Pension and Benefits	Pension
	Carers
	Crisis
	Job seekers
	Families
	Students
	People with disabilities
	Migrants refugees and visitors
	Older people
Transport and Infrastructure	Public transport and private vehicles
	Roads and Road transport
	Aviation
	Maritime
	Registration and licences
	Infrastructure
Citizenship, Visa's and Passports	Citizenship and living in India
	Passports
	Travel abroad

	Living abroad
Agriculture, Rural and Environment	Farming
	Fishing and hunting
	Land and water resources
	Wildlife and biodiversity
	Climate change
	Environmental grants
	Environmental management and protection
	Weather
	Pollution and waste management
	Rural services

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