



GreenShield Writing Style Guide



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Introduction

GreenShield's Writing Style Guide supports the development of any written materials on behalf of GreenShield.

Use this guide to ensure **consistent, accessible, and inclusive language**, as well as adherence to GreenShield's **brand voice**.

This guide is based on the Canadian Press (CP) Style Guide, with certain variations and custom brand language indicated throughout. It is meant to be iterative and updated regularly as our language evolves.

For guidelines on visual elements, please refer to the relevant sections elsewhere in the [Brand Toolkit](#).

This document is meant to be used by all GreenShielders. Written materials can include marketing copy, training materials, client presentations, email communications, and other internal or external assets. Achieving consistency in writing will help advance a unified voice as One GreenShield.

The Writing Style Guide is owned by Corporate Affairs and managed by the Senior Writer, who conducts quarterly reviews and is accountable for reflecting adjustments of GreenShield's style and messaging. For any questions regarding this document, please contact Katherine Hannemann, Senior Writer (katherine.hannemann@greenshield.ca).





Tone and voice

GreenShield's voice is **simplified, clear, and concise**. It is **aspirational and bold** without being self-promotional, and **conversational** without being too casual.

Some tips to help adhere to GreenShield's brand voice include:

- **Write short sentences.** If a sentence is becoming too long, aim to break up multiple conjunctions into two or more sentences.
- **Avoid industry buzzwords** and GreenShield internal language (e.g., acronyms) to ensure material is accessible to readers.
- **Avoid hubris.** GreenShield has a bold and powerful mission, but aim to avoid language that exudes excessive pride or superiority. Also acknowledge contributing partners in our efforts where relevant.
- **Use active voice** for clarity and directness, versus passive voice. The active voice emphasizes the person or agent who performs an action, the "actor." In other words, the subject performs the action. (For example: Passive: "The report was submitted by the team" vs. Active: "The team submitted the report.")
- **Keep audience and context top of mind.** Language may vary slightly depending on the audience and context, but simplified and plain language should be used as much as possible across audiences.



At-a-Glance:

Frequently used conventions

Below are frequently used conventions and language specific to GreenShield.

Please see the glossary section below for a more comprehensive list of standards in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and other style conventions.

Use	Do not use
GreenShield, GreenShield+	Green Shield, Green Shield Canada, GS, GSC, GS+
Non-profit social enterprise, non-profit	Not-for-profit
GreenShielders, employees, colleagues, team	Staff
Clients, partners, members	Customers
Health care and insurance organization	Health and benefits company
Better Health for All (<i>Title case, use TM in its first use within a document for external purposes</i>)	Better health for all TM (<i>sentence case; no need to use TM after first mention</i>)
Health care (<i>Also use "health care" as two words [no hyphen] when modifying a noun</i>)	Healthcare
Per cent	Percent or % (<i>unless in visual stats</i>)
Well-being	Wellbeing, wellness
Payer-provider, coverage and care	Payer provider, payor provider
The organization	The company
Physician	Doctor



Inclusive language

Inclusive language is a critical component of GreenShield's brand voice.

In our written communications, we strive to **embrace diversity, avoid stigmatization and exclusion, and prioritize the preferred word choices** of the communities that our language reflects.

In health care, using person-first language is an approach to avoiding conflation of an individual's identity with a disorder, disease, condition, or disability that they may have, unless specifically desired by an individual or community. It also strives to uphold accuracy in referring to select conditions.



General guidelines

Key strategies for adhering to inclusive language from the Canadian Press and other credible sources include:

Reflect on language patterns:

- Be mindful of assumptions, stereotypes, and biases that can be embedded in common language.
- Consider your intentions for using a phrase, its origins, and whether there is a more inclusive way to state what you are trying to say.
- Consider that over time, language changes to reflect revised preferences and values. Ensure your word choices are up to date.

Prioritize individuals:

- Avoid broad generalizations about groups of people and experiences.
- Avoid “deficit” language and making assumptions about what qualifies as a deficit or hardship. Examples of deficit language are terms like “unskilled workers” or “non-English speakers,” which define people in terms of what they lack.
- Focus on the person. Use descriptors as adjectives, not nouns, unless a person prefers otherwise. For example, refer to someone as “a person with diabetes” rather than “a diabetic person.”
- Confirm how sources wish to be described with respect to their gender or pronouns.

