

# The Guardian style guide



## Saying it in style

Former Guardian journalist Michael Frayn on subediting:

"There's nothing to it, really ... it's just a matter of checking the facts and the spelling, crossing out the first sentence, and removing any attempts at jokes" (Towards the End of the Morning)

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style n. the particular mode of orthography, punctuation, design, etc, followed in a book, journal, etc, or in a printing house... for the use of **writers, editors** and printers

(Collins English Dictionary - Millennium Edition) to which you should refer for guidance on anything that does not appear in the style guide

## Neither pedantic nor wild ...

an introduction by Michael McNay

The Guardian has always been a newspaper for writers, and so a newspaper for readers. All the other skills, copy editing, design, typography, illustration, photography, are there to enhance the writing and to make it more accessible, to make the paper a more desirable journal to read - though illustration and photography each has its separate justification as well.

It should not be necessary to add that Guardian writers and subeditors should all be interested in the language, in its proper use and its development, and that regular trips to books as wide-ranging as Gower's *The Complete Plain Words*, Partridge's *Usage and Abusage*, Orwell's brilliant short essay *Politics and the English Language*, Fowler's *Modern English Usage*, or Kingsley Amis's *The King's English*, are useful in sharpening professional tools as well as for entertainment.

One says it should not be necessary, but it is very obvious all round the Guardian office that uncomfortably many people involved in producing and shaping text for the paper rely more on the casual question, "What's the style for x?" and the casual answer, "I think it's probably y." Journalists who are not sufficiently interested in house style to check the house style guide are not on the face of it very likely to be much interested in style at all.

But our approach to style in its broadest sense is, if anything, more important now than before, first because other newspapers, which may always have had good writing in specialist areas, have caught up fast across a whole range of news and features; second because the Guardian itself employs so many staff on freelance shifts or short contracts who arrive here with no particular idea of what makes this paper different from others, and even staff journalists who are never inducted into what values the Guardian holds particularly close; third, though more obscurely, because of the arrival of the internet: this style guide itself is the first to be published on the world wide web. That makes it accessible in seconds; it cannot get lost or suffer having coffee spilt on it. But though there is no reason in itself why new publishing methods should change the language for the worse, the example of radio and television shows that it can: at the top end, the best correspondents file spoken reports that could grace this newspaper; at the broad base, reporters speak a form of unlovely but infectious journalese destined only for the rubbish bin.

House style is the means by which a newspaper seeks to ensure that where there are permissible variants in spellings, the use of acronyms and so forth, a unified approach to these

matters is adopted to help in disseminating a sense of rationality and authority in the use of language. What it does not mean is imposing a unified writing style on the newspaper. Many of the reporters, columnists, critics and at least one former editor who once ran a highly idiosyncratic gossip column and who have enlivened the pages of the Guardian and helped to build its international reputation could hardly have done so had they been edited from the beginning into a homogenous house style. A subeditor can do no worse disservice to the text before him and thus to the writer, the reader, and the newspaper, than to impose his or her own preferences for words, for the shape of sentences and how they link, for a pedantic insistence on grammar in all cases as it used to be taught in school; in the process destroying nuances and possibly even the flow of a piece. And I write this as a career copy and layout editor with the best part of 40 years' service on the Guardian and who regards the skills involved in copy editing not just as desirable but essential.

Editing involves fine judgment, particularly as the paper has so many sections today serving possibly quite different kinds of readership. But fine judgments mean good editing, blanket judgments mean bad editing. A piece written in the vernacular that would be inappropriate on the analysis page or even (even?) in a sports column might pass muster in the Guide, where the demotic language of an NME review would be closer to the mark than the high style of Macaulay or CP Scott. And dealing sympathetically with quirks of writing style certainly does not preclude tidying up cliché-ridden journalese, verbosity, the latest vogue words and phrases, the words and phrases that flatten out meaning, replace a range of better more finely tuned words and concepts, and anaesthetise writing.

The introduction to the Guardian stylebook of 1960, which itself was a revision to the initial guide published in 1928, was headed "Neither pedantic nor wild".

That much has not changed.

- Michael McNay joined the Guardian in 1963. He is currently editing The Guardian Year 2000



### **a or an before h?**

Use an only if the h is silent: an hour, an heir, an honourable man, an honest woman; but a hero, a hotel, a historian

### **abbatoir**

### **abbeys**

cap up, eg Rievaulx Abbey, Westminster Abbey

### **abbreviations**

Do not use full points in abbreviations, or spaces between initials: BBC, US, mph, eg, 4am, lbw, No 10, PJ O'Rourke, WH Smith, etc

Spell out less well known abbreviations on first mention; it is not necessary to spell out well known ones, such as EU, UN, US, BBC, CIA, FBI, CD, Aids, Nasa

Use all caps only if the abbreviation is pronounced as the individual letters; otherwise spell the word out: the BBC, ICI, VAT, but Nato, Unison, Isa

The rash of abbreviations containing apostrophes such as aren't, can't, couldn't, hasn't, don't, I'm, it's, there's and what's has reached epidemic proportions (even the horrific "there've" has appeared in the paper). While they might make a piece more colloquial or easier to read, they can be an irritant and a distraction, and make a serious article sound frivolous. And they look pretty horrible, particularly when the system attempts to hyphenate them

### **A2, B1463**

not the A2 road or the main A2

### **aborigines (noun) and aboriginal (adjective)**

Both lc, refer to indigenous populations and native Australians

### **abscess**

### **absorption**

### **abysmal**

### **abyss**

### **Acas**

Acas, the advisory, conciliation and arbitration service, at first mention; thereafter just Acas

**accents**

Include all accents on French words (but not anglicised French words such as cafe; exception: exposé, to avoid confusion with expose), and umlauts on German words. Do not use accents on other languages

**accommodate, accommodation**

**accordion**

**achilles heel, achilles tendon**

**acknowledgment**

not acknowledgement

**acronyms**

take initial cap: Aids, Isa, Mori, Unison, Nato

**act**

uc when using full name, eg Criminal Justice Act 1998, Official Secrets Act; but lc when speaking in more general terms, eg "we need a radical freedom of information act"; bills remain lc until passed into law

**acting**

always lc: acting prime minister, acting committee chairman

**adaptation**

not adaption

**actor**

male and female; avoid actress except when in name of award (eg Oscar for best actress)

