
EIA Writing Style Guide

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U.S. Energy Information Administration
Office of Communications

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Introduction

1. Using the EIA Writing Style Guide

Why a Writing Style Guide?

We wrote this Writing Style Guide to help EIA writers produce consistent, correct, and readable content. It provides guidance on those style issues—including capitalization, punctuation, word usage, tone—most relevant to EIA writing.

This Writing Style Guide is an update of the edition released in April 2009. With the exception of one rule in the [capitalization](#) section (federal, state, and nation no longer should be capitalized), none of the guidance in the 2009 version has been changed.

This edition includes six new chapters:

- Policy-Neutral Writing
- Advice for Good Writing
- Grammar
- Periods
- Symbols
- British versus American English

This new edition also includes more examples, explanations, advice, and notes.

The 2012 Writing Style Guide is provided in HTML on the EIA employee intranet and at www.eia.gov/eiawritingstyleguide.pdf, which allows for indexing and linking to related sections of the Style Guide.

We included this additional material to answer questions asked by EIA staff and to address writing mistakes caught while editing EIA content.

Specific new content includes many more examples of commonly misused words, more explicit rules and examples for uses of hyphens and dashes, punctuation, capitalization, symbols, and bulleted lists.

Because the content was written to help you and has been improved by your questions and comments, the Office of Communications welcomes [feedback](#), suggestions, corrections, and general comments.

The Writing Style Guide will also save you time. Ever wondered or worried about which was correct:

- Period or no punctuation for bullets?
- *Which* or *that*?
- % sign or *percent*?

You can quickly find answers to these questions—and most of your style-related questions—in this Guide.

Do these guidelines apply to print and web content?

This Writing Style Guide will help you produce uniform documents, regardless of office, function, or publication form. The purpose of the Guide is to provide style consistency in all EIA content. It addresses some issues that are particular to web writing, such as writing effective hypertext links. But most of the advice applies to all the writing you do—reports, website content, and even PowerPoint presentations.

Are these hard-and-fast rules?

This is a Writing Style Guide—not a rule book. Unlike grammar, which has specific rules that should not be broken, many style issues are preferences, such as how and when to write out numbers, whether to use the serial comma, or when to use ending punctuation for bullets. Writers and editors may differ. Famous style guides differ. Areas of the world differ. Our goal is to provide guidance on style issues so that EIA content has uniformity that conveys professionalism.

Style consistency enhances our credibility. Inconsistencies in style or misused words will cause users to question the accuracy of our data. A uniform style tells users that EIA has high quality standards for our words as well as our numbers.

Where can I get more guidance on editorial style?

We've addressed the most common style issues that EIA writers face. If you have a question that isn't covered in this Guide, or if there is a topic you'd like to know more about, consult these online references:

- [The Chicago Manual of Style](#), the most widely used style manual. EIA has a subscription to *The Chicago Manual of Style*
- [U.S. Government Printing Office \(GPO\) Style Manual](#), an authoritative source of information about issues that are specific to writing for the federal government
- [Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary](#), EIA's "official" dictionary

Other sources consulted in the revision of EIA's Writing Style Guide:

- Grammar Girl's Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing, Mignon Fogarty, 2008
- Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage
- The Elements of Style, William Strunk and E.B. White, 1999
- [OECD Style Guide](#), second edition, 2007
- [EERE Communication Standards and Guidelines: Style Guide](#), from U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy
- Woe Is I, Patricia T. O'Connor, 2003

EIA's [Colleen Blessing](#) is the editor-in-chief of the Writing Style Guide. Please [contact Colleen](#) with any questions, comments, or suggestions.

2. Writing well at EIA

Use short sentences

Short sentences are easier to read, so try to write sentences of 20 to 30 words rather than much longer ones. Consider breaking a long sentence into two or eliminating unnecessary words.

Use short paragraphs

Avoid long paragraphs or large blocks of text. Long paragraphs are daunting and difficult for readers to scan. Try to write paragraphs of four or five sentences, or approximately 100-125 words. Even paragraphs as short as one sentence are fine. Use bullets to highlight lists of points.

Avoid jargon

Jargon may be appropriate when writing exclusively for experts. But EIA's web content is accessible to a wide range of readers, from experts on your topic to novices. As much as possible, choose non-technical terms so all your intended readers can understand what you've written. If you must use jargon or technical language, be sure to explain the term in simple language. You might also link to an [EIA glossary](#) definition or other source material. To make the concept clear to the layperson, you may want to provide an example or an analogy.

Be consistent

Good writing is built on patterns, so be consistent within your content.

- Consistent terminology: Don't call it *gasoline* in some instances and *motor gasoline* in others.
- Consistent abbreviations: If you use bcf/d for billion cubic feet per day, don't use any other abbreviation for that reference.
- Consistent punctuation: For example, always use the serial comma (red, white, and blue).

Consider your audience

The best writers anticipate, and answer, their readers' questions. Identify your intended readers before you begin writing. Think about what they may already know and what they will want to know about your topic. While planning and drafting your content, consider their level of technical expertise, their depth of interest, and the tasks they will be performing with the information you provide.

Quick Tips—Style, Writing, and Grammar Tips

EIA Style

- Use the serial comma: red, white, and blue.
- Website and homepage and email: one word, no hyphens.
- Spell out United States as a noun: U.S. oil is produced in the United States.
- Do not capitalize state, federal, or nation unless it's a proper name (Federal Register).
- U.S. Energy Information Administration and EIA; not U.S. EIA and not the EIA.
- Write Washington, DC, not Washington, D.C.
- Don't use postal codes except in addresses and footnotes: Cushing, Oklahoma, not Cushing, OK (except for Washington, DC where the postal code is part of the city name).
- Writing time: Correct—3:00 p.m.; Incorrect—3:00 pm; 3:00pm; 3:00 PM.
- Writing dates: Correct—January 2012; Jan 5. Incorrect—Jan 2012; January, 2012; January '12; January 5th.
- Write 1990s, not 1990's.
- Don't CAPITALIZE or underline for emphasis. Use **bold** or *italics*.
- American vs. British English: gray (A) vs. grey (B); traveled (A) vs. travelled (B); forward (A) vs. forwards (B). EIA style uses American spelling and usage.
- Punctuating bullets: No ending punctuation (no commas or semicolons) unless they are all complete sentences (then end each sentence with a period).
- Don't link [click here](#) or [here](#). Link to the subject: See the [full report](#); [Register now](#).

Writing

- Be consistent with % (informal and education content) and percent (formal content) within a document.
- Title case capitalization: Natural Gas Consumption Increasing. Sentence case: Natural gas consumption increasing. Be consistent for headers and titles within a document.
- Spell out (or define or link to a full spelling) acronyms the first time used and repeatedly in separate sections of a long document.
- Avoid overuse of due to—try because, as a result of, or following.
- Use *since* with time (Since 2005, natural gas use has grown.) and *because* when you want to show cause (Because it was raining, we got wet.).
- Be policy neutral. Avoid words like plummeted, skyrocketed, slashed, spiked, huge.
- Use simple words: additionally → also; utilize → use; in order to → to; numerous → many.
- Don't use *impact* as a verb: The weather affected (not impacted) electricity demand.
- Don't begin a sentence with a numeral or a year. Incorrect: 2012 stocks are increasing. Correct: Stocks in 2012 are increasing. Also correct: The year 2012 shows increasing stocks.

Grammar

- Which or that? *Which* nearly always has a comma before it. If you can use *that*, use that. These two words are not interchangeable. *Which* is not a more formal word for *that*.
- Make bullets consistent: start with verb, verb, verb; noun, noun, noun; adjective, adjective, adjective.
- A person is a *who*, and a thing is a *that*. Correct: He is the person who said yes. Incorrect: He is the person that said yes.
- Use an en-dash to mean through or to: the temperature was 70–80 degrees. Use the word *minus* in an arithmetic phrase. Correct: Net imports = imports minus exports. Incorrect: Net imports = imports-exports.
- An em-dash is the length of two hyphens. It's used to show a break in thought and is almost always used in pairs. Correct: My sister Amy—who is two years younger than I am—graduated from college before I did.
- Hyphens with adjectives: short-term forecast, end-use technology. No hyphens with nouns: in the short term, three end uses.
- i.e. and e.g. must be followed by a comma. It is better to spell out i.e. → in other words and e.g. → for example.
- "Punctuation goes inside the quote marks."

Chapter 1: Editorial Voice and Words and Phrases To Avoid

Your writing speaks to your readers; it has a voice. At EIA, we want our writing voice to be professional, clear, and concise. This section covers some of the ways to create EIA's voice.

1. Using an inverted pyramid format to structure your writing

- Put your main message first so your readers can quickly get the most important information and then decide if they want to read more.
- Organize your content so that the information appears in order of importance, from the highest level to supporting details.

2. Choosing active or passive voice

- Use active voice most of the time.
- In active-voice sentences, the subject is doing the action of the verb.
- In passive-voice sentences, the object is doing the action of the verb.

Passive voice: New regulations were proposed.
Active voice: The agency proposed new regulations.

Passive voice: It is projected that oil production will increase.
Active voice: EIA projects that oil production will increase.

- The active voice allows readers to scan and comprehend information quickly.
- Use active voice to write concisely, as active-voice sentences are normally shorter than passive-voice sentences.

Active voice: The Clean Air Amendments of 1990 set the course for reducing pollution. (12 words)

Passive voice: The course for reducing pollution was set by the Clear Air Amendments of 1990. (14 words)

- Use the passive voice sparingly. The passive voice can be used occasionally for these purposes:

- To emphasize the object of the action, not the doer.

Stringent emissions guidelines were issued by the California Air Resources Board in 1990.

- When the subject of the sentence (the doer) is unimportant or unknown. In passive-voice sentences the doer may be left out.

Stringent emissions guidelines were issued in 1990.

- To structure a headline, blurb, or lead sentence, place key words at the beginning. Source: Jakob Nielsen, *Passive Voice is Redeemed for Web Headings*.

New Conservation Guidelines Are Adopted by Legislature

The writer of the above sentence chose to use the passive voice to feature the words ‘New Conservation Guidelines.’ If the writer had chosen the active voice, ‘Legislature Adopts New Conservation Guidelines,’ the emphasis would be on ‘Legislature,’ not the ‘New Conservation Guidelines.’

3. Words and phrases to avoid

Use simple and specific words—not bureaucratic or clichéd expressions—unless statistical or scientific precision is required.

Bureaucratic or clichéd	Simple and specific
accordingly	so
afford an opportunity	allow, let
a great number of	many
a number of	many, several, a few
additionally	also, in addition
approximately	about
as to whether	whether
at the present time; at this point in time	now
at the time that	when
burgeoning	growing, increasing
by means of	with, in, by
capability	ability, can
close proximity	nearby, near
come to an agreement on	agree
completely destroyed	destroyed
commence	start, begin
consequently	so
currently	now
demonstrate a preference for	prefer
due to the fact that	because
during the course of	during
endeavor to	try to
equally as	equally
equivalent	equal
facilitate	help
finalize	finish

Bureaucratic or clichéd	Simple and specific
for the most part	mostly
for the purpose of	for, to
furthermore	also, in addition
give approval for	approve
identical	same
impacted by	affected by
in accordance with	by, following, under
including, but not limited to	including
initial	first
in order to	to
in order to eliminate	to eliminate
in spite of the fact that	although
in the event that	if
in the near future	soon
in the vicinity of	near
in violation of	violates
is able to	can
it is felt that	(omit)
kind of	rather
like	such as
limited number	few
magnitude	size
majority of	most
make a choice	choose
make a decision	decide
no later than	by
not strong	weak
not well suited	unfit, poorly suited
numerous	many
of the opinion that	think
on a monthly basis	monthly
on or before December 2	by December 2
on the basis of	based on
on the part of	by
optimum	best
presents a summary of	summarizes
prior to	before
regarding	about, of, on
retain	keep

Bureaucratic or clichéd	Simple and specific
subsequent	next
terminate	end, stop
the question as to whether	whether
therefore	so
the reason why is that	because
the table is a list of	the table shows
to perform an analysis	to analyze
since the time when	since
sufficient	enough
until such time as	until
used for fuel purposes	used for fuel
utilize	use
whether or not	whether
with regard to	about
with the exception of	except
would appear that	appears

4. Using parallel structure

- Use the same grammatical structure to present two or more ideas of equal value in a sentence.
- Present the same type of information in a similar format to make the information easier to read.
- Use parallel structure for items in a numbered or bulleted list. Every bullet must start with the same kind of word (noun, verb, adjective, etc.), and all must be either phrases or complete sentences, whenever possible.

Parallel structure: The project director is a strong leader, a skillful politician, and an effective manager.

Not parallel structure: The project director is a strong leader, a skillful politician, and he manages effectively.

Good example of parallel structure:

There are two relevant definitions:

- Deepwater—a water depth that is greater than 200 meters but less than 1,500 meters
- Ultra-deepwater—a water depth that is equal to or greater than 1,500 meters

For more information on using parallel structure in numbered or bulleted lists, see: [Chapter 15, Section 3](#).

5. Maintaining consistent verb tenses

- Maintain consistent verb tenses to clearly establish the time frame of the action.

Consistent verb tense:

Natural gas is created by the underground decomposition of organic matter. Much of the carbon and hydrogen is converted to methane, the major component of natural gas.

Using the present tense consistently conveys that the action (both the decomposition of organic matter and the conversion to methane) is happening in the same time frame and is an ongoing process.

Inconsistent verb tense:

Natural gas was created by the underground decomposition of organic matter. Much of the carbon and hydrogen is converted to methane, the major component of natural gas.

The shift in verb tense from past (was created) to present (is converted) is confusing to the reader. It implies that the decomposition of organic matter happened in the past, but that the conversion to methane is occurring only now (present tense).

- Do not change verb tenses unless you want to indicate a clear shift in time.

Appropriate shift in verb tense:

The regulations were adopted in 2000. The regulations will be reviewed in 2010.

The first sentence uses the past tense (were adopted) to indicate action that happened in the past. The second sentence uses the future tense (will be reviewed) to indicate future action.

6. Tailoring the formality of your writing to the audience

How formal should your writing be? At EIA, we tend to favor formal language over informal language. But the formality of your writing depends on both content and audience. Authors and supervisors decide on the level of formality for each report or product.

For example, if you are writing a report for Congress, your language should be formal. But if you are writing an Energy In Brief article, a Today in Energy story, or content for Energy Explained, your language can be more informal.

What makes writing formal or informal?

- Avoiding colloquial words or expressions makes your writing more formal.

Formal language: However, the formality of your writing depends on the audience.

Informal language: But the formality of your writing depends on the audience.

Formal language: Why are gasoline prices so high?

Informal language: What's behind high gas prices?

Formal language: Is there enough oil to meet future needs?

Informal language: Are we running out of oil?

- Use of percent, rather than %, makes your writing more formal.

Formal language: Prices increased by 5 percent.

Informal language: Prices increased by 5%.

- Using the pronoun 'we' instead of the noun 'EIA' is more informal.
- Using a noun rather than a pronoun makes your writing more formal.

Formal language: EIA cannot develop an independent estimate of revenue impact.

Informal language: We cannot develop an independent estimate of revenue impact.

- Spelling out whole words rather than using contractions makes your writing more formal.

Formal language: EIA will not comment on the legislation.

Informal language: EIA won't comment on the legislation.