Common inclusive style conventions

- Black (capitalized)
- Indigenous (capitalized)
- 2SLGBTQI+ (note that we follow the Government of Canada’s standard, which leaves out the “A”)
- People experiencing homelessness, underhoused (not “the homeless”)
- Disproportionately affected by; under-resourced; underserved
- Person with [cancer, disabilities, etc.] (not “cancer patient” or “disabled person”)
- People with lower incomes (not “poor people”)
- Equity-seeking communities

Land acknowledgments

GreenShield offices are located in traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories across Canada. Written and verbal land acknowledgements are important to recognize, honour, and express gratitude to the Indigenous people who have lived and worked on these lands historically and presently.

Below is a sample land acknowledgment for use in any GreenShield location or in materials that will be distributed across Canada.

For customizing the land acknowledgment to your office’s location, please research a local land acknowledgment and use the [Native Land Digital](#) tool to learn more about the traditional territories in your area.

We wish to acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories where GreenShield employees, clients and partners gather across Canada. Our head office is in Windsor, which is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie. GreenShield honours all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis and their valuable past and present contributions to this land and the benefits it provides us all.

For additional resources on inclusive language, please see Resources section below.



Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Generative AI platforms like Microsoft Copilot can make writing easier. But relying solely on AI for creating content can hinder accuracy, flow, and big-picture context.

Here are a few tips for leveraging AI to support writing in a way that maintains our brand voice:



Use AI to get started

If you find yourself facing writer's block, use Copilot to get started with brainstorming ideas or drafting an outline. An example prompt could be: "Suggest a few sections for an article on mental health in the workplace."



Be an editor

AI-generated materials require a human editor. For any copy generated in AI, take extra time to review and edit writing to ensure accuracy, flow, and GreenShield brand voice.



Look out for AI "tells"

Remove any punctuation or style conventions typical to AI from your copy. For example, generative AI platforms often use em-dashes (or long dashes) without spaces between words (e.g., "Think of Copilot as a creative catalyst—not a replacement for your voice."). Defer to GreenShield's convention of en dashes (or short dashes – not hyphens) for punctuation (e.g., "word – word") listed below in Punctuation section.



Use emoji sparingly

Generative AI models tend to use an excess of emoji. Use emoji only where appropriate (such as social posts) and assess the quantity of emoji. Delete excess emoji.

Please see GreenShield's Generative AI Policy on Shieldsy for more information.



GreenShield Key Messages

Below are select GreenShield key messages that you can apply to a variety of texts. Please see the latest Key Messages document on GreenShield's [Brand Toolkit](#) for more details.

As Canada's only national non-profit health care and insurance organization, GreenShield believes **health care is a right, not a privilege.**

- GreenShield's mission is **Better Health for All.**
- We are building a future where **every Canadian can reach their fullest health and well-being potential.**
- GreenShield's **payer-provider model is unique:** offering insurance, administering claims, and paying claims as a "payer," while delivering health services such as mental health, pharmacy, and medical services as a "provider."
- Our **Creating Shared Value** model powers our mission, integrating our social impact with business strategies. As our business grows, so does our ability to give back and scale programs that improve the health and well-being of Canadians in a sustainable way. This virtuous cycle reflects why we exist: to improve the health and well-being of Canadians through a model where **impact and growth reinforce each other.**
- As a non-profit organization, **we don't have shareholders with profit-driven motives**, which enables us to truly prioritize and invest in the Canadians and communities we serve. With no shareholders to answer to, we can solely focus on improving the health and well-being of Canadians and strengthening the systems they rely on.
- We proudly **reinvest our excess earnings and redeploy our service capabilities** to improve the health and well-being of five priority populations most often underserved by traditional health and benefits programs, including **women, low-income workers, youth, racialized communities, and 2SLGBTQI+.**
- We invested **\$75 million to positively impact one million Canadians between 2020 and 2025**, reaching our goal ahead of schedule.
- What's driving us now is the commitment to measurably impact an **additional three million Canadians by 2030** – across mental health, essential medicines, and chronic disease management – through scalable initiatives that deliver meaningful change in pursuit of our mission of Better Health for All.
- GreenShield is proud to be recognized multiple times as one of **Canada's Most Admired Corporate Cultures**, certified annually as a leading **Imagine Canada Caring Company**, and honoured with repeat placement on **Fortune's prestigious Change the World list** – a testament to our sustained commitment to purpose-driven innovation and impact.



Additional resources

For full access to the Canadian Press Style Guide, access GreenShield's account here:

- **URL:** <https://stylebooks.thecanadianpress.com/editors/>
- **Username:** sarah.buchalter@greenshield.ca
- **Password:** Gr33n5h13ld

Additional resources: Inclusive language

Please see additional resources for more information and support using inclusive language:

- CP Style Guide – Inclusive language section (*see log-in details above*)
- [Western University Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion – Inclusive Language Guide](#)
- [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\) – Person-first and destigmatizing language](#)

For a searchable database on typical style conventions in Canadian languages:

- <https://www.noslangues-ourlanguages.gc.ca/en/index>



CP Style Glossary

GreenShield’s standards for spelling, grammar, and punctuation adhere to the Canadian Press Style Guide, with select variations as indicated below.

