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# Formatting content

If you’re copying and pasting text in from another document, paste it in without any formatting, then apply the styles embedded in this template. You’ll be presenting most of your content in the Normal style, which is Arial 12pt font.

Numbered paragraphs are only required in legal documents. For cross-referencing purposes, refer to headings instead. Do not use language such as ‘shown above’ or ‘as outlined below’ as this language is not inclusive of all users.

## Bullet points

Use bullet points to set out a list of options or outcomes. They’re helpful in breaking up dense text and improving readability.

Bullet points need a lead-in line ending in a colon. Each point continues the lead-in line and will therefore start with a lower-case letter. No full stop is needed at the end. Use the tab key to insert a secondary level, if needed, like this:

* High-level point
  + Lower-level detail

## Quotes

To style a quotation, use the DfE Quote style. Italicise the source, but don’t use italics for any other purpose, as they’re less accessible than regular text. For example:

This study compares the take-up of foreign language skills in 14 European countries. Belgium tested French, Flemish and German pupils separately, so there are results for 16 jurisdictions. – *Anonymous contributor*

## Page break

Use Insert > Page break to start a new page. Do not use returns to space out content.

## Footnote

Insert footnotes using the Reference > Insert footnote tool. Do not insert footnotes manually by any other method or they will not be accessible to all users.[[1]](#footnote-1)

# Heading 1

Headings are signposts to help your audience find and return to information they’re seeking. Use clear, descriptive language to tell users what content can be found under each heading.

Always use headings in order from Heading 1 to 2 to 3 to 4. Do not skip a heading level by having a Heading 3 under a Heading 1 or a Heading 4 under a Heading 2.

Use a Heading 1 to start a new section or chapter.

## Heading 2

Use a Heading 2 for a sub-heading. Sub-headings break up the body text, making it easier to read. Heading 2s automatically appear in the table of contents to direct users to the information they’re looking for.

### Heading 3

Use Heading 3 to further subdivide content. These sub-headings also appear in the table of contents, but can be removed from there if they’re not required. Go to the References tab, select Table of Contents, then Custom Table of Contents, and change the figure in Show levels from 3 to 2

#### Heading 4

Use Heading 4 to label a still smaller section. The most detailed content will likely sit under heading level 4.

# Colour

Only use the DfE-approved colour palette.

Colour should only be used for graphics, not text. To change the colour of a graphic, right-click on it, then go to Fill > More Fill Colours > Custom and enter the RGB codes. Do not use white or pale text against a dark background, as this will not be visible to all users. Always use black.

Colour should only be used for the header row(s) of a table. Choose the lightest blue in the palette. Do not use a coloured background, as this will cause accessibility issues.

If you want to insert an emphasis box to highlight key content, choose the lightest blue for the background and apply the Coloured box headline and Normal styles to the text, as shown here.

1. **Emphasis box headline**

The tested subjects were the 5 most widely taught in Europe: biology, chemistry, physics, history and geography. Each jurisdiction tested their pupils in 2 of these subjects. In England, these were chemistry and physics.

## Approved colour palette

Table 1: Table caption example

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Blue | Red | Orange | Yellow | Green | Purple |
| 100% |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | RGB  R16 G79 B117 | RGB  R138 G37 B41 | RGB  R232 G125 B30 | RGB  R194 G162 B4 | RGB  R0 G71 B18 | RGB  R38 G8 B89 |
| 80% |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | RGB  R64 G114 B145 | RGB  R161 G81 B84 | RGB  R237 G151 B75 | RGB  R206 G181 B54 | RGB  R51 G108 B65 | RGB  R81 G57 B122 |
| 60% |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | RGB  R112 G149 B172 | RGB  R185 G124 B127 | RGB  R241 G177 B120 | RGB  R218 G199 B104 | RGB  R102 G145 B113 | RGB  R125 G107 B155 |
| 40% |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | RGB  R159 G185 B200 | RGB  R208 G168 B169 | RGB  R246 G203 B165 | RGB  R231 G218 B135 | RGB  R153 G181 B160 | RGB  R168 G156 B189 |
| 20% |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | RGB  R207 G220 B227 | RGB  R232 G211 B212 | RGB  R250 G229 B210 | RGB  R243 G236 B205 | RGB  R207 G218 B189 | RGB  R212 G206 B222 |

# Tables

Only use tables for data, not for laying out text.

Label every column and row, and use the table format embedded within the template to correctly style up your table.

Avoid merging or splitting cells, as this can cause problems for screen-reader users.  
It can be clearer to repeat a heading than to merge cells.

If your table is very large and complex, consider whether it would look better in landscape format or could be made available in a separate annex or spreadsheet. Avoid reducing the font size – the text should be 12pt Arial.

Do not colour-code cells unless you are providing an alternative method by which this can be accessed by non-sighted users.

Table 2: Table caption example

| Heading | Heading | Heading | Heading | Heading | Heading | Heading |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| German | Italian | Spanish | Greek | French | Dutch | German |
| Greek | Spanish Italian German French Greek | Italian | German | Dutch | Belgian | Greek |
| Spanish | German | Greek | Italian | French Spanish | Greek | Spanish |

Source: Source of data

Table 3: Table caption example

|  | Heading | Heading | Heading | Heading | Heading |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Heading | £25,000 – £50,000 | 0.07 | £100.00 | 8,762 | 1 |
| Heading | £1,000 – £4,000 | 0.23 | £50.00 | 9,839 | 45 |
| Heading | £1.3 million – £1.7 million | 0.12 | - | 10,2896 | 7 |

Source: Source of data

# Charts

Insert charts as Excel objects where possible.

Use shades of the same DfE-approved colours for diagrams and charts to ensure they’re accessible and consistent. Use shades of DfE blue as a first option and provide a key above each graphic.

Try to use the same colour for the same dataset throughout your report. If there’s room and you want users to know the figures for each data set, label the data points. If you label each data point, you do not need gridlines. Remove as many marks as possible so the graph is clear and uncluttered, and the focus remains on the data.

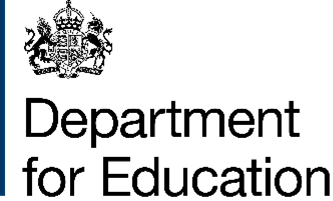
Make sure labels are legible and horizontal. Avoid reducing the font size – the text should be 12pt Arial.

Figure 1: Chart caption example

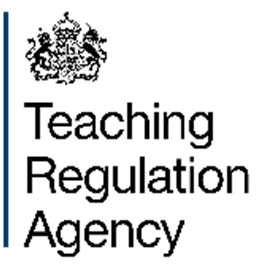
Source: Source of data

Figure 2: Chart caption example

Source: Source of data

A black background with a black square

Description automatically generated with medium confidenceA black background with blue lines

Description automatically generated

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1. Example of a footnote [↑](#footnote-ref-1)