7. Using a consistent point of view

In your writing, you can choose to use one of three different points of view: first person, second person, or third person. Each point of view expresses a different relationship to the reader. Generally, third person is most appropriate for EIA writing.

Three points of view for writing

First Person is when the person or object is speaking: We can produce steam several ways.

Second Person is when the person is spoken to: You can produce steam several ways.

Third Person is when the object is spoken about: It can produce steam in several ways.

- Do not shift point of view within a unit of content (such as a web page or report). The point of view that you choose will depend on your audience and the product you are writing.

Shifting point of view: Most commercially available electricity is generated by turbines that convert steam into electricity. You can produce steam in several ways.

This paragraph shifts from third person to second person (you).

Consistent point of view: Most commercially available electricity is generated by turbines that convert steam into electricity. Turbines produce steam in several ways.

This paragraph maintains the third person throughout.

8. Emphasizing content

- EIA prefers bold text for emphasis. Italics can be used to emphasize a word or phrase, rarely a whole sentence or paragraph. If used too frequently, italics or bolding for emphasis lose their power.
- Never underline for emphasis. Underlining is for links only, although most links are now shown in blue type.
- Never use capital letters for emphasis.

Correct emphasis: Your comments must be sent by **mail**—not email.

Incorrect emphasis: Your comment must be sent by MAIL—NOT EMAIL.

Incorrect emphasis: Your comments must be sent by mail—not email.

9. Using Italics

- Use italics to set off a non-English word or phrase that might be unfamiliar to the reader. If the foreign phrase is used frequently in the document, use italics only for the first use. If the phrase is used only rarely in the document, use italics for each use.

A laissez-faire approach to the market can have serious repercussions.

- Use italics to call attention to specific words or phrases.
- Do not use italics if the foreign phrase is commonly used in English. (If the word is listed in [Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary](#), you do not normally use italics.)

The used car had no warranty. *Caveat emptor*.

- Do not use italics for:
 - et al. (and all other items)
 - ibid (in the same place)
 - etc. (and other items)
 - i.e. (in other words)
 - e.g. (for example)

Correct: Greenhouse gases (e.g., carbon dioxide) may contribute to global warming.

- Use italics for report and product names in footnotes and the first time they are used in a report.

EIA projects that renewable-generated electricity will account for 12.6% of total electricity generation in 2006.¹

For EIA Documents: ¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Annual Energy Outlook 2012*, Table 8.

Citing EIA in external documents: ¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Annual Energy Outlook 2012*, Table 8, accessed March 11, 2008.

- Key terms may be italicized on their first use. Do not use italics for subsequent uses.

Correct: Some cities are participating in the *Clean Cities* program. Other cities may participate in the Clean Cities program in the future.

10. Formatting paragraphs

Separate paragraphs with a blank line. The first line of a paragraph should be flush left, not indented.

Correct:

In 2004 and 2005, increased global demand for oil stretched capacity along the entire oil market system and caused a surge in crude oil prices.

Incorrect:

In 2004 and 2005, increased global demand for oil stretched capacity along the entire oil market system and caused a surge in crude oil prices.

Chapter 2: Policy-Neutral Writing

“The glass is never half empty or half full. It’s just an eight-ounce glass with four ounces of liquid.”

Bureau of Labor Statistics spokesperson

EIA’s responsibility is to provide independent, policy-neutral information. We don’t advocate or support policies, industries, fuels, or trends.

Sometimes our writing may seem repetitive, always saying increased or decreased, rose or fell. Using different words to vary the text may seem like a good idea, but often the new verbs or adverbs have subtle or not so subtle connotations, either positive or negative.

1. Use policy-neutral words

Neutral: Prices fell

Not neutral: Prices plummeted

Neutral: Production decreased, production dropped

Not neutral: Production was slashed

Neutral: Hydraulic fracturing requires large amounts of water

Not neutral: Hydraulic fracturing requires huge amounts of water

Neutral: Natural gas production reversed its downward trend

Not neutral: Natural gas production finally reversed its downward trend

2. Phrases to avoid

Quantify statements where possible, but avoid these words and phrases. A 50% increase may seem to be *surging* or *skyrocketing*, but let the reader make the quantifying judgment.

- Appropriate action
- Burgeoning
- Effective policy
- Enormous
- Gale
- Huge
- Obvious solution
- Skyrocketed
- Slashed
- Soar
- Spiked
- Surging

3. Policy-neutral situations to watch for

- Rising or falling prices—To a consumer, rising prices are usually negative and falling prices are usually positive. An energy producer may have the opposite perspective. EIA reports the trends with neutral words that avoid seeming like we are on one side or the other.
- Environmental impacts of energy production and consumption—EIA can discuss that there are impacts and list what they are, but we should not use judgmental or advocacy words.
- Policies that support or do not support a specific fuel technology—Avoid appearing like a cheering section for a specific tool or technology. Just state the facts.

Did you know?

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics actually has approved verbs, including fell, increased, or remained unchanged. EIA isn't that strict, but writers should not use verbs or adverbs that have connotations or feelings or tones. Rising gasoline prices aren't positive or negative, they are just prices that are increasing.

Chapter 3: Advice for Good Writing

Clarity does not come from simple ideas, but from presenting ideas in the simplest form possible.

OECD Style Guide, Second Edition, 2007

EIA style includes advice from several different style guides that disagree on some points. The *Government Printing Office* style is sometimes too formal. *AP Style* (Associated Press) is sometimes too informal. *The Chicago Manual of Style* is close to EIA style, but not in all cases. Remember, style is a preference; it is not right or wrong (unlike grammar, which does have rules).

The *EIA Writing Style Guide* reflects what works best for EIA.

1. General style

- Use short sentences.
- Use short paragraphs. They are easier to read, especially online. Even if a long paragraph is all one thought or topic, consider breaking it into two smaller sections, or use bullets if there are related points in the paragraph.
- Begin with the fact or main point. Don't start with attribution or history.
- Avoid using too many introductory clauses.

Preferred: Oil production rose during the last half of 2014.

Less preferred: During the last half of 2014, oil production rose.

- Use bold text rather than italics or underline for emphasis.
- Use the word *percent* in more [formal](#) reports and the percent sign (%) in EIA's educational content ([Today in Energy](#), [Energy in Brief](#), and [Energy Explained](#)).
- Avoid using stacked nouns. Adding too many qualifying words before the noun requires the reader to deconstruct the meaning.

Stacked noun: Annual natural gas-fired electric power generation totals

Unstacked noun: Annual totals for electric power generated from natural gas

- Use either one or two spaces between a period and the start of the next sentence. Be consistent within a document. Using one space is accepted by many style guides and is the default in HTML and the [EIA report template](#).

Traditional: two spaces

I like chocolate. You like fruit.

Modern: one space

I like chocolate. You like fruit.

2. Avoid run-on sentences

A run-on sentence isn't just a long sentence (a common misconception); it is two sentences squished together without proper punctuation.

Correct sentences: He ran home. She stayed behind.

Incorrect, run-on sentence: He ran home she stayed behind.

3. Avoid excessive use of *due to*; *because* is better

The use of *due to* is rampant in EIA writing. Grammar advice says that if you are having trouble figuring out whether to use *due to* or *because*, *because* is almost always the better choice.

Correct: It gets light in the morning because the sun comes up.

Incorrect: It gets light in the morning due to the sun coming up.

Correct: Oil demand is down as a result of (or in response to) higher prices.

Incorrect: Oil demand is down to due to higher prices.

4. Use parallel writing styles

- Bullets should begin with the same part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, etc.).
- Sentences should be parallel.

Parallel: Natural gas was transported by pipelines and tankers.

Not parallel: Natural gas was transported by pipelines and tanker deliveries.

- Phrases and terms should be parallel.

Parallel: Natural gas imports and crude oil imports (preferred)

Not parallel: Natural gas imports and imports of crude oil

- Tense should be parallel.

Incorrect: Oil production **was up** from 2001-05, then it **had been decreasing** from 2005-09, but now it **is up** since 2009.

- References should be parallel.

Parallel: (see chart above)

(see chart below)

Not parallel: (see chart above)

(see chart)

5. It's ok to split infinitives

This rule came from Latin, where it was impossible to split an infinitive. English isn't Latin. It's ok to split infinitives.

Correct split infinitive: To boldly go where no man has gone before.

6. First, second, third

- Use first, second, third for connected points in text, not firstly, secondly, thirdly.
- If you have more than three points, consider listing numbered items or using bullets. Saying 'seventh' is cumbersome and confusing.

7. Ending a sentence with a preposition is ok

- Sometimes it is relatively easy to rewrite the sentence so it doesn't end in a preposition and sounds fine, but don't convolute the words or meaning to follow an antiquated rule.
- Avoid awkward-sounding syntax as you try to keep the preposition out of the sentence-ending spot.
- One grammar expert says not ending a sentence with a preposition is one of the biggest grammar myths of all time.

Clear: Where are you from?

Awkward: From where are you?

Clear: What did you step on?

Awkward: On what did you step?

8. This or that?

A common but somewhat confusing style in some EIA writing is to use sentences beginning with *this* or *that* or *they* where the subject is not stated. (You have to find the subject in the previous sentence.)

Clear: Oil prices are rising because demand is up and supplies are low. This **rise in oil prices** is the result of...

Unclear: Oil prices are rising because demand is up and supplies are low. This is the result of... (This what? Prices rising? Demand up? Supplies low? Don't make the reader have to guess.)

Clear: Electricity demand is affected by price and weather. These **two factors** are...

Unclear: Electricity demand is affected by price and weather. These are...

9. This is because or It is due to?

Do not write sentences that begin with, *This is because*, *That is because*, *Those are because*, or *It is due to*. Repeat the subject from the previous sentence.

10. Writing the possessive form

Correct and preferred EIA style: Columbia’s oil production (sounds like the country)
Correct but not preferred: Columbian oil production (sounds like the people)

Correct and preferred EIA style: Kansas’s legislature
Correct but not preferred: Kansas’ legislature

Correct: OPEC’s production
Correct: FDR’s policies

11. To use that or not to use that

Using the extra word *that* is not necessary in many sentences.

Preferred: The sandwich I ate yesterday was good.
Ok: The sandwich that I ate yesterday was good.

Preferred: The cars sold in 2012 have more airbags.
Ok: The cars that were sold in 2012 have more airbags.

12. And, as well as, in addition

The words you write after *as well as* or *in addition to* are not as important as the words you write after *and*.

Equal: Prices went up because of weather and generator shut-downs. (Both factors are equally important.)
Unequal: Prices went up because of weather as well as generator shut-downs. (Shut-downs are a less important factor.)

13. Small words are often better than big words

Try to **avoid**:

- Additionally (use also or in addition)
- Furthermore (use also or in addition)
- Numerous (use many)
- Utilize (use use)

14. Tips for copyediting your writing

- Read your work out loud—this method forces you to read every word individually and increases the odds you will find a typo or writing mistake.
- Force yourself to read each word. Consider each word. Read small sections.

- Proof a printed version—many people find it easier to proofread on paper rather than on a computer screen.
- Ask a colleague to help—four eyes are better than two.

15. But it's in the dictionary

- A dictionary reflects how speakers use the language. As words such as *irregardless* creep into our language, they are added to the dictionary. Inclusion in a dictionary does not automatically make these words correct.
- A style guide establishes standards of good usage. EIA's Writing Style Guide reflects choices made by EIA to establish consistency and correctness in our writing.

Did you know?

There are two types of dictionaries—prescriptive and descriptive.

A prescriptive dictionary is more concerned about correct and standard English. It would include only standard usage, spelling, and rules. A descriptive dictionary describes the language as it is spoken, so it includes commonly used words, even if they are nonstandard (like *ain't* and *irregardless*). A descriptive dictionary might also include nonstandard spellings and guidance about which words are nonstandard or offensive.

Historically, most dictionaries were prescriptive. The 20th century saw a move toward descriptive dictionaries. Today, most dictionaries, including *Merriam-Webster*, are descriptive.

Chapter 4: Grammar

“An entirely adequate description of English grammar is still a distant target and at present seemingly an unreachable one, the complications being what they are.”

Robert Burchfield, *Unlocking the English Language*, 1991.

1. Which and that

- *Which* and *that* are not interchangeable. *Which* is not a more elegant or formal or clever way to say *that*. Your choice is not a matter of style—this rule is a right-or-wrong choice.
- *Which*: a pronoun that introduces non-essential information. Use a comma before a *which* clause. If a comma won't work, then you should be using *that*. If you crossed out the words in the *which* clause, the remaining words should still be a complete sentence.
- *That*: a pronoun used to introduce essential information. Don't use a comma before *that*.

Correct: Power plants that burn fossil fuels emit pollutants.

Incorrect: Power plants which burn fossil fuels emit pollutants. (see—no comma)

Correct: Power plants, **which are one source of electric power**, may emit pollutants.

Incorrect: Power plants that are one source of electric power may emit pollutants.

Here's the bottom line on *which* and *that*: If you can use the word *that*, use *that*. If you don't have a comma before *which*, use *that*.

2. He and I, you and me

Correct: Send the information to Mike and me.

Correct: Send the information to me and Mike.

Correct: Send the information to me. (Each of these examples says send the information to me, which is correct.)

Incorrect: Send the information to Mike and I. (What you are really saying here is send the information to I.)

Incorrect: Send the information to Mike and myself. (You are saying send the information to myself.)

3. None is or none are, either...or, and neither...nor

- Deciding whether an indefinite pronoun such as *neither*, *none*, *everyone*, *no one*, and *some* takes a singular or plural verb can be tricky.
- When an indefinite pronoun is the subject of a verb, it is usually singular.

Correct: None of the proposals was accepted. (Not one was accepted.)

Correct: Neither answer was sufficient.

- When comparing two items, you must say "either...or" or "neither...nor."

Correct: Neither my officemate nor I was planning to attend the conference.
Correct: Either my officemate or my boss was the last person to leave.

4. Showing possession for singular nouns ending in s

Both styles below are correct.

Preferred: Kansas's legislature
Correct: Kansas' legislature

Preferred: James's
Correct: James'

More correct examples: Dickens's novels, the Williams's new house.

5. Using compound subjects

Colleen's and Melinda's recipes (different recipes, some from Colleen and some from Melinda)
Colleen and Melinda's recipes (same recipes, ones both Colleen and Melinda use)

My aunt's and uncle's houses (each person has a house)
My aunt and uncle's house (only one house)

The guest speaker and new author, Mr. Smith, will be at our meeting.
Ham and swiss is the only sandwich left on the plate.

6. A person is a *who*, not a *that*

Use *who* with he, she, people, etc. Use *that* with objects.

Correct: He is the person who came to the meeting.
Incorrect: He is the person that came to the meeting. (many writers make this mistake)

Correct: This is the couch that I just bought.
Incorrect: This is the couch who I just bought. (no one makes this mistake)

7. Fewer and less

Fewer and *less* mean the same thing, but you use them in different circumstances. Use *less* for mass nouns (things you can't count individually) and *fewer* for count nouns (things you can count).

- Things you can't count—less salt, less tired, less money, less time
- Things you can count—fewer apples, fewer refineries, fewer dollars, fewer hours
- Describing levels or amounts—lower imports, higher prices, lower production

Correct: Lower imports

Incorrect: Less imports

8. A and An

- Usually you use an *a* in front of nouns that start with consonants: a chair, a piano, a barrel. You use *an* in front of nouns that start with vowels: an apple, an electric power plant, an import level.
- But sometimes it's not the beginning letter but the pronounced sound of the beginning letter that determines the correct article.