**AD1066 but 1000BC**

**addendum**

plural addendums not addenda

**addresses**

119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER

**Adidas**

initial cap

**administration**

the Clinton administration, etc

**adrenalin**

not adrenaline

**adverbs**

Do not use a hyphen between an adverb and the verb it qualifies: a hotly disputed penalty, a constantly evolving newspaper, genetically modified food etc

**adviser**

not advisor

**affinity with** or **between**, not to or for

**aficionado**

plural aficionados

**Afrikaans** language, **Afrikaner** person

**ages**

Tony Blair, 46, not aged 46; little Johnny, four; the woman was in her 20s, not twenties

**ageing**

**aggravate**

to make worse, not to annoy

**AGM**

**ahead of**

use before or in advance of

**aide-de-camp**

plural aides-de-camp

**aide-memoire**

plural aides-memoire

**Aids**

acquired immune deficiency syndrome, but normally no need to spell out

**aircraft-carrier**

**aircrew, airdrop, airlift, airmail**

one word

**air raid, air strike**

two words

**Air Vice-Marshal**

**Alastair** or **Alistair**?

Alastair Campbell, Alastair Hetherington  
Alistair Cooke, Alistair Darling, Alistair Maclean  
Aleister Crowley

**Albright, Madeleine**

US secretary of state; Mrs Albright, not Ms, after first mention

**Alcott, Louisa May**

(1832-88) American author of Little Women

**A-levels**

hyphen

**Ali, Muhammad**

**alibi**

being somewhere else; not synonymous with excuse

**Allahu Akbar**

"God is most great"

**Allende, Isabel**

Chilean author, niece of following entry

**Allende, Salvador**

Chilean president, overthrown and killed in 1973

**allies**

lc, second world war allies, Gulf war allies, etc

**allot, allotted**

**all right**

is right; alright is not all right

**All Souls College**

Oxford: no apostrophe

**alsatian**

dog

**alternative**

Strictly, a choice between two courses of action; if there are more than two, option or choice may be preferred

**alumnus**

plural alumni

**Alzheimer's disease**

**AM**

member of the Welsh assembly, eg Rhodri Morgan AM

**ambassador**

lc, eg the British ambassador to Washington

**American civil liberties union**

not American civil rights union

**America's Cup**

**amid**

not amidst

**amok**

not amuck

**among**

not amongst

**among** or **between?**

Contrary to popular myth, *between* is not limited to two parties. It is appropriate when the relationship is essentially reciprocal: fighting between the many peoples of Yugoslavia, treaties between European countries. *Among* belongs to distributive relationships: shared among, etc

**ampersand**

Use in company names when the company does: Marks & Spencer, P&O

**anaesthetic**

**analysis**

plural analyses

**annex** verb, **annexe** noun

**Ansaphone** TM

use answering machine

**anticipate**

take action in expectation of; not synonymous with expect

**antipodes**

**anticlimax**

**anti-semitic**

**apex**

plural apexes



**apostrophes**

Plural nouns take a singular apostrophe (children's games, gentlemen's outfitter, old folk's home)

The possessive in words and names ending in s also takes the singular (Jones's, James's), but be guided by pronunciation and use the plural apostrophe where it helps: Mephistopheles' rather than Mephistopheles's

Use apostrophes in phrases such as 12 years' imprisonment, 200 hours' community service, eight months' pregnant

**appal, appalling**

**appendix**

plural **appendices**

**appraise** to estimate worth; **advise** to inform

**aquarium**

plural **aquariums**

**Arafat, Yasser**

**archbishop**

the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, at first mention; thereafter Dr Carey or the archbishop. Archbishop of York, etc: same rules apply

**archdeacon**

the Ven Paul Olive, Archdeacon of Farringdon, at first mention; then Mr Olive (unless he is a Dr), or the archdeacon

**archipelago**

plural **archipelagos**

**Argentina**

an **Argentine** noun, **Argentine** adjective; not Argentinian

**armed forces, armed services**

**the army**

the British army, the navy, but Royal Navy, Royal Air Force (RAF is OK)

**artist**

not **artiste**

**Arts Council**

**ascendancy, ascendant**

**aspirin**

**asylum seeker**

no hyphen

**Atlantic ocean**

or just the Atlantic

**attache**

no accent

**attorney general**

lc, no hyphen

**augur** predict or presage; **auger** used to make holes

**Aum Shinrikyo**

Supreme Truth sect

**au pair**

**autumn**

**avant garde**

no hyphen

**Autocue** TM

**axis**

plural axes



**BAA**

Do not call it the British Airports Authority, its former name

**B&Q**

**backbench**

newspaper or politics, backbenches, backbenchers

**backwoodsman**

**BAe Systems**

formerly British Aerospace

**Baghdad**

**bail out**

a prisoner, a company or person in financial difficulty; the noun is bail-out

**bale out**

a boat, from an aircraft

**balk**

obstruct, pull up, stop short; baulk area of a snooker table

**ballot, balloted**

**Band-Aid TM**

Use plaster or sticking plaster

**Bank of England**

the Bank (uc) is acceptable on subsequent mentions

**bank holiday**

**banknote**

**bar**

(legal) she was called to the bar

**bar**

(political) of the House of Commons

**barbecue**

**Barclays Bank**

**barolo**  
wine

**baroque**  
lc

**barons, baronesses**  
are lords and ladies, even at first mention: Lady Thatcher, Lady Blackstone, Lady Jay, Lord Healey, etc

**bas-relief**

**BBC1, BBC2**

**BC/AD**  
BC goes after the date or century, eg 55BC; AD goes before the figure (AD64) but after the century: second century AD (or BC)

**beau**  
plural beaux

**bebop, hard bop, post-bop**  
(jazz)

**bedouin**

**beef wellington**

**Beeton, Mrs**  
(Isabella Mary Beeton 1836-65)  
Author of the Book of Household Management

**befitted**

**begs the question**  
best avoided, since it is almost invariably misused — it means evades the issue, not raises the question

**Beijing**

**Belarus**  
formerly Byelorussia

**believable**

**Bell's** whisky

**benefits agency**

**benefited, benefiting**

**Benetton**

**Berchtesgaden**

**Bergkamp, Dennis**

Arsenal footballer, Dutch international

**Bernabeu stadium**

Madrid

**Betaferon TM**

generic term for drug is interferon-beta 1b

**bete noire**

no accent

**betting odds**

Take care about using the phrase "odds on": if Labour is quoted by bookmakers at 3-1 to win a byelection, and the odds are cut to 2-1, it is wrong to say "the odds on Labour to win were cut last night" — in fact, the odds against Labour to win have been cut (the shorter the price, the more likely something is expected to happen)

It gets more complicated when something is genuinely odds on, ie bookmakers quote a price of "2-1 on" (sometimes expressed as 1-2): in this case, if the Labour candidate is quoted at 2-1 on and becomes an even hotter favourite, at 3-1 on, the odds have shortened; if Labour loses popularity, and 2-1 on becomes, say, 7-4 on or evens, the odds have lengthened.