Common usages are in the glossary, with a full reference to the CP Style Guide accessible through GreenShield’s account (see “Additional Resources” section for login information).

Punctuation	
<p>Unlike Canadian Press, GreenShield uses the serial comma (also known as the Oxford comma) to avoid confusion. There are instances where the comma may slow the reader down (e.g., a video caption) so use your discretion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: “Many youth face barriers to mental health care, including complex system navigation, long wait times, and cost.”
<p>Use en dashes with spaces like this: word – word</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make an en dash on a Mac: option + hyphen (-) To make an en dash on a PC: alt + 0150 OR type two hyphens and it will form an en-dash You can use a spaced en dash to enclose parenthetical material in sentences. (Example from https://www.noslangues-ourlangues.gc.ca/en/writing-tips-plus/en-dash: “Jen’s bike – a brand new, custom-built Rocky Mountain – was stolen over the weekend.”)
<p>Prioritize the en dash (short dash, not hyphen) over the em dash (long dash).</p>	<p>Note that a spaced en dash can be used in place of an unspaced em dash to enclose parenthetical material in sentences. Unlike Canadian Press, we defer to the use of the en dash as AI prioritizes this style of punctuation.</p>
<p>Use exclamation points sparingly (if at all).</p>	
<p>Don’t use ampersands in body text or headers, unless they’re part of a company name, title, or other proper noun.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: “GreenShield won two Wealth & Finance Ethical Finance awards in 2024.”

Numerical conventions	
<p>Write out numbers between zero and nine.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exception per CP: Unless in a headline
<p>Use numerals for numbers 10 and above.</p>	
<p>Numbers at the beginning of a sentence must be written out, no matter how large or small. When numbers between 21 and 99 are written out, use a hyphen.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seventy-five people attended the event. One person attended the workshop.

Title conventions/Capitalization

The Canadian Press follows a modified down style – in other words, capitalizing proper nouns and official titles, but maintaining lowercase for general terms.

Specifically, capitalize all proper names, the names of departments and agencies of national and provincial governments, trade names, names of associations, companies, clubs, religions, languages, races, places, addresses. Otherwise, lowercase is favoured where a reasonable option exists. Examples include:

<p>Capitalize names, but follow French style for French names, e.g.:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Société pour vaincre la pollution Association of the Scientific, Engineering and Technological Community of Canada (Scitec) Canadian Bankers Association the association meeting
<p>Common nouns:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> church, league – are capitalized when part of a proper name: Anglican Church, National Hockey League. They are normally lowercased when standing alone: the church's stand, a league spokesman.

<p>Formal titles directly preceding a name are capitalized:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime Minister Mark Carney, Archbishop Tom Collins. GreenShield’s convention is also to capitalize titles following a name: Joe Blomeley, Executive Vice President and Head of GreenShield Health. Please see the Government of Canada resource on Styles of Address for a list of formal and honorific titles for government and heads of state.
<p>Holidays</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalize religious holidays and feasts and all special times: Christmas Eve, Easter, Hanukkah, Yom Kippur, Ramadan, New Year’s Day, Father’s Day. GreenShield’s convention is to keep seasons in lowercase (e.g., spring, summer, fall, winter).
<p>Headings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use sentence case capitalization for titles and headings except where indicated in the Compositions section below and in reference to GreenShield’s mission, “Better Health for All.”

Compositions

Capitalize the principal words in the titles of reports, books, broadcast programs, films, plays, poems, songs, speeches, works of art and other compositions. GreenShield’s convention is to capitalize our own reports but avoid use of italics or quotation marks: Health Outcomes Report: Measuring Better Health for All; Creating Lasting Impact.

Spelling

The Canadian Oxford Dictionary is the authority for Canadian Press spelling with specific exceptions noted in the Canadian Press Stylebook. Canadian Press style is: our, not -or, for labour, honour and other such words, deferring to British Canadian over American spelling.

Common usages include:

advisor (*GreenShield usage for brokers)

aging (not ageing)

Alzheimer's disease (but Alzheimer Society of Canada)

analyze (not -se), analyzing

authorize

Canada-wide (adj.)