Correct: a united front

Incorrect: an united front

The following are all correct examples: an hour, an honor, an heir, a historic day, a Utopian society, an unfair law, an MBA

9. Subject-verb agreement

Singular nouns take singular verbs, and plural nouns take plural verbs. This advice sounds easy, but it's confusing with collective nouns (staff, family) and when plural words are added between the subject and verb.

Correct: **The author** of the reports and analyses **is**...

Incorrect: **The author** of the reports and analyses **are**...

Correct: **The import level** of petroleum products and crude oil **is**...

Incorrect: **The import level** of petroleum products and crude oil **are**...

Correct: **Our forecast**, together with the appendix tables, **shows** that...

Incorrect: **Our forecast**, together with the appendix tables, **show** that...

Correct: **One key factor**, high oil prices, **is** the reason...

Incorrect: **One key factor**, high oil prices, **are** the reason...

Correct: **Our experience** in dealing with complex models **makes** us...

Incorrect: **Our experience** in dealing with complex models **make** us...

Correct: EIA staff **includes** economists and statisticians. (Staff is singular.)
Not preferred: EIA staff **include** economists and statisticians.

Chapter 5: Commonly Misused Words

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
accept/except	accept: to receive; to agree I accept your suggestions.	except: apart from; but; excluding We approve all your suggestions except the last one.
additionally, in addition to, also, besides	Same meaning. EIA prefers in addition and also. Avoid additionally. Just ok: Additionally, the price of gasoline went up. Better: The price of gasoline also went up.	
advice/advise	advice: recommendation; guidance EIA seeks advice from the American Statistical Association.	advise: to recommend; to suggest We must advise you that email is an insecure means of transmission.
affect/effect	affect: to influence Policy decisions affect energy markets.	effect: a result; to bring about; being in full force; to accomplish What was the effect of the committee's work? The committee's work effected major changes to the system.
aid/aide	aid: the act of helping Accepted students must apply for financial aid prior to enrollment.	aide: person acting as an assistant The political candidates brought their campaign aides to the meeting.

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
a lot/alot/many/allot	<p>a lot: a considerable quantity or extent; a lot is always two words.</p> <p>allot: to parcel out; to assign a share</p> <p>alot is not a word.</p> <p>Correct: It takes a lot of coal to generate electricity.</p> <p>Incorrect: It takes alot of coal to generate electricity.</p>	<p>many: consisting of or amounting to a large but indefinite number</p> <p>Correct: It takes a lot of coal to generate electricity.</p> <p>Better: It takes many tons of coal to generate electricity.</p> <p>Best: It takes more than 100 tons of coal to generate that much electricity.</p>
all ready/already	<p>all ready: everything is ready</p> <p>Once the papers are all ready, we can send them.</p>	<p>already: before a specified time.</p> <p>The meeting is already finished.</p>
all right/alright	<p>all right: a statement of affirmation, satisfaction, agreement. EIA preferred style</p> <p>Is it all right to wear white after Labor Day?</p>	<p>alright: a statement of affirmation, but this spelling is less preferred and not standard. Not EIA style</p>
although/though	<p>although: in spite of the fact that, even though</p> <p>EIA prefers the use of although, but both are correct.</p>	<p>though: in spite of the fact that, even though. Not EIA Style</p> <p>The dress, though expensive, was just what I wanted for the party.</p>
although/while	<p>although: in spite of the fact that, even though</p> <p>Although I was full, I still ordered dessert.</p>	<p>while: at the same time*</p> <p>*Not a hard-and-fast rule. Often, while can be used in place of although. Be careful.</p> <p>While we were sleeping, an inch of rain fell.</p>

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
all together/altogether	all together: in a group, always two words We sat all together on the lawn at the concert.	altogether: completely, in all, on the whole Altogether, the songs on this album present vivid imagery.
alternate/alternative	alternate: to change back and forth; every other one in a series When I cross-train, I alternate between running and cycling.	alternative: a choice between two things or possibilities An alternative to driving your car is taking public transportation. Because the weather is cold, the alternative to freezing is wearing a heavy coat.
allude to/refer to	allude to: to mention indirectly The report alluded to problems with the system.	refer to: to mention directly The report referred to other references on the subject.
among/amongst	among: American English. EIA prefers among He chose among the many options.	amongst: British English He chose amongst the many options.
any more/anymore	any more: additional, any longer I'm not waiting any more. The difference between the two meanings is shown in one sentence: "I don't buy books any more because I don't need any more books."	anymore: an adverb meaning nowadays or any longer I don't jog anymore.
anyone/any one	anyone: any single person or thing Does anyone have a stamp?	any one: any person or thing Any one of the sandwiches on the menu would be fine.

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
backward/backwards	backward: American spelling. EIA prefers backward Count backward from ten to one.	backwards: British spelling Count backwards from ten to one.
because/since	because: cause and effect Because prices went up, demand went down.	since: from a certain time Since 1980, demand has gone up.
because (of)/due to	because (of): for that reason Note: Because is almost always the right choice.	due to: as a result of Just ok: Production went up due to more exploration. Better: Production went up because of more exploration.
between/among	between: connecting or comparing two objects The driving distance between Baltimore and Philadelphia is surprisingly short. I had to choose between chocolate and vanilla.	among: in or into the midst of; connecting or comparing more than two objects Feel free to speak freely. You're among friends. I had to choose among the four ice cream flavors.

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
biannual/biennial/semiannual	<p>biannual/semiannual: occurring every half year, meaning twice a year.</p> <p>Note: EIA preference is to say twice a year, which removes any possible confusion.</p> <p>We have a lease agreement requiring that payments be paid on a biannual basis in January and July.</p> <p>This poetry anthology is updated on a semiannual basis in June and December.</p>	<p>biennial: occurring every two years</p> <p>Note: EIA preference is to say every two years.</p> <p>Our group's next biennial conference will be in two years.</p> <p>This insect has a biennial lifecycle.</p>
big/large	<p>big: often countable (more colloquial/common)</p> <p>Not preferred: big price increase, biggest nuclear reactor</p>	<p>large: related to objects that are quantifiable</p> <p>Note: In general EIA prefers <i>large</i>.</p> <p>Large price increase, largest nuclear reactor, largest decrease</p>
brake/break	<p>brake: a device for stopping or slowing motion</p> <p>The system captures excess energy when the driver uses the brake.</p>	<p>break: to separate into parts; to smash; a disruption</p> <p>The water in these tubes must be very pure or the tubes might break.</p> <p>New commercial building practices caused a break in the trend.</p>
breakout/break-out	<p>breakout: shown in parts or categories, as statistical data</p> <p>The breakout of petroleum imports showed levels by country.</p>	<p>break-out: adjective modifying table or meeting; smaller or separate item</p> <p>The break-out session discussed the issues.</p>
canceled/cancelled	<p>canceled: American spelling, preferred</p>	<p>cancelled: British spelling</p>

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
complement/compliment	<p>complement: to complete; something that completes</p> <p>Pipelines complement tankers at key locations by relieving bottlenecks.</p> <p>This Climate Wise Primer is a complement to EIA's Form 1605.</p>	<p>compliment: to praise; an expression of praise</p> <p>My boss complimented me for my good work.</p> <p>We take it as a compliment that journalists quote our research.</p>
comprise/compose	<p>comprise: to be made up of or consist of; the whole comprises the sum of its parts. Something is never comprised of something else.</p> <p>Note: These two words are not synonyms. "Is comprised of" is generally incorrect. Comprise does not mean include.</p> <p>OPEC's membership comprises 12 countries.</p> <p>The United States comprises 50 states.</p>	<p>composed of: to make up; to form the substance of</p> <p>OPEC's membership is composed of 12 countries.</p>
continuously/continually	<p>continuously: uninterrupted or constant</p> <p>The video plays continuously.</p>	<p>continually: continued occurrence; one reoccurrence</p> <p>We continually review and update our policies.</p>

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
data/datum	<p>data: a collection of pieces of factual information including statistics; the plural form of datum</p> <p>For written EIA products, the word data is plural.</p> <p>Correct: The data are correct. Incorrect: The data is correct.</p>	<p>datum: a single piece of factual information</p> <p>Datum is technically correct, but not commonly used.</p>
different from/different than	<p>Similar meaning. EIA prefers different from. Different from is almost always the correct choice.</p> <p>Less correct: My ideas are different than yours.</p> <p>Correct: My ideas are different from yours.</p>	
due to/because (of)	<p>due to: as a result of</p> <p>Just ok: Production went up due to more exploration.</p> <p>Better: Production went up because of (or as a result of) more exploration.</p>	<p>because (of): for that reason</p> <p>Note: Because is almost always the right choice.</p>
email/e-mail	<p>EIA uses email, no hyphen. This is a style decision.</p> <p>Correct: email Incorrect: e-mail, Email, E-mail</p>	

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
ensure/insure/assure	<p>ensure: to make certain</p> <p>We monitor network traffic to ensure site security.</p> <p>assure: to state with confidence; to declare earnestly</p> <p>The director assured the staff that the project budget was adequate.</p>	<p>insure: to protect against financial loss</p> <p>Indemnity clubs insure the tankers that transport petroleum imported into the United States.</p>
everyday/every day	<p>everyday: commonplace; normal</p> <p>These are my everyday shoes.</p>	<p>every day: each day; regularly; daily</p> <p>I go for a walk every day.</p>
everyone/every one	<p>everyone: every person, everybody, all the people</p> <p>Everyone is welcome to attend the meeting.</p>	<p>every one: each one of a number of people or things</p> <p>Every one of the pieces of garbage must be picked up from the floor.</p>
expected/forecast/projected	<p>expected or forecast (to be): Estimates of what is expected or forecast to happen, given historical trends, recent data, and specific assumptions.</p>	<p>projected (to be): Generally, projections by EIA are not statements of what will happen but of what might happen, given the assumptions and methodologies used for any particular scenario.</p>
farther/further	<p>farther: at or to a greater distance</p> <p>An average vehicle traveled farther in 1994 than in 1988.</p>	<p>further: moreover; to a greater extent</p> <p>In the United Kingdom, deregulation is further along than it is in other countries.</p>

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
fewer/less	fewer: for items you can count There are fewer people at the meeting this week.	less: for items you can't count This recipe calls for less salt.
flammable/inflammable	Both mean 'easy to burn.' These kinds of words are called contronyms. Best to avoid these words. Use explicit words to describe.	
forward/forwards/foreword	forward: to go toward American English. EIA prefers forward. The child walked forward. forwards: British English	foreword: introduction to a book. Foreword is only a noun. I enjoyed reading the foreword to that book.
forecast/projected/ expected	forecast or expected (to be): Estimates of what is expected or forecast to happen, given historical trends, recent data, and specific assumptions.	projected (to be): Generally, projections by EIA are not statements of what will happen but of what might happen, given the assumptions and methodologies used for any particular scenario.

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
forth/fourth	<p>forth: forward in time, place, and order</p> <p>Despite setbacks, we are moving forth.</p> <p>Not preferred EIA style</p>	<p>fourth: next after the third</p> <p>The Surry nuclear plant is the fourth largest in the region.</p>
historic/historical	<p>historic: famous; important in history</p> <p>George Washington is a historic figure.</p>	<p>historical: of, belonging to, or referring to history</p> <p><i>Gone with the Wind</i> is a historical novel.</p>
hone/home in	<p>hone: to sharpen, make more effective</p> <p>The candidate wants to hone her argument.</p> <p><i>Hone in</i> is used colloquially, but in writing the preference is <i>home in</i>.</p>	<p>home in: direct onto a point or target</p> <p>The IRS is homing in on tax fraud.</p>
Internet/intranet	<p>Internet: a global system of interconnected public and private computer networks</p> <p>The World Wide Web is just one service that uses the Internet.</p> <p>Note that <i>Internet</i> is capitalized.</p>	<p>intranet: a private computer network; an internal organizational website</p> <p>Use the intranet to find employee phone numbers.</p> <p>Note that <i>intranet</i> is not capitalized.</p>
impact/effect	<p>impact: an effect, used only as a noun</p> <p>Note: Don't use impact as a verb.</p> <p>Incorrect: Prices impacted demand for gasoline.</p>	<p>effect: a result; to bring about</p> <p>Correct: What was the effect of that legislation?</p>

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
impacted/affected	impacted: packed or wedged in; colloquially, affected or influenced. Don't use impacted as a verb Incorrect: Oil production was impacted by new technology.	affected: to influence or to change Correct: Oil production was affected by the new technology.
its/it's	its: belonging to it; <i>its</i> is the possessive form of <i>it</i> . EIA has consolidated its analysis of world oil markets into its latest report.	it's: it is; <i>it's</i> is a contraction Correct: It's cold outside today. (which means) It is cold outside today.
later/latter	later: at some time after a given time I can meet with you later.	latter: of, relating to, or being the second of two groups or things or the last of several groups or things referred to When asked which proposal I liked the most, I will indicate the latter.
lead/led	lead: (verb) to guide; to show the way Our country continues to lead the world in wind power growth. lead: (noun) a bluish-white, soft, heavy metal Lead was added to gasoline to improve engine performance.	led: past tense of the verb <i>lead</i> Improved technology led to deeper reservoir drilling and access to more resources.
loose/lose	loose: not tight The loose standards extend throughout the industry and allow for abuse.	lose: to give up; to misplace; not win Both oil and coal lose market share to natural gas.
maybe/may be	maybe: perhaps; possible Maybe I will be able to come to the meeting tomorrow.	may be: might be; could be I may be able to come to the meeting tomorrow.

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
more than/over/above	more than: of a greater quantity There are more than 1,000 applicants for the position.	over: above or in excess of The price of gasoline went above \$4 per gallon.
online/on line/on-line	online: involving the Internet When you're on the Internet, you're online. on-line: old usage, not EIA preferred style	on line: operational, ready for use The nuclear power reactor came on line last year.
overtime/over time	overtime: extra work Bob had to work overtime this weekend.	over time: over some length of time The stockpile was built over time.
pair/pare	pair: two of a kind Each module has a pair of small turbines.	pare: to reduce; to peel We should pare down this extensive set of instructions to three simple steps.
palette, palate, pallet	palette: an array of colors palate: roof of mouth	pallet: a wooden platform
personal/personnel	personal: private We do not collect personal information for any purpose.	personnel: employees The UN Secretary-General announced the withdrawal of all humanitarian personnel from Iraq.
precede/proceed	precede: to go before The 1992 and 1994 editions precede the current one.	proceed: to continue The ventilation system removes methane while mining operations proceed.