We frequently get this wrong. If in doubt, consult the racing desk

**Beverly Hills**

**biannual**

twice a year; biennial every two years. Alternatives: twice-yearly or two-yearly

**bias, biased**

**Bible**

cap up if referring to Old or New Testament; lc in phrases such as Wisden, the cricketers' bible; biblical lc

**biblical references**

Genesis 1:1; II Corinthians 2:13; Revelation 3:16 (please, please not "Revelations")

**bicentenary**

a 200th anniversary; bicentennial is its adjective

**biceps**

singular and plural: there is no such thing as a bicep

**bid**

Use only in a financial sense, eg Manchester United have made a bid for Bergkamp, or auction room

**bigot, bigoted**

**bill**

lc, even when giving full name; cap up only if it becomes an act

**billion**

one thousand million; use bn in headlines and text — £1bn, 56bn people

**Birds Eye** TM

no apostrophe

**Biro** TM

use ballpoint pen

**birthplace, birthrate, birthright**

one word

**Birtwistle, Sir Harrison**

(born 1934) British composer

**bishops**

the Right Rev Clifford Richard, Bishop of Wimbledon, at first mention; thereafter the bishop or Bishop Richard

**black**

(race) lc noun and adjective

**black economy**

prefer hidden or parallel economy

**blackout**

**blase**

no accent

**blastfurnace**

**bleeper**

not beeper; synonym for pager

**blitz, blitzkrieg**

**blond**

adjective, male noun

**blonde** female noun

The woman is a blonde, because she has blond hair; the man has blond hair too and is, if you insist, a blond

**Blu-Tack** TM

**Boat Race**

Oxford v Cambridge

**Boddingtons**

**bogey** golf

**bogie** trolley, truck

**bogy** ghost, menace

**bona fide, bona fides**

**bookcase, bookkeeper, bookseller, bookshelf**

one word

**book titles**

roman, with initial caps except for words such as a, an, and, of, on, the: A Tale of Two Cities, The Pride and the Passion, etc

**bon vivant**

not bon viveur

**bordeaux**

wine

**bored with or by**

not bored of

**both**

unnecessary in most sentences that contain "and"; "both men and women" says no more than "men and women", and takes longer

both is plural: "both women have reached the tops of their professions"

**bottleneck**

**boundary commission**

**bourgeois** adjective

**bourgeoisie** noun

**Boutros Boutros-Ghali**

former UN secretary general; Mr Boutros-Ghali at second mention

**bovine somatotrophin**

(BST)

**bovine spongiform encephalopathy**

(BSE) no need to spell it out

**box office**

**boy**

male under 18

**boyfriend**

**Brands Hatch**

no apostrophe

**Brasilia**

capital of Brazil

**breastfed, breastfeeding**

one word

**briar pipe, brier bush**

**bric-a-brac**

**brickbat**

cliche; do not use

**Brink's-Mat**

**Britain or United Kingdom?**

Britain is generally preferable, although UK (which, unlike Britain, includes Northern Ireland) is useful and acceptable in headlines

**British Council**

**British Film Institute**

BFI on second mention

**British Library, British Museum**

**British Medical Association**

(doctors' trade union) BMA on second mention

**Britvic** TM

**broadcasting standards commission**

**brussels sprouts**

**Brylcreem** TM

**BSE**

bovine spongiform encephalopathy; no need to spell out

**BST**

British Summer Time

**Buckingham Palace**

the palace on second mention

**buckminsterfullerene**

a form of carbon, named after the US engineer Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983)

**Budget, the**

but budget talks, budget measures, etc

**buffaloes**

not buffalos

**Burberry** TM

**bureau**

plural bureaus (furniture) or bureaux (organisations)

**burgomaster**

not burgomeister

**burned**

not burnt

**businesslike, businessman, businesswoman**

one word

**businessmen**

say business people or the business community if that is what you mean

**bussed, bussing**

**Bussell, Darcey**

British ballet dancer

**buyout**

but buy-in

**buzz words and phrases**

quickly become bore words and phrases, so use with care: recent ubiquitous examples include "drop-dead gorgeous" and "but, hey..." (see also clichés)

**byelection, bylaw, bypass, bystander**

**bylines**

like this:

**Lucy Ward**

Political correspondent



**cabin attendant, flight attendant, cabin crew, cabin staff**

not air hostess, air stewardesses

**cabinet, shadow cabinet**

**caesarean section**

**Caesars Palace**

no apostrophe

**cafe**

no accent

**Calor TM**

**Campari TM**

**Canary Wharf**

the whole development, not the main tower, which is No 1 Canada Square

**canvas**

tent, painting

**canvass** solicit votes

**capitals**

Times have changed since the days of medieval manuscripts with elaborate hand-illuminated capital letters, or Victorian documents in which not just proper names, but virtually all nouns, were given initial caps (a tradition valiantly maintained to this day by Estate Agents). A glance at the Guardian of, say, 1990, 1970 and 1950 would show greater use of capitals the farther back you go. The tendency towards lower case, which in part reflects a less formal, less deferential society, has been accelerated by the explosion of the internet: some net companies, and many email users, have dispensed with capitals altogether.