CAR T-cell therapy (form of cancer treatment; CAR-T acceptable on second reference)

CAT scan – Use CT scan

centre, centred, centring

coordinated (not co-ordinated)

defence (not defense), but defensive

dependant (n.), dependent (adj.), dependence (not -ance)

developing nations (not Third World)

diabetes, Type 1, Type 2 diabetes

dietitian

doctor (Dr., but avoid unless health care professional. GreenShield convention is to use "physician" as noun but "Dr." as prefix for title.)

–doctor of laws (LLD)

–doctor of medicine (MD)

–doctor of philosophy (PhD)

dos and don'ts

drop-down (adj.), drop-down menu

EDT (not EDST), eastern time

employment insurance (no caps), EI (second reference)

endeavour

enrol (not enroll), enrolled, enrolling, enrolment

entrepreneur, entrepreneurial

EpiPen (trademark for epinephrine injector)

everyday (adj., one word)

favour, favourite, favourable

fetus (not foetus)

flare up (v.), flare-up (n.)

foresaw, foresee, foreseeable, foreseen

Franco-Manitoban

Franco-Ontarian

francophone (lowercase)

fuel, fuelled, fuelling

fulfil (not fulfill), fulfilled, fulfilment

Globe and Mail, the Globe and Mail

–in bylines only, uppercase the:

By Greg Keenan

The Globe and Mail

gynecologist, gynecology

heir, honest, honour and hour – four words and their derivatives begin with silent “h” requiring “an”: an honest man. Otherwise: a historic battle, a hotel.

health care (n. and adj.) **GreenShield convention

hemophilia

hepatitis A, B, C

honour, honourable but honorary

inaccessible (not -able)

Indigenous (uppercase in all uses when in reference to Indigenous Peoples in Canada; lowercase in other contexts, e.g., “plants indigenous to Mexico”)

indispensable (not -ible)

instalment

kilometre (km – sing. and pl. metric symbol, no period)
–km/h

knowledgeable

labour but laborious

licence (n.), license (v.)

licensed, licensee, licensing

livable (not -eable)

memorandum, memorandums

moustache (not mus-)

movable (not moveable)

MP (member of Parliament), MPs (pl.), MP’s and MPs’ (poss.)

MRI (for magnetic resonance imaging; OK in first reference)

multi-, multicultural, multilateral, multinational, multimillionaire, multimillion-dollar, multimedia, multiplatform but multi-year

neighbour, neighbourhood

non-profit (n. and adj.)

no one (two words)

northern Ontario

occur, occurred, occurrence, occurring

one-time (adj., hyphen for all uses)

on-site, off-site (adj.)

ophthalmologist, ophthalmology

page 2, pages 1-3; p. 2, pp. 1-3 (abbn. for tabulation)

panel, panellist, panelling

paralyze (not -se), paralysis

passerby, passersby

paycheque (one word)

per cent, percentage, six per cent increase (no hyphens)

phase, Phase 1 (not phase one)

PhD (doctor of philosophy)

p.m., a.m.

policymaker (no hyphen)

practice (n. or adj.), practise (v.)

prefer, preferable, preferably, preference (not -ance), preferential, preferred

prevent, preventable, preventer (not -or), preventive (not preventative)

Pride (capitalized in all references to 2SLGBTQI+ events and symbols)

privatize, privatization

program (not -mme), programmer, programming

provincewide

Qur'an (not Koran)

reality, realization, realize (not -ise)

research and development, R&D (no periods)

rigour but rigorous

roadblock (one word), road map (two words)

roundtable (one word, n. and adj.)

semi, semi-annual, semi-automatic, semicircle, semicolon, semifinal, semifinalist, semi-official, semitransparent, semitropical, semi-weekly

skilful

sombre (not -er)

southern Ontario

stand out (v.), standout (n.)

startup (n and adj.)

stopgap (one word)

straightforward (no hyphen)

temporary foreign workers (lowercase)

tendency (not -ancy), tendencies

till, until, not 'til

trade-off (n. and adj.), trade off (v.)

transfer, transferred

transgender (adj.; never transgendered)

tumour but tumorous

TVOntario, TVO

uninterested (not interested), disinterested (impartial)

ventilator (not respirator)

vertebra, vertebrae

Veterans Affairs Canada (no apostrophe)

web, web browser, webcam, webcast, web-enabled, webmaster, web page, web server, website but World Wide Web, Web3

well-being (hyphen)

Western University, Western (prefer to official name, University of Western Ontario)

worldwide (one word)



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GreenShield means, collectively, Green Shield Association and Green Shield Holdings Inc., which houses our insurance, health, adjudication, and benefit administration businesses, including Green Shield Canada Insurance (GSCI), Green Shield Health Inc., Green Shield Adjudication Inc., and Green Shield Administration Inc. Green Shield Holdings Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of the non-profit Green Shield Association.

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