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
principal/principle	<p>principal: foremost</p> <p>The principal use for this wax is in candles.</p> <p>principal: head of a school</p> <p>Mr. Jones was named principal of Maywood Elementary School.</p> <p>principal: a sum of money</p> <p>You paid back the principal of your loan.</p>	<p>principle: a rule; standard of good behavior</p> <p>The decision was based on principle, not profit.</p>
projected/ forecast/expected	<p>projected (to be): Generally, projections by EIA are not statements of what will happen but of what might happen, given the assumptions and methodologies used for any particular scenario.</p>	<p>forecast or expected (to be): Estimates of what is expected or forecast to happen, given historical trends, recent data, and specific assumptions.</p>
regardless/irregardless	<p>regardless: despite everything</p> <p>Regardless of the dangers, the hikers went on.</p>	<p>irregardless: not a word</p>
seams/seems	<p>seams: lines formed by sewing together fabric, or a fissure or crack across a surface</p> <p>Coal comes from deep seams in the earth.</p>	<p>seems: appears</p> <p>Gasoline demand in the Midwest seems to be growing faster.</p>

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
sight/cite/site	<p>sight: the act of seeing</p> <p>Customers were excited by the sight of the new model.</p> <p>cite: to quote</p> <p>Please cite all of your sources of information.</p>	<p>site: a location</p> <p>We don't know how much radium-bearing material is processed at the Canonsburg Mill site.</p>
stationary/stationery	<p>stationary: not movable</p> <p>The monitor is stationary, so you'll have to move your chair if you cannot see it.</p>	<p>stationery: writing paper</p> <p>Our office will need to order more stationery with our logo on it.</p> <p>Remember: The last vowel in both paper and stationery is an e.</p>
than/then	<p>than: compared with</p> <p>Developed economies use oil much more intensively than the developing economies.</p>	<p>then: at that time; next in time</p> <p>The maps were developed using GIS software and then converted to PDF format.</p>
that/which	<p>that: a pronoun used to introduce essential information. <i>That</i> phrases have no preceding comma.</p> <p><i>That</i> and <i>which</i> are not interchangeable.</p> <p>I like books that have good stories.</p>	<p>which: a pronoun used to introduce non-essential information. Nearly always has a comma before it</p> <p>This book has a good story, which is one reason I liked it.</p> <p>Note: Which and that are not interchangeable. <i>Which</i> is not a more elegant way to say <i>that</i>. If you can use the word <i>that</i>, use <i>that</i>.</p>

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
their/there/they're	<p>their: belonging to them</p> <p>We used their research in our book.</p> <p>they're: contraction of <i>they are</i></p> <p>The refineries undergo maintenance when they're switching from heating oil to gasoline.</p>	<p>there: in that place</p> <p>Place your signed application over there, on the counter.</p>
thorough/through/threw/though	<p>thorough: complete; painstaking</p> <p>Before hiring a new person, the company conducts a thorough background check of the applicant.</p> <p>through: from side to side or from end to end; completed</p> <p>The DOE list includes resources for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.</p> <p>Preferred: I am finished with this assignment.</p> <p>Not preferred: I am through with this assignment.</p>	<p>threw: tossed</p> <p>Because your son threw the ball, your insurance will not pay to replace the window.</p> <p>though: in spite of the fact that. Informal version of although. Not EIA preferred style. Use <i>although</i> in formal writing.</p>
toward/towards	<p>toward: American spelling EIA prefers toward</p> <p>She walked toward the exit.</p>	<p>towards: British spelling</p> <p>She walked towards the exit.</p>
traveled/travelled	<p>traveled: American spelling, preferred</p>	<p>travelled: British spelling</p>

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
upward/upwards	upward: American spelling EIA prefers upward We revised the forecast upward.	upwards: British spelling
verbal/oral	verbal: technically, both written and spoken	oral: spoken
weather/whether	weather: state of atmospheric conditions The city's website has a link to the local weather forecast.	whether: used to introduce alternative possibilities This figure indicates whether markets are shifting.
web/the Web	web: an adjective meaning "related to the World Wide Web;" when used as an adjective, "web" is lowercased. I did web research to write my term paper.	the Web: short for the World Wide Web, when used as a noun. I used the Web to research my vacation.
website/web page	website: a collection of web pages. EIA uses <i>website</i> as a compound word. EIA's website contains lots of information. <i>webcast</i> is also a compound word.	web page: a single web page (with a single URL). EIA uses <i>web page</i> as two words, where <i>web</i> is an adjective. I researched electricity information on EIA's web pages.

Commonly Misused Words	Definition and Example	Definition and Example
which/that	<p>which: a pronoun used to introduce non-essential information. Nearly always has a comma before it</p> <p>This book, which is one of my favorites, is a historical novel.</p> <p>Note: Which and that are not interchangeable. <i>Which</i> is not a more elegant way to say <i>that</i>. If you can use the word <i>that</i>, use <i>that</i>.</p>	<p>that: a pronoun used to introduce essential information. Phrases with no preceding comma</p> <p>I like books that have good stories.</p> <p>Incorrect: This is the book which I bought yesterday.</p> <p>Correct: This is the book that I bought yesterday.</p>
while/whilst	<p>while: American spelling. EIA prefers American English</p> <p>While we were taking a test, the teacher left the room.</p>	<p>whilst: British spelling</p> <p>Whilst we were taking a test, the teacher left the room.</p>
your/you're	<p>your: belonging to you</p> <p>Your electricity use is measured with a meter.</p>	<p>you're: contraction for "you are"</p> <p>You're likely to see energy prices increase.</p>

- Him and me, he and I

The use of the words *me* and *I* is tricky and often confusing. One way to figure out if you're using them correctly is to break the original sentence into two shorter sentences. If your wording sounds correct when separated, you've gotten it right. If the wording sounds off or incorrect, you're using *me* and/or *I* incorrectly.

Correct: Give it to him and me.
Separated into two shorter sentences: Give it to him. Give it to me.

Incorrect: Give it to he and I.
Separated into two shorter sentences: Give it to he. Give it to I.

This grammar question becomes more confusing when *he and I* are the subject of the sentence rather than the direct object.

Correct: He and I went to the party.
Separated into two shorter sentences: He went to the party. I went to the party.

Incorrect: Him and me went to the party.
Separated into two shorter sentences: Him went to the party. Me went to the party.

Correct: The party was fun for Sam and me.
Separated into two shorter sentences: The party was fun for Sam. The party was fun for me.

Incorrect: The party was fun for Sam and I.
Separated into two shorter sentences: The party was fun for Sam. The party was fun for I.

- One word or two?

One Word	Two Word
breakout	decision makers
database	policy makers
dataset	power plant
email	web page
homepage	
kilowatthour	
lightbulb	
nonsalt	
website	

Chapter 6: Capitalization

1. Capitalization (or not) for words and terms frequently used by EIA

Administration (when referring to executive branch of federal government)

the Arctic

British thermal unit(s) (Btu is singular and plural.)

crude oil (but capitalize specific types or blends, for example, Brent, West Texas Intermediate)

Census region, Census division

Department of Energy

DOE

earth

East Coast

the East

eastern United States

EIA (not "the EIA" and not U.S. EIA)

email (not Email, E-mail, or e-mail)

The terms email and website have evolved over the past decade and have become distinct words or terms that do not require hyphens or capitals.

email list (not 'listserv,' which is a protected trademark that EIA may not use)

euro

fall

federal – lower case for general uses

Federal Register Notice

Federal Reserve Board

Federal Trade Commission

Forrestal Building

gigawatt (GW)

gross domestic product (GDP)

Gulf of Mexico (GOM)

homepage (one word, lower case)

HR 2454 (for House Rule: no periods)

Imported Refiner Acquisition Cost

Internet

Internet service provider (ISP)

intranet

kilowatthour (kWh)

Lower 48 states or lower 48 states (do not use a hyphen)—be consistent within your document. Make sure you include the word *states*.

megawatt (MW)

Middle East

the Midwest

moon

the nation (lower case)

New England

the North

the North Pole

North Sea

Northern Hemisphere

northern New Mexico

Nymex futures

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

OECD

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (don't forget the 'the')

OPEC

the Pacific Northwest

PAD Districts

the Persian Gulf

seasons are lower case (spring, summer, winter, fall)—except when the seasons are part of a proper noun such as Summer Olympics or Spring Semester

spring

southern France

South Africa, but southern Africa

South Korea

Southern Hemisphere

Silicon Valley

states (lower case)

the South

the Southeast region

the South Pole

the State of Colorado

summer

Washington State

the West

West Coast

Western Hemisphere time zones (Eastern Standard time, Eastern time zone, Mountain time)

the U.S. Energy Information Administration (but just EIA, not “the EIA”)

U.S. (with periods, never US; spell out United States when used as a noun)

URL

Washington, DC

World Wide Web

the Web (short for World Wide Web)

web page (*web* is lowercased when used as an adjective)

webcast

webinar

website

winter

For more information on capitalizing names of regions, localities, and geographic features, see: *The Chicago Manual of Style*: [Popular Names and Terms](#) or *GPO Style Manual*: [Capitalization Rules](#).

2. Capitalizing and punctuating bulleted or numbered lists

- Capitalize the first word in a bulleted or numbered list, even if the listed items are not complete sentences.
- Don't use any punctuation at the ends of the bulleted items unless they are complete sentences.

Correct punctuation (none):

There are four energy-consuming sectors:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Transportation

Incorrect punctuation (don't end with semicolons):

There are four energy-consuming sectors:

- Residential;
- Commercial;
- Industrial;
- Transportation;

Incorrect punctuation (don't end with commas):

There are four energy-consuming sectors:

- Residential,
- Commercial,
- Industrial, and
- Transportation.

Incorrect punctuation (don't end with periods, unless every bullet is a complete sentence):

There are four energy-consuming sectors:

- Residential.
- Commercial.
- Industrial.
- Transportation.

- Sometimes it is tempting to not capitalize the first word of every bullet. This style is not wrong; it's just not EIA style.

EIA capitalization style:

I have three pets:

- Bird
- Dog
- Cat

Alternative lower-case style (not wrong, but not EIA style):

I have three pets:

- bird
- dog
- cat

Note: Use numbers only for items that have a sequence (step by step) or an intended order (top 10 oil-producing states). Otherwise, use [bullets](#).

Correct:

Steps to apply:

- Fill out the form
- Sign the form
- Turn in the form

Correct:

The top three coal-producing states are:

- Wyoming
- West Virginia
- Kentucky

Also, correct (adding numbers indicates order)

Steps to apply:

1. Fill out the form
2. Sign the form
3. Turn in the form

Also, correct (adding numbers indicates ranks)

The top three coal-producing states are:

1. Wyoming
2. West Virginia
3. Kentucky

3. Capitalizing web page titles and headings

Two types of capitalization for titles and headings:

Sentence case: Just like the capitalization in a sentence—only the first word of the title or heading is capitalized (and, of course, any names and proper nouns).

Sentence case capitalization: Natural gas production increased in 2012.

Title case: The first letter of each major word in the title headings is capitalized. Do not capitalize but, for, or, to, as, a, etc.

Title case capitalization: Natural Gas Production Increased in 2012.

Which type of capitalization you should use depends on your content, the style sheet format (if applicable), and author and/or supervisor preference. The agency is moving more toward sentence case for subheadings, graph titles, and graph labels.

4. Definition of title case

- Capitalize the main words of table titles and most headings and subheadings, including the second word in a hyphenated term (e.g., PV Program Five-Year Plan).
- Do not capitalize articles (e.g., *a*, *an*, and *the*) unless they begin the title or heading; conjunctions (e.g., *and*, *or*, *nor*, and *but*); or prepositions (e.g., *for*, *of*, and *to*) unless they contain four or more letters. When *to* is used in a title or heading, it is capitalized as an infinitive and lowercase as a preposition. Verbs are always capitalized, including *is* and *are*.

Correct title case:

Projected Summer Gasoline Prices Are Near Last Summer's Level
Chavez's Opponents Accuse Him of Squandering Venezuela's Resources
North American Electric Reliability Regions Map
U.S. Petroleum Administration for Defense Districts (PADD) Map
International Energy Data and Analysis

- Capitalize all first and last words in title-case titles and headings.

The Signal Scientists Wait For

- Capitalize hyphenated words that would be capitalized if standing alone.

Correct: Short-Term Energy Outlook
Correct: Long-Term Forecast Shows Growth

- Do not capitalize hyphenated words if those words would be lowercased if standing alone, if using title case.

Correct: Renewable and non-Renewable Fuel

- Always capitalize the word *to* when it precedes a verb, if using title case.

Correct: Researchers To Discuss Recent Findings
Correct: How To Subscribe to the Newsletter

- Do not capitalize the word *to* in other uses.

Correct: Add International Data to Your Sample Set

5. Capitalizing governmental references

- Do not capitalize the words federal, state, nation, and government or the names of any government entities below the state level, unless it is part of a proper noun.

Correct: What state uses the most electricity?
Correct: The renewable initiative is a federal program.

Correct: How much oil does our nation import?

- Do not capitalize government entities below the state level, unless the entity name is part of the proper name.

Correct:

Both county and city governments levy gasoline taxes.
I was born in Carson City, Nevada.
Los Angeles County is in California.

- United States: Spell out United States when it's used as a noun. Use terms such as United States, country, or nation. Avoid using the term American, which can sometimes refer to more than just the United States.

Correct: Grand Coulee Dam is the largest electric power facility in the country.

Incorrect: Grand Coulee Dam is the largest electric power facility in America.

- Congress: Capitalize the full names and shortened names of governmental organizations. Congress is capitalized but congressional is not.

Correct: The U.S. Congress is considering amendments to energy legislation. The Congress did not pass the amendments.

Correct: The congressional session resulted in no action.

Remember to be consistent in capitalization of governmental references within each document.

6. Capitalizing acts, treaties, and government programs

- Capitalize formal or accepted titles of rules, pacts, plans, policies, treaties, acts, programs, and similar documents or agreements.

Correct: The Clean Air Interstate Rule (CAIR) was promulgated by EPA in March 2005. This rule was published in the Federal Register.

- Do not capitalize incomplete or generic forms of acts, treaties, and government programs.

Correct: The treaty set international standards.

For more information on capitalizing governmental entities, see: *GPO Style Manual*, [Chapter 3: Capitalization rules](#) and [Chapter 4: Capitalization examples](#).

7. Using capitals in EIA organization names

- Capitalize names of specific offices and teams. Do not capitalize organization names in generic, non-specific references.

Correct: Office of Communications
Correct: Petroleum Marketing Statistics Team

Correct: Meet with your office director.
Correct: EIA has many team leaders.

8. Using bold for emphasis instead of capitals

Do not write in all capital letters for emphasis, which is interpreted as shouting at the reader. Use bold instead of uppercase when you want to emphasize a word or phrase.

Correct: Important note: We review databases annually.
Incorrect: IMPORTANT NOTE: We review databases annually.

Correct: That is why these technologies must **never** be abandoned.
Incorrect: That is why these technologies must NEVER be abandoned.

9. Capitalizing Internet-related words

homepage
Internet
Internet service provider (ISP)
intranet
URL
the Web (short for World Wide Web)
web page ("web" is lowercased when used as an adjective)
webcast
webinar
website
World Wide Web

10. Capitalizing embedded hypertext links

- When the text in the embedded link is the title of a publication, etc., match the link capitalization to the capitalization of the publication's title.

Examples:

[Electric Power Monthly](#) is released mid-month.
See [What's New in the International Petroleum Monthly](#) for details.

- When the text in the embedded link is not a title, use lower case.

Example: Information on [pipeline capacity](#) covers all four regions of the United States.

- Do not capitalize embedded links that are not proper nouns or titles.

Example: The [updated information](#) was released today.

11. Using capitals in company names

- Capitalize the same way the company does.

Example: Use Twitter, but tweet

- Use camelcase (capital letters inside the name or word) only if it is the formal company name.

Examples:

PowerPoint

TiVo

PayPal

iPod

- Avoid using all caps for company and other names unless that is the way they spell their name.

Examples:

Bentek, not BENTEK

Nymex, not NYMEX

Pepco, not PEPCO

ENERGY STAR® is a registered trademark

Chapter 7: Numbers

1. Writing out numbers or numerals

- Write out numbers from one through nine. Exceptions: When the numbers refer to percentages (2%), time of day (4:00 o'clock), or measurement (3 inches, 9 miles).