Our style reflects these developments. We aim for coherence and consistency, but not at the expense of clarity. As with any aspect of style, it is impossible to be wholly consistent — there are almost always exceptions, so if you are unsure check for an individual entry in this guide. But here are the main principles

**jobs:** all lc eg prime minister, US secretary of state, editor of the Guardian, readers' editor

**titles:** differentiate between title and job description eg President Clinton (but the US president, Bill Clinton, and Mr Clinton on subsequent mention); the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey (Dr Carey, or the archbishop, on subsequent mentions); the Duke of Westminster (the duke at second

mention); the Pope, the Queen

**British government departments of state:** initial caps eg Home Office, Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence (MoD on second mention); see under departments of state entry for a full list. Other countries: lc eg US state department, Russian foreign ministry

**government agencies, commissions, public bodies, quangos etc:** mostly lc eg benefits agency, crown prosecution service (CPS at second mention), customs and excise, parole board; there are exceptions, so check individual entries

**acts of parliament:** initial caps (but bills lc) eg Official Secrets Act, Criminal Justice Act 1992

**parliamentary committees, reports and inquiries:** all lc eg trade and industry select committee, Lawrence report, royal commission on electoral reform

**artistic and cultural:** initial caps for names of institutions eg Museum of the Moving Image (Momi on second mention), Royal Court, Tate Modern

**churches, hospitals and schools:** cap up the proper or placename, lc the rest eg Great Ormond Street children's hospital, Vernon county primary school, Ripon grammar school, St Peter's church, Pembury

**universities and colleges of further and higher education:** caps for institution, lc for departments eg Sheffield University department of medieval and modern history, Oregon State University, Free University of Berlin, University of Queensland school of journalism, London College of Printing

**words and phrases based on proper names** that have lost connection with their origins (alsatian, cardigan, champagne, french windows, yorkshire pudding and numerous others) are usually lc; many are listed individually in this guide, as are the few exceptions (eg Long Island iced tea)

**capitalism**

**cappuccino**

**carcass**  
plural **carcasses**

**career girl, career woman**  
banned

**Caribbean**

**carmaker**

**cashmere** fabric  
**Kashmir** region disputed between India and Pakistan

**castoff**  
one word (noun, adjective); **cast off** two words (verb)

**casual** (journalist)

prefer freelance; casual labour evokes an image of the docks in around 1953

**cathedrals**

cap up, eg Canterbury Cathedral

**Catholic**

does not always mean Roman Catholic. If Roman Catholic is meant, say so at first mention

**caviar**

not caviare

**CD, CD-rom**

**ceasefire**

**celibate, celibacy**

strictly refer to being unmarried (especially for religious reasons), but it is now acceptable to use them to mean abstaining from sexual intercourse

**cello, cellist**

**celsius/centigrade**

synonymous; we use the former, invented by a man named Celsius, but with fahrenheit equivalent in brackets 23C, -3C etc

**Celtic**

not Glasgow Celtic

**central rail users' consultative committee**

**centre** on or in; **revolve** around

**century**

6th century, 21st century, etc

**chairman, chairwoman**

are better than chair or chairperson; if in doubt, use a different construction ("the meeting was chaired by Alan" or "Georgina was in the chair")

**champagne**

**chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster**

**chancellor of the exchequer**

**Channel 4**

**Channel tunnel**

never Chunnel

**chargé d'affaires**

**charity commission**

**chassis**

singular and plural

**chateau, chateaux**

no accent

**chatroom**

one word

**cheddar, cheshire**

cheese

**chief**

("planning chiefs" etc): try to use proper titles; officers or officials may be preferable

**chief constable**

a job, not a title — John Smith, chief constable of Greater Manchester; Mr Smith at second mention

**CFC**

chlorofluorocarbon

**Chechnya** (not Chechenia), inhabited by **Chechens**

**childcare**

**chief secretary to the Treasury**

**chief whip**

**childminder**

**choc-a-bloc**

**Christian, Christianity**

but unchristian

**Christie's**

**Christmas Day**

**church**

lc for the established church: eg "the church is no longer relevant today"

**City**

capped when used as shorthand for the City of London. A city is a town that has been granted a charter by the crown; it usually has a cathedral

**civil servant, civil service**

**CJD**

Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease; not normally necessary to spell it out

It is now acceptable to refer to variant CJD as the human form of BSE, but not "the human form of mad cow disease"

**clearcut**

**cliches**

see also buzz words and phrases

Overused words and phrases to avoid include: back burner, boost (massive or otherwise), bouquets and brickbats, but hey..., drop-dead gorgeous, luvvies, major, massive, political correctness, politically correct, PC, special, to die for, upsurge (surge will do)

Verbs overused in headlines include: bid, boost, fuel, hike, signal, target, set to

**cliffhanger**

**climbdown** noun, **climb down** verb

**coalfield, coalmine, coalminer**

one word

**Coalite** TM

**coastguard**

**Coca-Cola, Coke** TM

**cockney**

**coconut**

**cold war**

**Coliseum** theatre; **Colosseum** Rome

**College of Arms**

**colleges**

take initial caps, eg Fire Service College; but not when college forms part of the name of a school

**Colonel**

Colonel Napoleon Bogey, subsequently Col Bogey

**comedian**

male and female; do not use comedienne

**commas**

The news production editor, David Marsh, is an expert on style - correct: there is only one

The subeditor David Marsh is a little short on style — correct: there are more than one

**commission for racial equality**

CRE on second mention

**Commons, House of Commons**

but the house, not the House

**Commons committees**

lc: home affairs select committee, public accounts committee, etc

**common sense** noun, **commonsense** adjective

**Commonwealth, the**

**Commonwealth war graves commission**

**communiqué**

no accent

**communism, communist**

lc, except in name of party: Communist party

**company names**

Use names the companies use themselves, except in cases where they adopt typographical or other devices that, in effect, turn them into logos

So: Adidas, not adidas; BhS (no italicised h); Live TV (not L!ve TV); Toys R Us (do not attempt to turn the R backwards); ONdigital and Yahoo! are OK

**compare to** liken to, **compare with** make a comparison

The lord chancellor compares himself to Cardinal Wolsey because he believes he is like Wolsey; I might compare the lord chancellor with Wolsey to assess their relative merits. In other words, unless specifically likening someone or something to someone or something else, use compare with

Useful aides-memoire: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? (Shakespeare) is correct, as is Nothing Compares 2U (Prince)

**compass points**

are all lc: north, south, the south-west, north-east England; the same applies to geopolitical areas: the west, western Europe, far east, south-east Asia, central America etc.

Exceptions: West End (London), Middle East, Latin America, North America

**competition commission**

replaced the Monopolies and Mergers Commission

**complete, completed**

better than finalise, finalised

**comprise**

to consist of; do not use comprise of

**Congress**  
(US)

**connection**  
not connexion

**Conservative party**

**consortium**  
plural **consortiums**

**constitution**

**Consumers' Association**

**contemporary**  
Of the same period, though often wrongly used to mean modern; a performance of Shakespeare in contemporary dress would involve Elizabethan costume, not 21st-century clothes

**continent, the**  
mainland Europe

**continual**  
refers to things that happen repeatedly but not constantly; **continuous** indicates an unbroken sequence

**convince** or **persuade**?  
You persuade someone to do something, but convince them of the facts

**convener**  
not convenor

**cooperative, cooperation**  
no hyphen, but the store is the Co-op

**cord** vocal; **chord** musical

**collective nouns** (group, family, cabinet, etc) take singular or plural verb according to meaning: the family was shocked, the family were sitting down, scratching their heads

**cornish pasty**

**corporation of London**

**corps de ballet**

**cortege**  
no accent

**councils**  
lc apart from placename: Rochester upon Medway council, London borough of Southwark, Kent county council

**counter-attack**

**coupe**

no accent

**courts**

all lc: court of appeal, high court, supreme court, magistrates court (no apostrophe), European court of human rights

**court martial**

plural **courts martial**

**court of St James's**

**Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease**

(CJD) no need to spell it out

**cricket**

leg-side, leg-spinner, off-spin, off-stump, silly mid-on, mid-off hyphenated

**criterion**

plural criteria

**cripple, crippled**

offensive and outdated; do not use

**Crombie** TM

**Crowley, Aleister**

dead satanist

**crown, the; crown estate, crown jewels**

**crown prosecution service**

CPS on second mention

**cruise missile**

**cumberland sausage**

**cummings, ee**

(US poet, 1894-1962) lc

**cunt**

see swearwords

**Cup, FA**

caps for this event, the Cup subsequently; but other cups are lc on second mention

**currencies**

When the whole word is used it is lc: euro, franc, mark, sterling, dong etc

Symbols: (euros) — on QPS, it is alt-shift-2

Abbreviations: DM50 (German marks); Fr50 (French francs); BFr50 (Belgian francs); SFr50 (Swiss francs); \$50 (US dollars); A\$50 (Australian dollars); HK\$50 (Hong Kong dollars)

Convert all foreign amounts to sterling in brackets at first mention, but use common sense — there is no need to put £660,000 in brackets after the phrase "I feel like a million dollars"

**currently**

prefer now

**customs, customs and excise, customs officers, HM  
customs**

**cyberspace**

**Czech Republic**



**dash**

(QPS) — alt-shift-hyphen in copy; alt-hyphen in headlines

Beware of sentences — such as this one — that dash about all over the place — commas (or even, very occasionally, brackets) are often better; semi-colons also have their uses

**data**

takes a singular verb; strictly a plural, but the battle has been lost

**data protection registrar**

**dates**

January 1 2000 (no commas); 21st century; fourth century BC; AD2006 but 1000BC; for decades use figures: the swinging 60s or 1960s

**Davison, Emily**

Suffragette who dived under king's horse at the Derby

**D-day**

**D notices**

Issued by the defence, press and broadcasting advisory committee (current secretary: Rear Admiral David Pulvertaft), "suggesting" that the media do not publish sensitive information

**debacle**

no accents

**debatable**

**decades**

use figures — the swinging 60s, etc

**defensible**

**deforestation**

**defuse** render harmless; **diffuse** spread about

**deja vu**

no accents

**Deloitte & Touche**

accountants

**delphic**

**denouement**

no accent

**departments of state**

UK government ministries (but not ministers) take initial caps as follows: Home Office, Foreign Office, Cabinet Office, Department for Education (only add "and Employment" when relating to employment stories), Department of Culture (not normally necessary to add "Media and Sport"), Department of the Environment (DoE, second mention; nor normally necessary to add "Transport and the Regions"), Department of Health, Department for International Development, Department of Social Security, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI, second mention), Treasury, Ministry of Agriculture (not normally necessary to add "Fisheries and Food"), Ministry of Defence (MoD, second mention), Lord Chancellor's Department, Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office

lc when departments are abbreviated, eg agriculture ministry, education department

lc for departments and ministries of other countries, eg US state department, Iraqi foreign ministry

**dependant** noun

**dependent** adjective

**dependence**

**depository** person

**depository** place

**de rigueur**

**deselect**

**desiccate**

**despoil, despoliation**

**detente**

**Dettol** TM

**devil, the**

**DeVito, Danny**

**dialects**

lc: cockney, estuary English, scouse, etc

**DiCaprio, Leonardo**

**Dictaphone** TM

**diehard**

**dietician**

**different from**

not different to or than

**dignitary, dignitaries**

**dilapidated**

not delapidated

**dilettante**

**dim sum**

**Dinky Toys** TM

**diphtheria**

**diplomatic service**

**direct speech**

People we write about are allowed to speak in their own, not necessarily the Guardian's, style, but be sensitive: do not, for example, expose someone to ridicule for dialect or grammatical errors

**disabled people**

not "the disabled"

Use positive language about disability, avoiding outdated terms that stereotype or stigmatise. Terms to avoid, with acceptable alternatives in brackets, include victim of, crippled by, suffering from, afflicted by (prefer person who has, person with); wheelchair bound, in a wheelchair (wheelchair user); invalid (disabled person); mental handicap, backward, retarded, slow (person with a learning disability); the disabled, the handicapped, the blind, the deaf (disabled people, blind people, deaf people); deaf and dumb (a person who is deaf and speech-impaired, or a person who is hearing and speech-impaired)

**discernible**

not discernable

**discolour**

but discoloration

**discomfit**

thwart; do not confuse with discomfort

**discreet**

circumspect; **discrete** separate

**disfranchise**

not disenfranchise

**disinterested**

means free from bias, objective; it does not mean uninterested, not taking an interest

**dispatch, dispatch box (Commons), dispatched**

not despatch, despatched

**Disprin** TM

**disk**

(computers), not disc

**Disneyland Paris**

formerly Euro Disney

**dissociate**

not disassociate

**divorcee**

a divorced person, male or female

**Dr**

use at second mention for medical and scientific doctors, not, for example, a politician who happens to have a PhD in history

**Dog and gramophone picture** TM

**dogs**

lc: alsatian, doberman, rottweiler, yorkshire terrier; but Irish setter, old English sheepdog

**Dolby** TM

**Dome**

Millennium Dome at first mention, thereafter the dome

**Dominica**

lies in the Windward Islands, south-west of the Dominican Republic

**Dominican Republic**

shares an island with Haiti

**Donahue, Phil**

**dot.com**

**the Double**

as in Sheffield United may win the Double (FA Cup and Premiership)