Correct: The five renewable energy sources used most often are biomass, hydropower, geothermal, wind, and solar.

Correct: We did eight experiments with two barrels of oil.

Correct: The report is due in four months.

- Use numerals for numbers 10 and above.

Correct: In this report, the U.S. Energy Information Administration presents 10 major energy trends.

Correct: Nearly 30 million tons of trash were processed last year in waste-to-energy facilities.

- Write out any number that begins a sentence.

Examples:

Twenty-two people came to the meeting.

Thirty-one municipalities have proposed commercial nuclear power plants.

Fifteen years later, production at the mine had increased.

- Write out ordinal numbers (a number that indicates rank) under 10; use numerals for ordinal numbers 10 and above.

Example: China is the fifth largest producer of oil.

Example: As of January 2005, Louisiana ranked 15th in nuclear capacity.

- Use numerals for each number when two or more numbers appear in a sentence and one of them is 10 or larger.

Correct: Last month, 8 of the 16 geothermal sites were evaluated.

Incorrect: Last month, eight of the 16 geothermal sites were evaluated.

Correct: At the meeting of 12 offices and 3 divisions, they all had the same ideas.

Incorrect: At the meeting of the 12 offices and three divisions, they all had the same ideas.

- Use numerals (not words) usually until 1 million.

Examples:

3,000, not 3 thousand (unless you are comparing it with 285 thousand in the same sentence)
 680,000 or 680 thousand (either is ok, just be consistent)
 3 million, not 3,000,000

2. Writing out or using numerals for fractions

- Write out simple fractions and use hyphens.

Examples:

Coal typically fuels about nine-tenths of net electricity generation in Ohio.
 Three-quarters of the congressional members voted for the bill.
 The law passed by a two-thirds majority.

- Use numerals for mixed fractions.

Example: The 7½-inch pipeline crosses two states.

- Don't use th for fractions or dates.

Correct: The tear was 1/64 of an inch.
Incorrect: The tear was 1/64th of an inch.

Correct: May 7
Incorrect: May 7th

- Write out fractions that are followed by *a*, *of*, or *an*.

Example: The cake recipe called for a quarter cup of milk.

- Use numerals in fractions that are followed by a unit of measure.

Correct: The coal beds are at least ¾ miles apart.
Correct: The outage lasted for 1½ days.

3. Writing out or using the % sign for percent

One noticeable difference across EIA content is the use of *percent* and %. Traditionally, especially before the Internet, EIA used the word *percent*, a more formal style of writing. With the broadening of our audience through the website and the growing amount of educational content written for non-scientific and non-technical readers, EIA decided to use the % sign, a more informal style, in those areas. The decision to use *percent* rather than % rests with the author, supervisor, and Assistant Administrator, and with their determinations about [formality](#) and target audience.

- Express percentages in numerals.

Correct: During 2000, the inflation rate rose by 3 percent.
Correct: During 2000, the inflation rate rose by 3%.
Correct: The oil price shocks result in a 75-percent rise in gas prices.

Incorrect: During 2000, the inflation rate rose by three percent.

- Use the percent sign (%) or the word *percent* consistently within a document. Use *percent* in most EIA reports and the % sign in educational content. Do not put a space between the number and the percent sign (%).

Less formal: Almost 50% of U.S. oil imports comes from the Western Hemisphere; only 16% comes from the Persian Gulf.

More formal: World coal consumption increases by 74 percent, and international coal trade increases by 44 percent.

4. Writing ranges of numbers and adjacent numbers

- When writing a range, state the units or % with both values. If a budget increase was \$3-\$4 million dollars, that might mean \$3 to \$4 million, or \$3 million to \$4 million. State the units with each number to eliminate ambiguity.

Correct: Consumption rose 2%–4% across four regions. (repeat %, – means *to*)
Correct: Consumption rose 2% to 4% across four regions.

Incorrect: Consumption rose 2–4% across four regions.
Incorrect: Consumption rose 2 to 4% across four regions.

Correct: The temperature ranged between 32°C–40°C.
Correct: Our budget increase may be \$3 million–\$4 million.

- Adjacent numbers

Correct: The utility built ten 5-kW reactors.
Correct: The pipeline was built in fifteen 10-mile stretches.

5. Writing negative numbers or minus signs

- When writing negative numbers, always use a hyphen (not an en-dash) for the negative sign.

Correct: The temperature was -4°F.
Incorrect: The temperature was –4°F.

- When writing a calculation, spell out the word *minus* rather than using the negative sign.

Correct: The total was 30 minus 27.

Incorrect: The total was 30-27. (This style makes the total look like a range rather than a subtracted value.)

6. Using numerals with units of measure

Correct: I drove 8 miles.

Correct: The bottle contained 4 liters.

- Calendar references are not units of measure, so spell out the numbers.

Correct: The meeting is in three days.

Correct: I will go on vacation in six months.

7. Using numbers with currency

- Write out the word *cents* when writing about cents only (when not writing about dollars).

Example: The price of gasoline went up 15 cents per gallon last week.

- Sometimes when writing about prices (especially gasoline prices), it makes sense to state the actual prices in dollars per gallon and the price changes in cents per gallon. Again, be consistent in usage and style. Check with your supervisor if you are uncertain about units.

Correct: The U.S. retail price of gasoline decreased \$0.15 per gallon last week to \$3.82 per gallon, \$0.34 per gallon higher than last year at this time.

Correct: The U.S. retail price of gasoline decreased 15 cents per gallon last week to \$3.82 per gallon, 34 cents per gallon higher than last year at this time.

- If numerals are used for dollars, use the dollar sign (\$).

Example: The average coal-fired power plant costs \$850 million to build.

- If adjusting for inflation, use 2012 dollars or 2012\$, not \$2012.

Correct: The price of gasoline was adjusted for inflation using 2012\$.

Correct: The price of gasoline was adjusted for inflation using 2012 dollars.

- Numbers or prices in the same sentence should be shown to the same significance.

Correct: The cost of electricity rose from 6.7 cents per kWh to 7.0 cents per kWh.

Incorrect: The cost of electricity rose from 6.7 cents per kWh to 7 cents per kWh.

8. Mixing numerals and written-out numbers for very large numbers

To make large numbers (beginning with million) easier to read, mix numerals and written-out units.

Correct: In December 2007, two countries exported more than 1.5 million barrels per day to the United States.

Correct: Libya has eight oil fields with reserves of 10 billion barrels or more each, and four others with reserves of 500 million to 10 billion barrels.

Correct: The population is 3 billion people.

9. Writing out or using numerals for dates and years

- Use numerals to refer to a span of years. You can omit the first two digits of the second number if the meaning is clear.

Correct:

The model year 2005-07 standards

Between 2012-14

Between FY 2000-FY 2015

- Use all four digits of a year; don't omit the first two digits.

Correct: New investment in clean energy sources soared in 2008.

Incorrect: New investment in clean energy sources soared in '08.

- Write out the number associated with a century if the number is below 10. Use lower case.

Correct: Wood fueled the country from its earliest years through the middle of the 19th century.

Correct: Chinese merchants and traders arrived and settled in the ninth century.

- Write out decades in lowercase, or use numerals. If you use numerals, do not use the apostrophe between the numerals and the s.

Correct: 1990s

Incorrect: 1990's

- For dates.

Correct: Jan 3

Incorrect: Jan 3rd

- Don't begin a sentence with a year. Two choices:

Correct: Nineteen ninety eight was a good year.

Correct: The year 1998 was good.

10. Writing out or using numerals for time

- Write out the numbers when combined with the word *o'clock*.

Correct: Every day, Marie Curie read until three o'clock in the morning.

- Use numerals for exact times that are followed by a.m. or p.m.

Correct: Several thousand customers were affected by yesterday's 5:15 a.m. power outage.

- Write out the words *noon* and *midnight* and combine with numerals. Don't use 12:00 p.m. or 12:00 a.m. or 12:00.

Correct: The market will run from 9:00 a.m. through 12:00 noon.

Correct: Ending stocks are held in storage as of 12:00 midnight.

11. Using commas in numerals of four digits or more

Use commas between groups of three digits, starting from the right, to show thousands, millions, etc. both in text and on graphs.

Correct: A short ton is a unit of weight equal to 2,000 pounds.

Correct: PV cells and module shipments increased from 181,116 to 226,916 peak kilowatthours.

12. Using decimals and significant digits

- Use a zero before a decimal point if there is no value in the first place to the left of the decimal.

Correct: The price fell by 0.2 percent.

Incorrect: The price fell by .2 percent.

- Use the same level of significant digits in a comparison or section.

Consistent: Consumption rose by 2.0% in February and 3.2% in March.

Inconsistent: Consumption rose by 2% in February and 3.2% in March.

- Round to a whole number unless it is important to show the exact number.

Rounded: Crude oil imports in February 2008 were 15 million barrels per day.

More significance: Crude oil imports in February 2008 were 15.013 million barrels per day.

- Omit zeros after a decimal point unless they indicate exact measurement and the audience needs to know the level of significance. Use whole numbers to show percent change if possible. Remember that 3% means something different than 3.0%.

Correct: OPEC crude oil production will average about 32.2 million bbl/d during the first quarter of 2008, down from 33.0 million bbl/d last year.

Correct: Prices rose about 3% between March and April.

- The number of significant digits might vary within a document. You don't have to show the same number of digits for each figure you write within a document. Try to be consistent within sentences and paragraphs when you refer to the same units.

For more information on numbers, see *The Chicago Manual of Style*, [Chapter 9: Numbers](#) and *GPO Style Manual*, [Chapter 12: Numerals](#).

13. Writing about changes in values

- Be careful when writing that a value increased four-fold. If something goes from 1 to 4, that's a four-fold increase but only a 300% increase. These calculations are not easy for readers to understand.

Correct, more clear: Consumption increased from 1 **unit** to 4 **units**, or 300%, between 2012–2013.

Correct, possibly confusing: Consumption increased four-fold between 2012–2013.

- Restating a change: If you state a change in physical units and then restate the same change as a percentage, you must use a comma or commas to show you are restating the same change.

Correct: Production fell by 6 million bbl/d, or 10%, in 2014.

Incorrect: Production fell by 6 million bbl/d or 10%. (Omitting the comma means it fell by one value **or** the other. The comma signals that it fell by both values.)

Correct: Oil prices rose from \$80 per barrel to \$100 per barrel, or 25%, between 2007 and 2008.

Incorrect: Oil prices rose from \$80 per barrel to \$100 per barrel or 25% between 2007 and 2008.

Writers make this mistake when they state the change in units and then restate the change as a percentage. It's not that it changed by this amount or this other amount. Rather, it's that it changed by this amount, or restated, it changed by this other amount.

14. Formatting phone numbers

Show the area code, and use hyphens between number groups. Do not use parentheses or periods around or between numbers.

Technical Inquiries

Phone: 202-586-8959

15. Typing scientific notations and footnotes

EIA web pages and publications often contain scientific notations, such as CO₂ for carbon dioxide, and footnotes that normally appear as superscript numbers. Use the following steps to make numbered characters appear as subscript or superscript where necessary.

In Word:

1. Type out the text that includes the character that you want to be in subscript (or superscript).
2. Highlight the character (or number) to be subscripted. Click on the Format tab in the upper toolbar.
4. Choose Font. Check the Subscript checkbox, and then OK.

Chapter 8: Commas

1. Using commas with listed items within sentences

- Use commas to separate three or more items in a list. Don't forget the comma between the last two items. This comma is often called the serial comma (or the Oxford comma) and is an EIA style choice.

Example: The pump price reflects the costs of refiners, marketers, distributors, and retail gas station owners.

Example: The American flag is red, white, and blue.

- Sometimes the serial comma is imperative for clarity. Adding one comma in the second sentence below adds two people to the meaning.

Example: Two girls, Christine and Michelle, studied in the library. (2 people)

Example: Two girls, Christine, and Michelle studied in the library. (4 people)

2. Using commas with introductory phrases

- Use a comma after introductory words, phrases, or clauses.

Example: After drafting the regulations, the agency called for comments.

- Using a comma after a short introductory phrase is often optional, but an introductory phrase of four words or more should be followed by a comma to make the sentence easier to read.

Correct (but optional) commas.

Example: In addition, federal taxes are added to the price of gasoline.

Example: In 2012, EIA got a new administrator.

Example: Of course, we approved the report.

- Long introductory phrases requiring an introductory comma.

Example: When the Navy destroyers engaged North Vietnamese torpedo boats in August 1964, the United States officially entered the Vietnam War.

- One way to avoid this comma-use dilemma is to change the order of the components of the sentence, so no comma is needed. It depends on what you are trying to emphasize in the sentence.

Example: The United States officially entered the Vietnam War when the Navy destroyers engaged North Vietnamese torpedo boats in battle in August 1964.

- Don't use a comma after an introductory phrase that is followed by a verb.

Example: Issuing the regulations begins the review process.

3. Using commas with clauses

- The words *which* and *that* are not interchangeable. You use the word *which* in cases where the text that follows elaborates on the first part of the sentence. You use the word *that* in cases where the sentence doesn't need a comma to break up the two thoughts in the sentence.
- Use a comma before a clause that begins with *which*.
- Do not use a comma before *that*.

Example: EIA's conference chairs, which are old, will be replaced.
(All of EIA's conference chairs will be replaced because they all happen to be old.)

Example: EIA's conference chairs that are old will be replaced.
(Only EIA's old conference chairs will be replaced, but the new ones will not be replaced.)

For more information on using *which* and *that*, see: [Chapter 5: Commonly Misused Words](#)

- Use commas to set off supplemental or parenthetical information.
- Do not use commas if the phrase or clause restricts the meaning such that, if you deleted the phrase or clause, the sentence would be unclear.

Correct: The amendments, adopted in 1960, changed enforcement procedures.

The commas setting off *adopted in 1960* signify that the date of adoption informs, but does not restrict, which amendments are being discussed.

Example: The amendments adopted in 1960 changed enforcement procedures.

Without commas, the sentence indicates that the amendments that were adopted in 1960 set forth the procedures. The phrase restricts which amendments are being discussed.

4. Using commas with conjunctions and with two complete sentences

Use a comma when two complete sentences are separated by a conjunction, such as *and*, *but* and *or*.

Complete sentence, *but* complete sentence.
Complete sentence, *while* complete sentence.
Complete sentence, *and* complete sentence.

Correct: I would like to attend the conference, but I can't find registration information.

Correct: Paul pumped the gas, and Mary got a soda.

Correct: I was hungry, so I went to the store.

(two sentences separated by a comma)

Correct: Paul pumped the gas and got a soda.

Incorrect: Paul pumped the gas, and got a soda.

Correct: I was hungry and went for dinner.

(one sentence with no comma)

Either put the thoughts in two separate sentences, or, if you put them together, use a comma between the two complete sentences.

5. Using a comma to separate a name from a title

Correct: John Smith, human resources director, issued the regulations regarding leave.

Don't forget the second comma.

6. Using commas in dates

- Do not use a comma to separate the month from the year.

Incorrect: October, 2012

Incorrect: Oct. 2012

Incorrect: October of 2012

- Use a comma to separate the date from the year but not the month from the year.

Correct: October 4, 2012

Correct: October 2012

7. Commas after e.g. and i.e.

Always put a comma after e.g. and i.e. Do not italicize e.g. or i.e. EIA preferred style is to say *for example* or *that is* rather than using these abbreviations.

Preferred: I like ethnic food (for example, Thai, Mexican, and Indian).

Correct: I like ethnic food (e.g., Thai, Mexican, and Indian).

Preferred: The year has four seasons, that is, winter, spring, summer, and fall.

Correct: The year has four seasons, i.e., winter, spring, summer, and fall.

8. Using commas with however

Correct: However hard I tried, I couldn't stop eating chocolate. (no comma after however)

Correct: However, I didn't gain any weight. (comma) (beginning a sentence with 'however' is not recommended)

9. Using commas with too

Correct: I like it too.

Correct: I like it, too.

Either way is correct. Style books say the comma puts a little more emphasis on the word *too*.

10. Using commas when restating a numerical change

Correct: Oil prices rose from \$80 per barrel to \$100 per barrel, or 25%, between 2007 and 2008.

Incorrect: Oil prices rose from \$80 per barrel to \$100 per barrel or 25% between 2007 and 2008.

Writers make this mistake when they state the change in units and then restate the change as a percentage. It's not that it changed by this amount or this other amount. Rather, it's that it changed by this amount, or restated, it changed by this other amount. The commas setting off the restatement are critical.

11. Using commas with large numbers

Correct: 1,200

Incorrect: 1200

International: 1 200

Use commas to show thousand in writing and on graph axes. Some graphing packages drop the comma, just using 1000, 1200, 1400. This approach is not EIA style.

Chapter 9: Hyphens and Dashes

1. Hyphen (-), En-dash (–), and Em-dash (—)

The two types of dashes and the hyphen have different uses and are *not* interchangeable. Simply put, hyphens bring words together, en-dashes show a span or relationship, and em-dashes set words apart.

Example with all three: The three-year-old nuclear reactor—located at Crystal Lake—will be closed from 3–5 weeks for a safety evaluation.

Em-dash and en-dash are strange names for dashes, but they come from the historical width of the typed capital letters M and N. You can remember an em-dash is longer because a capital M is wider than a capital N.

The rules for using hyphens in compound words are somewhat flexible. Compound words frequently have a "hyphen stage" when they are newly combined, then the hyphen disappears as the compound is commonly used and becomes one word. For example, *on line* became *on-line* and is now *online*.

- Hyphen (-) connects words for clarity. It is the shortest of the three dash lines.

Correct: short-term forecasts, combined-cycle plant, shut-in capacity

- En-dash (–) shows a range from (something) to (something else). You should be able to substitute the word *to* for an en-dash. An en-dash is longer than a hyphen but shorter than an em-dash.

Correct: The party is from 3:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Correct: Consumption rose by 2%–4%

- Em-dash (—) is twice as wide as a hyphen and serves the same purpose as commas or parentheses, with a phrase set between them. Em-dashes are often used in pairs. Use an em-dash to indicate a sudden break or abrupt change in thought.

Correct: Consumption of liquid fuels is projected to decline in 2008—a sharp reversal from previous projections.

Correct: Most—but not all—of the attendees were from EIA.

Typing an en-dash: There is no computer key for typing an en-dash. You either need to insert it as a symbol, or, in Microsoft Word, click at the position in the document where you want the en-dash. Press the CTRL key on the keyboard and hold it down. Press and release the – key on the numeric keypad. Release the CTRL key. No spaces between words and an en-dash.

Typing an em-dash: There is no computer key for typing an em-dash. You need to either insert it as a symbol, or, in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens and then leave no space between the second hyphen and the next word. Microsoft Word will automatically convert the two hyphens to an em-dash. No spaces between words and an em-dash.

Never use a hyphen in place of a dash. When people say “use a dash,” they almost always mean an em-dash.

2. Hyphenating compound words

- Use a hyphen between words when they are combined to modify the word that follows.

Examples:

near-term contract
agreed-upon standards
long-term forecast
combined-cycle plant
high-level discussion
high-volume wells

- Don't use a hyphen in compound words when the meaning is clear without the hyphen and the hyphen will not aid readability.

Examples:

bituminous coal industry
child welfare plan
civil rights case
per capita

- Proper noun compounds: with hyphens.

Examples:

Spanish-American pride
Winston-Salem festival
African-American program
Franco-Prussian War

- Dangling hyphens: when two or more hyphenated compounds have a common element and this element is omitted in all but the last term.

Examples:

coal- and natural gas-fired generation
 highly service- and technology-oriented business
 pro- and anti-competitive practices
 long- and short-term forecasts

- Two modifiers before a noun with an adverb that ends in "-ly.": no hyphen.

Examples:

rapidly growing economy
 frequently missed deadlines
 heavily skewed results

- Compound that includes a non-English phrase: no hyphen.

Examples:

bona fide transaction
 ex officio member
 per capita consumption

- General hyphen examples.

I walked the much-loved dog.
 The dog was much loved.

We use a low-cost fuel.
 That fuel is low cost.

It's a day-to-day task.
 I take life day to day.

I bought a new air-conditioning unit.
 I am chilled by the air conditioning.

- The terms *end use* and *end-use* are often used in EIA publications. A hyphen is required when end-use is used as an adjective but not when it's used as a noun.

Correct: Residential is one of the end-use sectors.

Incorrect: Residential is one of the end use sectors.

Correct: The end uses of electricity include powering lights and providing air conditioning.

Incorrect: The end-uses of electricity include powering lights and providing air conditioning.

3. Using a hyphen to prevent mispronunciation or to avoid ambiguity in context

- In some cases, you should use a hyphen to prevent mispronunciation or to avoid ambiguity of a word.

Examples:

mid-decade
non-civil-service position
pre-position
re-creation
re-sorting
un-ionized
re-entry
re-press
re-license

- Sometimes a hyphen is needed to prevent ambiguity in a sentence.

Clear: The scientist tested a new defect-causing gas.

Not clear: The scientist tested a new defect causing gas.

The hyphen makes it clear the gas is causing defects.

Clear: The silver-jewelry cart has nice gifts.

Not clear: The silver jewelry cart has nice gifts.

The hyphen makes it clear the jewelry is silver.

4. Using hyphens with numbers

- Use a hyphen when the number is a descriptor and a modifier for numbers between 21 and 99.

Examples:

24-inch ruler
10-minute delay
3-to-1 ratio
18-year old power plant
over a 12-month period
five-year plan
three-week period

- Use a hyphen between the elements of a fraction.

Correct:

one-thousandth
two-thirds
three-fourths of an inch

- Do not use a hyphen to indicate a range. Use an en-dash.

Correct: between 25 inches and 30 inches

Correct: between 25–30 inches

Incorrect: between 25-30 inches

- Do not use a hyphen to mean *minus*. The hyphen below looks like a dash, not a subtraction sign.

Correct: Imports minus Exports.

Incorrect: Imports-Exports.

5. Using hyphens with civil and military titles

- Do not use a hyphen with a civil or military title denoting a single office, but do use a hyphen for a double title.

Examples of single title: no hyphen

Congressman at Large
major general

Examples of double title:

secretary-treasurer
treasurer-manager

- Use a hyphen with the adjectives elect and designate.

Example:

President-elect
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development-designate
ambassador-designate

6. List of commonly hyphenated and non-hyphenated words and phrases

Commonly hyphenated words and phrases
agreed-upon standards
air-conditioning unit
around-the-clock basis
cap-and-trade legislation
combined-cycle unit
cost-of-living increase
day-ahead schedule
day-to-day tasks
drought-stricken area
end-use consumption
end-use sector
English-speaking nation
ex-governor
full-power days
government-owned stocks
high-speed line
land-use restrictions
large-scale project
light-year
line-item veto
long-term contract
long-term forecast
low-cost housing
low-sulfur diesel
lump-sum payment
market-based pricing
multiple-purpose uses
near-term contract
non-hydroelectric power
non-liquid
non-profit corporation
off-highway use
one-on-one situation
part-time personnel
passenger-mile
quasi-academic
self-contained units

Commonly hyphenated words and phrases
self-control
short-term outlook
state-of-the-art technology
shut-in capacity
T-shaped
ultra-low sulfur diesel
up-or-down vote
U.S.-owned property

List of commonly used EIA words that are not hyphenated
breakout (not break-out)
email (not e-mail)
lower 48 states or Lower 48 states
megabytes
nonutility
nonrenewable
nonsalt (Unless it's used as an adjective, like nonsalt-dome caverns.)
offline (for power plants)
online (for power plants)
shut in (e.g., The capacity is shut in.)
wellhead

For more information on hyphens, see:

The Chicago Manual of Style, [Chapter 6: Punctuation](#)

GPO Style Manual, [Chapter 6: Compounding Rules](#) and [Chapter 7: Compounding Examples](#)

Chapter 10: Colons and Semicolons

The purpose of the **colon** is to introduce, list, or define something. A colon signals that what comes next is directly related to the previous sentence.

The purpose of the **semicolon** is to signal that two clauses are related, but each clause could stand on its own as a sentence if you wanted them to.

A semicolon is stronger than a comma but weaker than a period.

1. Using colons with bulleted or numbered lists

- Use a colon to introduce a bulleted or numbered list if it's introduced by a complete sentence. Never use a colon after a sentence fragment.

Correct:

The price that consumers pay for heating oil can change for a variety of reasons: (complete sentence, so the colon is used correctly)

- Seasonal demand
- Fluctuations in crude oil prices
- Competition in local markets

Correct:

I have three pets: (complete sentence)

- Cat
- Dog
- Bird

Incorrect:

My pets include: (not complete sentence)

- Cat
- Dog
- Bird

- But omit the colon if a subheading introduces a list.

Correct:

Forecasts (phrase, so no colon)

- Annual Energy Outlook
- Short-Term Energy Outlook
- International Energy Outlook

For more information on punctuating lists, see [Chapter 15: Itemized Lists and Bullets](#).

2. Using colons with examples

Use a colon to introduce an example or explanation of the idea to the left of the colon. The word following the colon is normally lowercase, unless it is a proper name or more than one sentence.

Example: The requirement for claiming a tax credit is clear: you must have purchased the product in 2014.

3. Using colons with quotations

When you have a quotation that is at least one complete sentence, you can choose to introduce it with a colon. This option is stronger and more formal than using a comma.

Example: The Administrator said: “The forecast shows rising natural gas production.”

4. Using semicolons to join independent clauses

- Use a semicolon instead of a period to join two independent clauses to emphasize a close relationship between the two clauses. Do not capitalize the word after the semicolon.

Example: The report is on our website; you can download it.

- Use a semicolon between two independent clauses (sentences) joined by a transition word such as *therefore* and *however*.

Example: The price of the car is high; however, it includes taxes.

5. Using semicolons in a series

Use a semicolon to separate the items in a series when the items already include commas.

Example: Our regional offices are in Miami, Florida; Chicago, Illinois; and Phoenix, Arizona.

Chapter 11: Periods

- Use periods for U.S.

Correct: U.S. imports
Incorrect: US imports

Correct: U.S. Energy Information Administration
Incorrect: US E.I.A.
Incorrect: U.S. EIA

- Use periods for time a.m. and p.m.

Correct: 7:00 a.m.
Incorrect: 7:00 am
Incorrect: 7:00 AM

- Periods inside or outside parentheses.

Period outside: ...(phrase). If the content inside the parens is a phrase, the period goes **outside** the close paren.

Period inside: (Complete sentence.) If the content inside the parens is a complete sentence, the period goes **inside** the close paren.

- Use a period at the end of notes and footnotes.
- Use only one period at the end of a sentence, if the last word also includes a period.

Correct: The greatest gains were at Apple, Inc.
Incorrect: The greatest gains were at Apple, Inc..

- No periods in abbreviations.

USSR (EIA prefers Former Soviet Union)
BC
HR (House Rule)
PhD
Washington, DC
Dec 2012 (in tables)

- Periods at the ends of bullets.

Correct bullet punctuation:

- Full sentence (period)
- Full sentence (period)
- Full sentence (period)

Correct bullet punctuation:

- Phrase (no period)
 - Phrase (no period)
 - Phrase (no period)
- Periods using i.e. and e.g.

Preferred: namely California, Texas, and Alaska (don't use i.e. at all)

Preferred: that is (or specifically) California, Texas, and Alaska

Correct, not preferred: i.e., California, Texas, and Alaska (always use a comma with i.e.)

Preferred: for example, bridge and gin rummy (don't use e.g. at all)

Preferred: including (or such as) bridge and gin rummy

Correct, not preferred: e.g., bridge and gin rummy (always use a comma with e.g.)

Chapter 12: Symbols

- **&** Almost never use the ampersand sign; only use it in very informal writing. You can use & if it is part of a proper name (H&M Department Store) or phrase (R&D).

Correct: cap and trade

Incorrect: cap & trade

Correct: imports and exports

Incorrect: imports & exports

- **[]** Bracket sequence

First level: [...(...)...]

Second level: {...[...(...)...]...}

- **...** Ellipses

The most common and formal use of ellipses is to indicate an omission. You use ellipses to show where you've dropped words or sentences from a quote.

A more informal use is in email messages, where the ellipsis is used to indicate a pause or break in thought. It can show a list is incomplete or the speaker has left something unsaid. Do not use this form of ellipses in formal EIA writing. Do not use ellipses to mean etc. or to indicate an unfinished sentence.

An ellipsis is three dots, never two dots, and never four dots.

To form the ellipsis, type three periods in a row and the AutoCorrect feature in Word changes three periods in a row to a single special ellipsis character. If your Auto Correct feature is disabled, you can insert the ellipsis by holding down Alt+Ctrl+ and the period (.)key.

- ***** Asterisk

It's a risk to use an asterisk (not pronounced asterix or asterick). An asterisk is usually used as an informal footnote. In most cases for footnotes, EIA uses numbers (for text and graphs) or, in some cases, lower-case letters (in [tables](#)).

- **!** Exclamation Point

Never use an exclamation point in formal EIA writing.

Chapter 13: Punctuating and Formatting Quoted Text

1. Using quotation marks with direct quotes

- Use quotation marks to set off direct quotes. Ending periods and commas go inside the close quote.

Example: The Senator said, "We must pass the legislation during this session."

- Do not use quotation marks if the text is paraphrased or not exactly what the person said or wrote.

Example: The Senator said that it is important to pass the legislation in this session.

- Periods and commas always go inside the quotation mark.

Example: "Good morning, everyone," said Secretary Chu.

Example: Secretary Chu began his presentation by saying, "Good morning, everyone."

- Semicolons and colons always go outside the quotation mark.

Example: I always read The New Yorker's "Talk of the Town"; it keeps me up-to-date on many issues.

Example: I enjoy reading "Talk of the Town": it's a great current events column.

- When the question, exclamation, or interruption is part of the quotation, the punctuation goes inside.

Example: "But you said the rate was \$6.95 per pound!" he said to the cashier.

- When the question, exclamation, or interruption applies to the whole sentence, the punctuation goes outside.

Example: What did the office director mean when he asked, "When will you be finished with the report"?

2. Using a comma to set off quoted text

- Use a comma to separate text from quoted material when the quoted material is a complete sentence or paragraph.

Example: The President said, "All federal employees will have the Friday after Christmas off."

- Omit the comma to separate text from quoted material when the quoted material is a phrase or fragment integrated into the sentence.

Example: The director said that energy consumption in transportation had "increased significantly."

3. Using punctuation marks with closed quotation marks

- Place a period or comma inside the closing quotation marks.