**dover sole**

**downmarket**

**Down's syndrome**

**dozen**

approximately 12, so "about a dozen", often seen, is tautologous

**dreamed**

not dreamt

**dressing room**

two words

**drug dealer, raid, squad**

singular, not drugs raid, etc

**drug enforcement administration**

(US, not agency); DEA at second mention

**draftsman**

of document, **draughtsman** of drawing

**drunkenness**

**dugout**

**Duke of Westminster**

or wherever, first mention; thereafter the duke

**Duke of York**

first mention; thereafter Prince Andrew or the prince

**dumb**

do not use; say speech-impaired

**DVLC**

driver and vehicle licensing centre; not normally necessary to spell out

**dyke**

not dike

**dynamo**

plural dynamos

**Dynamo**

football teams from the former Soviet Union are Dynamo; teams from Romania are Dinamo



**Earls Court**

no apostrophe

**earring**

no hyphen

**earshot**

**Earth**

in an astronomical context; but moon, sun

**east end**

inner east London north of the river (the equivalent district south of the Thames is south-east London); but West End

**EastEnders**

TV soap

**eastern Europe, western Europe**

**Easter Day**

not Easter Sunday

**EasyJet**

**E coli**

**e-commerce**

**ecstasy**

(drug) lc

**ecu**

European currency unit, superseded by the euro

**educationist**

not educationalist

**erie** weird

**Erie** North American lake

**eyrie** of eagles

**effectively**

not a synonym for in effect

"The Blair campaign was launched effectively in 1992" means the intended effect was achieved; "The Blair campaign was in effect launched in 1992" means this was not the official launch, but the event described did have the effect of launching it, whether intended or not.

The word effectively, usually misused, is also overused, and can often be omitted

**eg**

no full points

**Eire**

no — use Republic of Ireland or Irish Republic

**elan**

no accent

**elegiac**

**elite**

no accent

**ellipsis**

... (QPS) alt-space bar/alt-colon/alt-space bar

**email**

no hyphen (but e-commerce)

**emanate**

is intransitive; use exude if you need a transitive verb

**Embankment, the**

London

**embargo**

plural **embargos**

**embarrass, embarrassment**

**embassy**

lc, eg British embassy

**emigrate**

leave a country; **immigrate** arrive in one

**enamoured of**

not by or with

**emir**

not amir

**employment service**

**employment tribunal**

not industrial tribunal

**EMS**

European monetary system

**Emu**

European monetary union

**enclose**

not inclose

**enervate**

to deprive of strength or vitality

**enforce, enforceable**

**England**

take care not to offend by saying England or English when you mean Britain or British

**English Heritage**

**English Nature**

**en masse, en route**

do not italicise

**enormity**

something monstrous or wicked, not synonymous with large

**enrol, enrolling, enrolment**

**ensure** make certain; **insure** against risk, **assure** life

**enthral, enthralling**

**entr'acte**

**EPO**

erythropoietin, a performance-enhancing drug

**equator, the**

**ERM**

exchange rate mechanism

**Ernie**

electronic random number indicator equipment: the computer that picks winning premium bond numbers

**Eskimos**

**Inuit** in Canada and Greenland

Inuit is plural; an individual is an **Inuk**

**establishment, the**

**estuary English**

**EU**

European Union (no need to spell out at first mention); formerly EC (European Community); before that EEC (European Economic Community)

**Euro**

do not use as a prefix to everything European, but Euro-MP is an acceptable alternative to MEP

**euro**

(currency); **euroland** countries that have joined the single currency

**Euro Disney**

now called Disneyland Paris

**European commission**

the commission after first mention

**Eurovision song contest**

**Eurosceptic**

one word, capped: they are sceptics about the European Union, not just the euro

**evangelical**

fundamentalist wing of Christianity

**evangelist** one who spreads the gospel

**every day**

noun and adverb: it happens every day

**everyday** adjective: an everyday mistake

**Exchange & Mart**

**exchequer, the**

**ex officio**

by right of position or office

**ex parte**

on behalf of one party only

**expatriate, expat**

not expatriot or ex-pat

**export credit guarantee department**

ECGD at second mention

**extraterritorial**

**extrovert**

not extravert

**eye level**

no hyphen

**eyewitness**

one word, but prefer witness (what else would they use?)



**facade**

no accent

**FA Cup**

the Cup (the cap C is hallowed by convention); all other cups lc at second mention

**fahrenheit**

68F etc; use in brackets after celsius

**fallout**

**far, farther, farthest**

of distances; otherwise further, furthest

**far east**

but Middle East

**fascism, fascist**

**fatality**

use death

**fatwa**

an edict, not necessarily a death sentence

**Fayed**

Mohamed Al Fayed, owner of Harrods; Mr Fayed after first mention

**faze** intimidate or overwhelm; **phase** a stage

**FBI**

Federal Bureau of Investigation; no need to spell out

**Federal Reserve Board**

first reference, the Fed thereafter

**fellow**

lc, eg a fellow of All Souls

**fellow**

artists, fellow members, etc: do not hyphenate

**ferris wheel**

**fete**

no accent

**Ffestiniog**

but Festiniog railway

**Field Marshal**

**figures**

spell out from one to nine; integers from 10 to 999,999; thereafter 1m, 3.2bn etc: "the population had grown from three to 3bn in 2.5m years"

**film-maker**

**Filofax** TM

Use personal organiser unless you are sure

**finalise, finalised**

avoid; use complete, completed

**financial services authority**

FSA on second mention

**financial years**

2001-02, etc

**fine-tooth comb**

**Finnegans Wake**

**firebomb**

**firefighter**

not fireman

**firm**

strictly a partnership without limited liability, such as solicitors, but may be used to mean company in headlines

**first**

second, third spell out up to ninth, then 10th, 21st, millionth

**firstly**

prefer first, second, third

**first aid**

**first-hand**

**first minister**

(Scottish parliament, Welsh assembly, Northern Ireland assembly)

**first name**

not Christian name

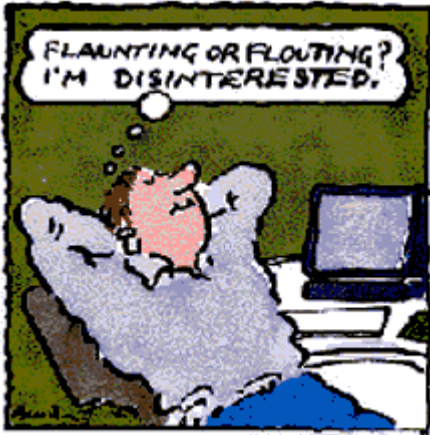
**first world war**

**flak**

not flack

**flammable**

means the same as inflammable; the negative is non-flammable



**flaunt/flout**

to flaunt is to make a display of something, as in flaunting wealth; to flout is to show contempt for something, as in flouting the seatbelt law

**fledgling**

not fledgeling

**flu**

**fluky**

not flukey

**flyer**

not flier

**fo'c'sle**

abbreviation of forecastle

**focus, focused, focusing**

**foetid**

not fetid

**foetus**

not fetus

**fogey**

not foggy

**following**

prefer after, eg Mansfield Town went to pieces after their Cup exit

**foot and mouth disease**

**forbear** abstain; **forebear** ancestor

**forever**

continually: he is forever changing his mind

**for ever**

for always: I will love you for ever

**foreign names**

The French le or de, the Italian di and the Dutch van are all lc when the name is full out: eg Graeme le Saux, Roberto di Matteo, Pierre van Hooijdonk; but Le Saux, Di Matteo, Van Hooijdonk.