Example: EIA is required to report "the number and type of alternative fuel vehicles in existence."

Example: "Clean air standards are under review," said the director.

- Place colons, semicolons, question marks, and exclamation points outside of closing quotation marks, unless a question mark or exclamation point is part of the quoted material.

Example: Which congressional staffer said, "You must complete the report by the end of the fiscal year"?

Example: The director asked, "Do you have a deadline for the project?"

4. Using single quotation marks to set off quoted content within quotation marks

Example: The director explained, "The HR handbook says 'employees have two weeks of annual leave,' not three weeks."

5. Using ellipsis points in quoted text

- Use ellipsis points—three dots or periods—to indicate the omission of text from a quoted passage. An ellipsis consists of three periods (...).

Example: "The regulations specify clean air standards...and compliance regulations."

- An [ellipsis](#) may be combined with other punctuation, such as a comma, period, or question mark. There is no space between the ellipsis and the punctuation.

Example: Will you come...?

6. Formatting long quoted text as a block quotation

Integrate short quotes into the text; but indent a block of long text. Block quotes are not enclosed by quotation marks.

The press spokesman explained the purpose of the new publications:

Energy education is a critical part of EIA's mission. At a time when American consumers face many energy-related challenges, it is more important than ever to provide the public with reliable energy information in a format that is useful and accessible by the widest possible audience.

7. Avoid double quotes to emphasize words or phrases

- In most cases, avoid using quote marks around specific words. Where possible, use italics.
- Nicknamed “scare quotes,” they signal to the reader that this is not how the term is usually used. The intent may be to emphasize the quoted words, but the quotes may actually mislead or confuse the reader.

Incorrect examples:

“Free” delivery

“Down” elevator

“Licensed” plumber

Chapter 14: Abbreviations and Units

1. Defining abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms

In this Guide, *abbreviation* will be used generically to refer to abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms.

Abbreviation	Shortened form of a word or phrase. FYI Ph.D. (traditional usage) PhD (modern usage) preferred
Acronym	A word formed from the initial letters of other words. It's pronounced as a word rather than read as separate letters. OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) NASA (National Aeronautic and Space Administration)
Initialism	A term read as a series of letters. EIA MER FBI IRS

2. Spelling out a term the first time it is used

Spell out an abbreviation or acronym when it's first used. Follow it with the abbreviation in parentheses. If in doubt about the full name or correct spelling, check the primary source.

This new Short-Term Energy Outlook (STEO) is now available. STEO provides short-term energy forecasts.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration's (EIA) projection shows the price of natural gas is decreasing.

If your content is presented on one long web page with jump links to separate sections of the content, and if that content has acronyms that you define at the top, you should spell them out again farther down the page (or deeper in the report) so people who don't read from the top won't have to hunt around for the definition.

This guidance applies to long paper documents, as well. If you haven't used the acronyms in several pages or when you start a new chapter, you probably should spell out the acronyms again.

In general, avoid using too many abbreviations and acronyms. In a short document, try to avoid using them at all, especially if the term will only be used once or twice. Often it's easier to spell out the term twice.

For more information on abbreviations, see:

- [EIA's current list of energy-related abbreviations](#)
- [GovSpeak: A Guide to Government Acronyms & Abbreviations](#)
- [GPO Style Manual, Chapter 9: Abbreviations and Letter Symbols](#)
- [The Chicago Manual of Style, Chapter 15: Abbreviations](#)

3. Referencing EIA and DOE

Correct	Incorrect
EIA	the EIA
U.S. Energy Information Administration	the U.S. EIA
U.S. Department of Energy	U.S. DOE
DOE	the U.S. DOE

4. Abbreviating and spelling out United States

- Spell out United States when it is used as a noun.

Correct as a noun: Temperatures vary across the United States.
Correct as an adjective: U.S. temperatures vary widely.

- Use the abbreviation U.S. when it's used as an adjective, such as when it precedes the name of a government organization or a domestic energy statistic.
- Always use periods in U.S. (do not write US).

Correct: Each committee reports to the U.S. Congress regarding national energy needs and resources.
Correct: U.S. oil production rose in 1999.

- Spell out United States, even as an adjective, when it appears in a sentence containing the name or names of other countries.

Correct: Mexican oil, United States coal, and Canadian natural gas.
Incorrect: Mexican oil, U.S. coal, and Canadian natural gas.

5. Abbreviating the names of states and foreign countries

- In running text, spell out the state name when it stands alone or when it follows the name of a city. Do not use postal codes (CA, MI)—except for Washington, DC where the postal code is part

of the city's name—in text or tables or graphics. It's ok to use postal codes for states in footnotes and addresses.

Correct: Washington, DC no periods.

Correct: The earthquake happened near San Francisco, California.

Incorrect: The earthquake happened near San Francisco, CA.

- In bibliographies, lists, and mailing addresses, use the [U.S. Postal Service's two-letter no-period abbreviations](#).

In an address: Los Angeles, CA

In a bibliography: Richmond, VA

- Don't abbreviate the names of foreign countries except FSU for Former Soviet Union countries. Always spell out FSU the first time you use it.

6. Using periods with abbreviations

- Most abbreviations are written without periods, especially the ones that are pronounced letter by letter, including units of measure.

Examples:

ATM

BC

Btu

CAFE (no accent on E)

DOE

gal

kg (kilogram)

PADD (or PAD districts)

PhD

- Use no periods or spaces with abbreviations that appear in capitals, whether two letters or more.

Examples:

OECD

OPEC

MER

AER

AEO

ENERGY STAR® (include trademark only for the first use)

- Do not use periods for the names of laws.

Correct: HR 2454
Incorrect: H.R. 2454

- If an abbreviation that takes a period is used at the end of a sentence, a single period is used.

Example: The project team will meet at 10:30 a.m.

7. Using *a* or *an* before abbreviations

If the abbreviation starts with a consonant **sound** (not a consonant letter), use *a*. If the abbreviation starts with a vowel **sound**, use *an*.

Examples:

a TVA project (T consonant sound)

an EIA forecast (E vowel sound)

a RECS survey (*wrecks*) (begins with R consonant sound because RECS is pronounced)

an RPS policy (begins with *are* vowel sound)

8. Using abbreviations in lists

The Latin abbreviations *e.g.* and *i.e.* do not mean the same thing. Avoid confusion by just writing *for example*, *such as*, or *that is*.

- *e.g.* = for example, like, such as; provides examples for the content being discussed.
- *i.e.* = that is, that is to say; provides a descriptive or definitive statement about the statement already made.
- *ex.* = for example. Very informal. EIA prefers writing out *for example* or *such as*.

Correct: There are many fun things you can do on the Internet (*e.g.*, read, plan travel, social network).

Correct: The three people who attended the meeting (*i.e.*, Maya, Zoë, and Carson) agree with the plan.

- Always put a comma after *e.g.* and *i.e.*
- Never italicize these abbreviations.

9. Forming plural abbreviations

- Add an s to form a plural abbreviation.

Examples:

FAQs

FTEs

LDCs

Exception: Btu—do not add an s to the end of Btu. Btu is both singular and plural.

- Add an apostrophe before the s if the abbreviation consists of lowercase letters or a single letter.

Examples:

She earned all A's on her report card.

The class recited the abc's.

10. Forming possessive abbreviations

- To form a singular possessive, use an apostrophe before the s.

Examples:

DOE's policy

OPEC's members

This LDC's price hike

- To form a plural possessive, use an apostrophe after the s.

Example: The RNs' strike

Example: The various LDCs' price hikes

11. Abbreviating months

- Names of months followed by the day, or day and year, may be abbreviated in footnotes, tables, and bibliographies where space is limited. Spell out the months in text.
- In tables, EIA uses the style where periods are omitted and all months are written as three-letter abbreviations.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

- In text or in a footnote, either spell out the full name of the month or, if you must use the abbreviation, put a period at the end.

Correct: February in Washington, DC can be brutally cold.
Correct: February 12, 2012
Correct: February 2012
Correct, less preferred: Feb. 12, 2012 (use only if space is limited)
Incorrect: February of 2012

12. Using abbreviations with time

- Time zones. Abbreviated time zones are written without periods.

Example: Release Schedule: Monday between 4:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. ET

- EIA prefers the abbreviation ET (Eastern Time), which is the unchanging definition of the time zone of the far eastern United States. EST (Eastern Standard Time) and EDT (Eastern Daylight Time) are correct, but each applies to roughly one half of the year, as daylight saving time is in effect in most of the United States from the second Sunday in March until the first Sunday in November.
- Time of day. Use lowercase a.m. and p.m. with periods. Use space between the number and a.m. or p.m. The abbreviation for ante meridiem (before noon) is a.m. and the abbreviation for post meridiem (after noon) is p.m. If you note ET or PT, don't use a comma after a.m. or p.m.

Correct: 10:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.
Incorrect: 10:00 am and 2:30 pm
Incorrect: 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

- Time in history. Write 1,000 BC (no periods).

13. Abbreviating academic degrees

In traditional practice, periods are added to abbreviations of all academic degrees (M.A., Ph.D., etc.). Omit the periods unless they are required for tradition or consistency.

Correct: MA
Correct: PhD (Ph.D. is the traditional style)

14. Abbreviating units of measure

ac/dc: alternating current/direct current
 bbl: barrel(s). A barrel of petroleum contains 42 gallons.
 Bcf: billion cubic feet

bbl/d: barrels per day

Btu: British thermal units

Carbon dioxide: CO₂, not CO2

CO_{2e}: carbon dioxide equivalent

°C: degrees Celsius

CDD: cooling degree day(s) (no hyphen)

°F: degrees Fahrenheit

gal: gallon(s)

gW: gigawatt

GWe: gigawatt electric

gWh: gigawatthour(s)

HDD: heating degree day(s) (no hyphen)

kW: kilowatt

kWh: kilowatthour(s)

Mbbl: thousand barrels (not preferred usage)

Mbbl/d: thousand barrels per day (not preferred usage)

Mcf: thousand cubic feet (not preferred EIA unit)

million bbl/d (preferred) or MMbbl/d: million barrels per day

million Btu (preferred) or million British thermal units

MMcf: million cubic feet

MMcf/d: million cubic feet per day

MMgal/d: million gallons per day

MMst: million short tons

mpg: mile(s) per gallon

mst: thousand short tons (not preferred usage)

mt: metric ton

MW: megawatt

mWh: megawatthour(s)

NGL: natural gas liquids (don't use NGLs)

Petroleum Administration for Defense Districts: PAD District or PADD

p.m.: post meridiem (after noon)

ppm: parts per million

rpm: revolutions per minute

st: short ton

Tcf: trillion cubic feet

TWh: terawatt hour(s) (not commonly used at EIA)

V: Volt

W: Watt

Wh: Watthour

Chapter 15: Itemized Lists and Bullets

Big paragraphs are difficult to read quickly. Bullets make it easier for readers to see your main points. To improve the scannability of content, use vertical lists rather than continuous text to display a series of related items.

1. Introducing lists within text

- Introduce the list with a statement that encompasses all of the items in the list.
- Use a colon at the end of the introductory statement if it is a complete sentence. Don't use a colon if the introduction is a phrase (see next section).

Example:

The price that consumers pay for heating oil can change for a variety of reasons:

- Seasonal demand
- Fluctuations in crude oil prices
- Competition in local markets

Example:

The two reasons for increased demand are

- Lower prices
 - Higher economic growth
- To enhance the scannability of your content, you can add a line of space between introductory text and the beginning of a bulleted or numbered list.

Example:

Carbon dioxide is emitted when burning three fossil fuels:

- Petroleum
 - Coal
 - Natural gas
- Wrap lines under each other, not under the bullet point itself.

Correct bullet wrap:

- There are 104 commercial nuclear reactors at 65 nuclear power plants in 31 states. Since 1990, the share of the nation's total electricity supply provided by nuclear power generation has averaged about 20%.

Incorrect bullet wrap:

- There are 104 commercial nuclear reactors at 65 nuclear power plants in 31 states. Since 1990, the share of the nation's total electricity supply provided by nuclear power generation has averaged about 20%.

2. Introducing lists of links or items

Provide a descriptive heading at the top of each list, and don't use a colon.

Forecasts

Annual Energy Outlook
Short-Term Energy Outlook
International Energy Outlook

Recent Country Analysis Brief Updates

China
Argentina
Iraq

3. Using parallel structure for each item in the list

- Begin each item with the same type of word (noun, verb, infinitive, etc.).

Incorrect (not parallel):

How to create effective teams:

- To find the best solution to our problems
- Asking people to help us with the solution
- Identify champions for solution teams
- Strategic goals
- And have regular meetings

Correct (parallel):

To reduce natural gas bills, customers can do three things:

- Check appliances for efficient operation
- Obtain an energy audit
- Reduce thermostat settings

- Use the same grammatical form for each item (word, phrase, or sentence).

Correct:

The working group should meet to perform the following functions: (three verbs)

- Evaluate the Department's progress
- Provide suggestions for improving performance
- Collaborate on systems analysis

Correct:

There are four types of coal prices (four adjectives):

- Spot
- Captive
- Open
- Delivered

- Present the same type of information, in a similar format, to make the information easier for readers to understand.

Correct:

Relevant definitions include

- Deepwater—water depth that is greater than 200 meters but less than 1,500 meters
- Ultra-deepwater—water depth that is equal to or greater than 1,500 meters

Correct:

We emitted more CO₂ from petroleum than other fuels:

- Petroleum: 2.6 billion metric tons (44%)
- Coal: 2.1 billion metric tons (36%)
- Natural gas: 1.2 billion metric tons (20%)

Correct:

Learn more

- **For projections** of U.S. energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, see: [Annual Energy Outlook](#).
- **For projections** of foreign energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, see: [International Energy Outlook](#).

4. Punctuating itemized lists

- Listed items require no end punctuation unless they are complete sentences. Items that are sentences can be followed by a period.
- Do not use commas or semicolons at the end of each list item.

Correct:

Because the United States is the world's largest importer, it is easy to forget that it is:
(bullets are phrases, so no ending punctuation)

- The oldest major global oil producer
- Formerly the number one global oil producer
- Currently the number two global oil producer

Correct:

Several consumer trends have increased demand and offset these gains:
(bullets are all complete sentences, so an ending period can be used)

- Homes are larger and consume more energy.
- Appliances such as flat screen TVs are larger and consume more energy.
- Computers and other electronic devices increase the demand for energy.

5. Capitalizing items in a list

Capitalize the first word of each item in a list, even if the listed items are not sentences. This rule is an EIA style choice. Be consistent.

Correct:

Three factors compel the United States to reconsider how it produces, delivers, and uses energy:

- Energy security
- Environmental quality
- International competition

6. Using a numbered list

- Use numbered lists to indicate steps, sequence, or ranking.

Correct:

Use these steps to sign up for email subscriptions:

1. Enter your email address
2. Check the names of the publications you'd like to receive
3. Click subscribe

(this is a sequence) (ending periods are optional—but correct, because each is a complete sentence)

- Use numbered lists to rank order or count the content.

Correct:

Five countries supply most of our petroleum imports (listed by rank):

1. Canada
 2. Mexico
 3. Saudi Arabia
 4. Venezuela
 5. Nigeria
- Use numbered lists if you want to emphasize the number of items.