English names with le, de (Nigel de Gruchy, etc): same rules

**foreign words and phrases**

Italicise, with roman translation in brackets, if it really is a foreign word or phrase and not an anglicised one, in which case it is roman with no accents (exception: *exposé*)

Remember Orwell: do not use a foreign word where a suitable English equivalent exists

**forensic**

belonging to the courts; it does not mean scientific

**forego** go before; **forgo** go without

**Formica** TM

**formula**

plural formulas, but formulae in scientific contexts

**formula one**

motor racing

**forthcoming**

not upcoming

**fortuitous**

by chance, accidental; not by good fortune, lucky. A word that is almost always misused

**fosbury flop**

**fractions**

two-and-a-half, three-quarters etc

**french kiss, french leave, french letter, french polish, french window**

**fresco**

plural **frescoes**

**Freud, Lucian**

British artist, (born 1922); not Lucien

**freudian slip**

**frontbench, frontline, frontrunner**

**FTSE-100**

**fuck**

see swearwords

**fuel**

overused as a verb

**fulfil, fulfilling, fulfilment**

**fulsome**

means "cloying, excessive, disgusting by excess"; so "fulsome praise" should not be used in a complimentary sense

**fundraiser, fundraising**

no hyphen

**fungus**

plural **fungi**



**Gadafy, Muammar**

Libyan president; Col Gadafy on second mention

**gambit**

an opening strategy that involves some sacrifice or concession; so to talk of an opening gambit is tautologous — an opening ploy might be better

**gameplan**

one word

**Gandhi**

not Ghandi

**Garda**

Irish police force

**garda** (plural **gardai**) Irish police officer

**garotte**

not garrotte or garrote (Collins lists all three)

**Garryowen**

Irish rugby club

**garryowen**

up-and-under (rugby union)

**gases**

plural of gas; not gasses

**Gauguin, Paul**

(1848-1903) French painter, often misspelt as Gaugin

**gay**

synonymous with homosexual, and on the whole preferable

**Gaza strip**

**gender issues**

Our use of language should reflect not only changes in society but the newspaper's values. Phrases such as career girl or career woman, for example, are outdated (more women have careers than men) and patronising (there is no male equivalent): never use them

**actor, comedian:** covers men and women; not actress, comedienne (but **waiter** and **waitress** are acceptable — at least for the moment)

**firefighter**, not fireman; **PC**, not WPC (most police forces have abandoned the distinction)

businessmen, housewives, "male nurse", "woman pilot", "woman (lady!) doctor": do not use terms such as these, which reinforce outdated stereotypes

Use **humankind** or **humanity** rather than mankind, a word that, as one of our readers points out, "alienates half the population from their own history"

Never say "his" to cover men and women: use his or her, or a different construction; in sentences such as "a teacher who beats his/her pupils is not fit to do the job", there is usually a way round the problem — in this case, "teachers who beat their pupils..."

### **General**

at first mention; then Gen: General Wesley Clark, Nato's supreme commander; subsequently Gen Clark

### **general election**

### **General Medical Council**

(GMC) doctors' disciplinary body

### **genetically modified food**

GM food on second mention

### **Geneva convention**

### **german measles**

### **ghetto**

plural **ghettoes**

### **gift**

not a verb (unless, perhaps, directly quoting a football manager or player: "We gifted Spurs their second goal")

### **girl**

female under 18

### **girlfriend**

### **Glasgow kiss**

### **glasnost**

### **goalline, goalpost**

### **gobsmacked**

only when directly quoting someone

### **God**

### **Goldsmiths College**

no apostrophe

**golf**

the Open

For holes, use numbers: 1st, 2nd, 18th, etc

matchplay: one word, except World Match Play Championship

**Good Friday agreement**

Northern Ireland

**goodness, for goodness sake**

**goodnight**

**go-slow**

**government**

lc in all contexts and all countries

**government departments**

see departments of state

**government purchasing agency**

**graffiti**

are plural; **graffito** is the singular

**grandad**

but **granddaughter**

**grand prix**

lc: the British grand prix; plural grands prix

**grassroots**

one word

**Greater London authority**

GLA on second mention

**great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather**

**green belt**

lc: designated areas around cities subject to strict planning controls, not open countryside in general

**greenfield site**

One that has not been built on before; one that has been built on before is a

**brownfield site**

**greenhouse effect**

Energy from the earth's surface is trapped in the lower atmosphere by gases that prevent it leaking into space, a natural phenomenon that makes life possible, whose enhancement by natural or manmade means may make life impossible. Not the result of the hole in the ozone layer, whose thinning in the upper atmosphere is due to CFCs; the connection is that CFCs are also greenhouse gases

**Greens**

uc when referring to so-named political parties, eg the German Greens; but a green activist, the green movement

**green paper**

**G7**

Group of Seven leading industrial countries, but no need to spell out

**G8**

the G7, plus Russia

**Guardian, the**

**guerrilla**

**Guevara, Che**

(1928-67) Argentine-born revolutionary

**Guildhall**

(City of London), not "the Guildhall"

**Gulf war**

**Gypsy**



**habeas corpus**

**the Hague**

**Hair, Darrell**

Australian cricket umpire

**half a dozen; half past; half-price; halfway**

**halo**

plural **haloes**

**Hambros Bank**

no apostrophe

**Hamed, Prince Naseem**

boxer; Hamed at second mention

**Hamilton Academical**

not Academicals; nickname the Accies

**handbill, handbook, handout**

**handicapped**

Do not use to refer to disabled people or people with learning difficulties

**hanging participles**

Beware of constructions such as "having died, they buried him"