Correct:

This report has two purposes:

1. To provide background information on alternative transportation fuels
2. To furnish preliminary estimates of the use of these fuels and of alternative fuel vehicles

7. Using a bulleted list

Use a bulleted list when the order of the items is not important and the list is not about steps or procedures. Use a bulleted list rather than sentences when you want readers to clearly see the main points.

Correct:

Steam is produced in several ways:

- From water that is boiled by burning fossil fuels, nuclear fission, or biomass materials
- From geothermal resources where steam under pressure emerges from the ground and drives a turbine
- From a fluid heated by the sun (solar power)

8. Ordering a bulleted list

- When determining the order of the listed information, consider what order is most logical from a user's point of view. For example, lists can be ordered chronologically, step-by-step, by ranking, by most requested, by most important, or alphabetically.
- Avoid alphabetical order unless the lists are commonplace proper names, such as states, or if the list serves as an index. Use bullets rather than numbers if the order of the items doesn't matter.

Correct:

Most Requested Information (in order of the number of requests)

- On-Highway Retail Diesel Prices
- Gasoline and Diesel Fuel Update
- Natural Gas Storage Report

Correct:

The mission covers four technology developments: (in order of priority)

- Extending basic scientific understanding
- Developing ‘enabling’ technologies
- Enhancing existing technologies
- Pursuing ‘grand challenges’

Correct:

Four State Profiles have been updated: (alphabetical order)

- Alabama
- Alaska
- Arizona
- Arkansas

Correct:

Four State Profiles have been updated: (chronological order)

- Michigan (August 2014)
- California (September 2014)
- Tennessee (December 2014)
- Alabama (January 2015)

9. Presenting successive points in text—first, second, third

Bulleted lists are preferred for highlighting points and improving readability. If you must write your points in paragraph form, use first, second, third, not firstly, secondly, thirdly.

If you have more than three points, consider listing numbered items or using bullets. Saying seventh, eighth, etc., is cumbersome.

Chapter 16: Footnotes, Sources, and Notes

1. Using footnotes for explanation, comment, and citation

- Use footnotes for explanations or comments about specific information within the body of documents, tables, or graphics.

In 2006, about 7.1 billion metric tons carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) of greenhouse gases were emitted by the United States.¹

¹ Values expressed as carbon dioxide equivalents (CO₂e) are calculated based on their global warming potential (GWP).

- If the source is an online document, the title of the document should be a hypertext link within the footnote.

EIA projects that renewable-generated electricity will account for 12.6% of total electricity generation in 2006.¹

For EIA Documents: ¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration, [Annual Energy Outlook 2012](#), Table 8.

Citing EIA in external documents: ¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration, [Annual Energy Outlook 2012](#), Table 8, accessed March 11, 2008.

Citing EIA forms: Form 1, “Form Name” use comma and quotes. No italics for the form name.

2. Deciding what terms to define and choosing the correct format

- Define terms you think a non-statistical, non-scientific reader might not understand. Definitions can be provided four ways:
 1. In the text—added explanatory words— either in the sentence or in parentheses
 2. In a footnote
 3. Via a link to the [EIA Glossary](#)
 4. Via a link to additional EIA material or an outside source
- Remember to link the term, phrase, or report name rather than saying *click here*.

3. Use the most appropriate path to definitions

- When to use an in-text definition:

- When the definition is critical to the audience's understanding
- When the definition is short and succinct

- When to use a footnote:

- When the document is likely to be printed
- When the definition is not in the EIA glossary
- When the definition is too long or complicated to integrate into the text

- When to use a link to EIA glossary:

- When the document is likely to be read online
- When an understandable definition is in the EIA glossary

- When to use a link to an outside source:

- When an understandable definition isn't in the EIA glossary
- When the concept definition is very long or technical—not appropriate for a footnote.
- When the best definition is on someone else's site

4. Formatting footnotes correctly in text

- Number footnotes consecutively beginning with 1.
- In short documents that don't have chapters or sections, footnotes should be sequential throughout the document.
- In longer documents that have chapters or sections, footnotes should be numbered sequentially by chapter or section.
- Footnotes should appear at the bottom of the page (not relevant for large HTML files) where the term is referenced.
- Footnotes should be identified by a superscript, both within text and in the corresponding note at the bottom of the page.
- All footnotes end with periods, even if they are not complete sentences.

- Avoid overly long footnotes, if possible.

Numbered footnote example:

Renewable energy consumption increased 7% between 2005 and 2006, contributing about 7% of the nation's total energy demand and 9% of total U.S. electricity generation in 2006.¹ Electricity producers² consumed 63% of total U.S. renewable energy in both 2005 and 2006 for producing electricity.

¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration, [Renewable Energy Consumption and Electricity Preliminary Statistics, 2014](#).

² Electrical utilities, independent power producers, and combined heat and power plants.

5. Formatting or displaying footnotes with tables, charts, and other graphics

- Footnotes should be embedded into the image file so that they will print out as part of the graphic.
- Footnotes should appear beneath the graphic in a smaller, but readable, font size.
- In data tables, letters are recommended for footnotes to avoid confusion with the numbers in the data table.

Lettered footnote example:

Summary of Oil Prices 2006-07

	2006	2007
WTI Crude^a (\$/barrel)	66.02	72.32
Gasoline^b (\$/gal)	2.58	2.81

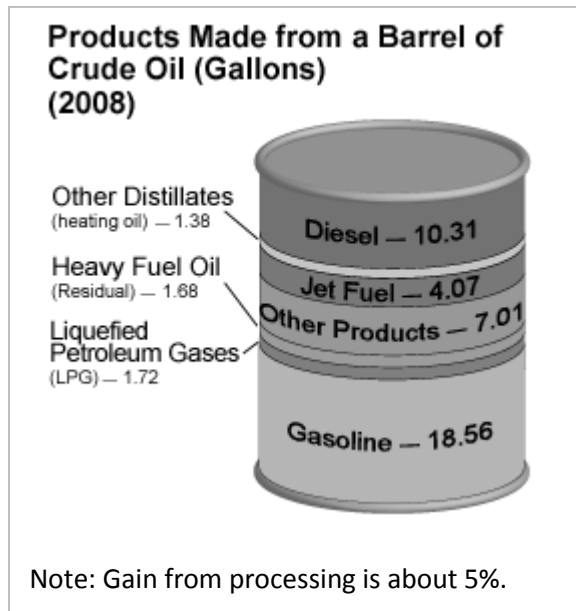
^a West Texas Intermediate.

^b Average pump price for regular gasoline.

6. Using notes

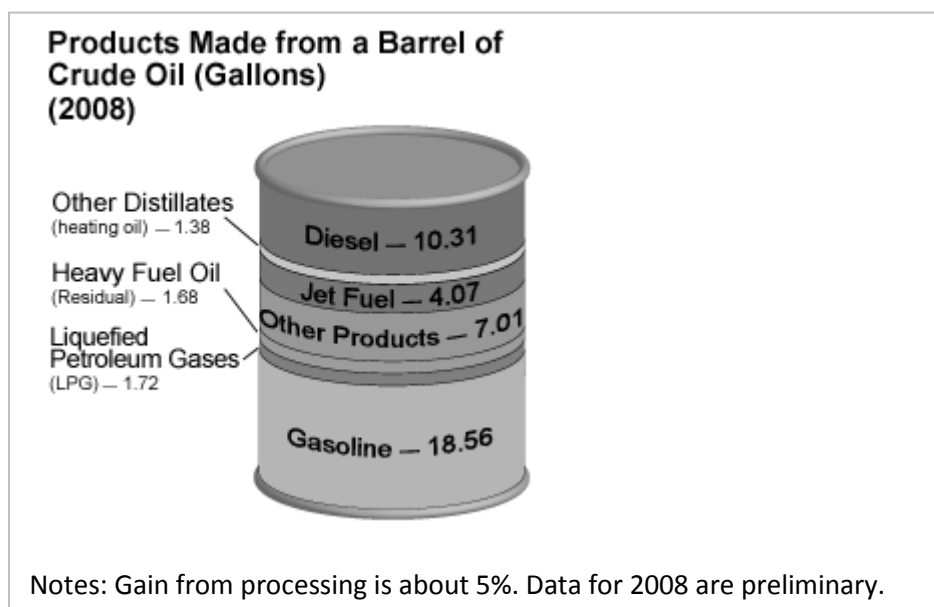
Example with one note

Use notes for definitions, explanations, or comments that refer to the overall content of the document, table, or graphic, rather than specific data. A note that pertains to only one part of the content should be shown with an asterisk.



Example with two notes

If there is more than one note, try using Notes and put content for both together. If the combined note gets too long, consider numbering the notes.



7. Formatting source citations

Include the following information in source citations that appear as either notes or footnotes for online EIA articles, graphs, and images. The title of the report or product should be in italics.

U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Petroleum Supply Monthly*, Table 3, December 2012.
U.S. Energy Information Administration, using data from Bentek and Reuters.

8. Format for sourcing online information

- Organization or publisher (for example, U.S. Energy Information Administration, U.S. Census Bureau)
- Title of publication (if applicable); title of book or journal appears in italics
- Publication number (if applicable)
- Reference to specific web page, table, or graphic. This may be a publication title, web page title, or title of chart or other graphic. The title should be hyperlinked to the referenced information. For example, if the data are from a table, the link should be to the table, not the beginning of the document or section. All sources end with a period.
- The date of publication of information

Example: U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Annual Energy Outlook 2014*, [Table 1A, Total Energy Supply and Disposition Summary](#), accessed March 18, 2014.

Example: U.S. Energy Information Administration, *State Electricity Profiles*, DOE/EIA-0348(01)/2 (Washington, DC, November, 2014), p. 145.

9. Format for sourcing print articles and newspapers

- Author: last name, first name (if known) or initial
- Title of article: title is shown in quotation marks
- Title of publication: title of book or journal appears in italics
- Volume or publication number (if applicable)
- Date of publication (in parentheses)
- Page number of specific information being cited

Example: S. Saraf, "India Set To Revise Hydroelectric Policy," *Power in Asia*, No. 471 (February 1, 2007), p. 8.

10. Format for sourcing printed books

- Author: last name, first name (if known) or initial
- Book title: title of book appears in italics
- Publisher
- Date of publication (in parentheses)
- Page number

Example: A. Simon, *Energy Consumption in India*, World Bank (December 2006), p. 6.

Chapter 17: Hypertext Links

1. Using embedded and stand-alone hypertext links

- Hypertext links can be embedded or stand alone.
- Embedded links are contained within text.

Example: [The Primer on Diesel Fuel Prices](#) explains how diesel fuel is made.
Example: Gasoline is refined from [crude oil](#).

- Stand-alone links are menu links or links at the beginning or end of a section of text such as the 'Learn more' links added to [Energy in Brief](#) articles.
- Try not to link to too many things within a block of text. Too many links makes it difficult to read.

Examples:

Forecasts

[Annual Energy Outlook](#)

[Short-Term Energy Outlook](#)

[International Energy Outlook](#)

Learn more: [Petroleum Supply Monthly](#)

- Hyperlink enough of the text to be clear about what the link is going to.

Good example: [Diablo Canyon Unit 2 was taken offline](#) on April 27.

Less clear: Diablo Canyon Unit 2 was taken [offline](#) on April 27.

Good example: The company presented an [Integrated Performance Plan](#) in response to the flooding.

Less clear: The company [presented](#) Integrated Performance Plan in response to the flooding.

- If possible, the hyperlink should not contain two phrases separated by a comma.

Correct: [Nuclear outages in 2011](#) were unusually high.

Not preferred: [In 2011, nuclear outages](#) were unusually high.

2. Writing clear hypertext links

- Never use [click here](#) or click [here](#) as a link. Don't write text that mentions the link itself.
- Using [click here](#) forces sighted users to read the surrounding text to understand the context of the word *here*. It also prevents visually impaired users who rely on screen readers from fully understanding where the link is going.
- Don't underline links; just make the content blue. Readers recognize blue text as links.
- Write descriptive, concise links that tell users what they will get or can accomplish when they click the link.

Correct: [EIA's automated email](#) system provides updates.

Incorrect: [Click here](#) to receive updates via EIA's automated email system.

Incorrect: Receive updates via EIA's email system on this link: <http://www.eia.gov/>

Correct: [Sign up for email updates.](#)

Correct: Learn more about [how to save energy.](#)

- Try not to create links that wrap to second or third line. Wrapped links can be hard for users to read and cut-and-paste.

Correct: Take advantage of lower heating fuel prices for winter 2006 and guard against future price spikes by investing in [energy efficient technologies.](#)

Incorrect: Take advantage of lower heating fuel prices for winter 2006 and [guard against future price spikes by investing in energy efficient technologies.](#)

- Emphasize only the distinctive words in a list of links.

Correct:

Below is renewable energy information for

- [Homeowners](#)
- [Small businesses](#)

Incorrect:

Below is renewable information for

- [Renewable energy information for homeowners](#)
- [Renewable energy information for small businesses](#)

- The wording of the link and the title of the destination page should be the same. If the title of the page you are linking to is not clear, consider changing the page's title.

Correct link: See [Short-Term Energy Outlook March 2011](#)
Correct landing page: Short-Term Energy Outlook March 2011

Correct link: See [Short-Term Energy Outlook March 2011](#)
Incorrect (not matching) landing page: Spring Outlook

3. Using hypertext links to provide additional information

- Use links to provide related content such as glossaries, tables, reports, and graphics.

Examples:

In 2006, about 60% of the [petroleum](#) consumed in the United States was imported from foreign countries.

Table 4: [U.S. Energy Consumption](#) provides usage data by state.

See [Short-Term Energy Outlook March 2011](#) for gasoline projections.

The chart, [U.S. Oil Imports](#), shows how much oil the United States imports from Mexico.

- When linking to a file other than a web page, indicate the file format after the link. Links should inform what kind of page will open if not HTML, which is normally the default. Use icons (PDF, XLS, PPT) as appropriate.

Example: The [Comparison Calculator](#) (Excel) will help you choose a fuel-efficient heating system.

- Use links to identify EIA reports or analysis in link wording.

Example: Learn more: [EIA Weekly Retail On-Highway Diesel Prices](#).

Chapter 18: British versus American English

There are [differences](#) between British and American English in spelling, usage, and punctuation. No wonder we get confused writing *travelled to London*. EIA prefers American spelling and usage.

1. Spelling differences

American	British
among	amongst
while	whilst
afterward	afterwards
backward	backwards
downward	downwards
forward	forwards
toward	towards
upward	upwards
canceled	cancelled
traveled	travelled
gray	grey
license/license(noun/verb)	licence/license(noun/verb)
sulfur	sulphur
analyze	analyse
organization	organisation
recognized	recognised

2. Usage differences

American	British
presently = now, currently	presently = soon, in the future
loan and lend are synonyms	loan is a noun; lend is a verb
table an idea (postpone)	table an idea (to present something, to bring it to the table)
slated = scheduled	slated = severely criticized
scheme = devious or secret plan (negative connotation)	scheme = program, plan (no negative connotation)
which and that = two different words	which and that = no distinction

3. Punctuation differences

- British writers put closing punctuation outside the close quotation mark. American writers put the punctuation inside.

American: She said, “Put it down.” (period inside)

British: She said, “Put it down”. (period outside)

- Americans put commas in number to mark thousands. European writers use a space.

American: 1,000

British: 1 000

- After i.e. and e.g., Americans use a comma while the British don’t.

American: Greenhouse gases (e.g., carbon dioxide) may contribute to global warming.

British: Greenhouse gases (e.g. carbon dioxide) may contribute to global warming.