**harass, harassment**

**Harland and Wolff**

**Harrods**

**hat-trick**

**headdress**

**headmaster, headmistress, headteacher**

one word; but Association of Head Teachers

**HQ**

singular and plural

**health and safety executive**

HSE on second mention

**healthcare**

**Heathrow airport**

or simply Heathrow; not London's Heathrow

**heaven**

**hectares**

not abbreviated; convert to acres in brackets (divide by 2.5)

**height**

in metres with imperial conversion, eg 1.68m (5ft 7in)

**hell, hades**

**hello**

not hallo (and certainly not "hullo", unless quoting the Rev ARP Blair)

**help**

takes "to" with another verb: eg help to decide, not help and decide

**herculean**

**hiccup**

not hiccough

**highfalutin**

**Highlands and Islands Enterprise**

**highland fling**

**high street**

lc in retail spending stories: the recession is making an impact in the high street;  
capped only in proper name: I went shopping in Walthamstow High Street

**hi-tech**

**highways agency**

**hijack**

of movable objects only, not of schools, embassies, etc

**hike**

a walk, not a rise in interest rates

**historian, hotel**

use a, not an before these

**HIV positive**

no hyphen

**hippopotamus**

plural **hippopotamuses**, not hippopotami

**historic, a**  
not an

**Hizbullah**  
not Hezbollah

**hoi polloi**  
common people, the masses; "the hoi polloi" is nowadays acceptable

**Holocaust**

**Holy Land**

**home counties**

**homepage**

**homeowner, homebuyer**

**honeybee**

**hon members**  
of parliament

**honorarium**  
plural **honorariums**

**honorifics**  
On news and comment pages: Tony Blair or Sir Bobby Charlton at first mention, thereafter Mr Blair, Sir Bobby, etc

Lord Irvine, the lord chancellor (first time), Lord Irvine (subsequent mentions)

Use surnames only after first mention on all sport stories, in arts-related news stories (actors, authors, musicians, etc), for those convicted of criminal offences, and for those who are dead

In other sections: surnames are acceptable after first mention, but use your judgment: for parents of a child who has drowned, say, surnames only may sound crude or heartless

**Hoover TM**

**hopefully**  
Sadly, this battle has been lost and hopefully is now widely used to mean it is to be hoped; mercifully, this is not the end of the world although it seems to upset the pedantic; happily, you may avoid ambiguity by using full of hope instead of hopefully in sentences such as "England will begin their second innings full of hope after tea"

**horrendous**  
sounds like a rather ugly combination of horrific and tremendous, but is in fact from the Latin for fearful; horrific is generally preferable, however

**hospital, a**  
not an

**hospitals**  
cap the placename, eg Derby district general hospital, Great Ormond Street children's hospital, Royal London hospital; but London Clinic

**hospitalised**  
no such word; use taken (never "rushed") to hospital

**hotel, a**  
not an

**housebreaker, housebuyer, householder, housekeeper, houseboat**  
one word

**housewife**  
avoid

**hovercraft**

**Hudson Bay, Hudson's Bay Company**

**humankind, humanity**  
preferable to mankind

**humour, humorist, humorous**

**hunky dory**

**hyphens**  
Our style is to use one word wherever possible, including some instances where a word might be hyphenated by other publications. Hyphens tend to clutter up text (particularly when the system breaks already hyphenated words at the end of lines)

Inventions, ideas and new concepts often begin life as two words, then become hyphenated, before finally becoming accepted as one word. Why wait? "Wire-less" was once hyphenated

In pursuit of this it is preferable to go further than Collins does in many cases: eg trenchcoat is two words in Collins but one under our style

Never use hyphens after adverbs, eg genetically modified, politically naive

Do use hyphens where not using one would be ambiguous, eg to distinguish "black-cab drivers come under attack" from "black cab-drivers come under attack"



**icon, iconoclast**

**ie**

no full points

**illegitimate**

do not use to refer to children born outside marriage

**impinge, impinging**

**impostor**

not imposter

**impractical**

possible in theory but not in reality

**impracticable**

not workable; a plan that has been put into practice and has failed

**inchoate**

just beginning or undeveloped, not chaotic or disorderly

**income support**

**income tax**

**index**

plural **indexes**, except for scientific and economic: **indices**

**indispensable**

not indispensable

**individual savings account (Isa)**

no need to spell out

**infer or imply?**

to infer is to deduce something from evidence; to imply is to hint at something (and wait for someone to infer it)

**infinite**

without limit; does not mean very large



**infinitives, split**

Most authorities say it is acceptable to split infinitives sensibly, though to always split infinitives may sound inelegant — so use common sense

And remember George Bernard Shaw's reaction after an editor tinkered with his infinitives: "I don't care if he is made to go quickly, or to quickly go — but go he must!"

**inflammable**

means the same as **flammable**; the negative is **non-flammable**

**initials**

no spaces or points, whether businesses or individuals eg WH Smith, PCR Tufnell

**inner city**

noun two words; adjectivally hyphen: "Inner-city blues make me wanna holler", as the great Marvin Gaye put it

**innocuous**

**innuendo**

plural **innuendoes**

**inoculate**

not inoculate

**inquiry**

not enquiry

**insignia**

are plural

**install, instalment**

**instil, instilled, instilling**

followed by into

**international date line**

**Interpol**

**internet, net, website, web, world wide web**  
all lc

**intifada**

**into**  
but **on to**

**invalid**  
means not valid or of no worth; do not use to refer to disabled or ill people

**Ireland, Irish Republic**  
not Eire

**ironfounder, ironmonger, ironworks**

**iron curtain**

**ironically**  
Avoid when what you mean is strangely, coincidentally or amusingly. There are times when ironically is right but too often it is misused. The idiotic "post-ironic" is banned

**ise**  
not ize at end of word (except **capsize**)



**jail**

not gaol

**jejune**

naive, unsophisticated (not necessarily anything to do with being young)

**jerry-builder**

**jewellery**

**jibe**

not gibe

**jobcentre**

**jobseeker's allowance**

**job titles**

lc: editor of the Guardian, governor of the Bank of England, prime minister

**jodhpurs**

**Joe Public, John Doe**

**Johnson Matthey plc**

metal specialist, not to be confused with Johnson Matthey Bank

**jokey**

not joky

**judgment**

not judgement

**junior**

abbreviate to **Jr** not Jun or Jnr, eg Frank Sinatra Jr



**kapok**

**Kashmir**

adjective **Kashmiri**; but cashmere fabric

**K-For**

Nato peacekeeping force in Kosovo

**khaki**

**kibosh**

**kick-off**

**kilogram, kilometre, kilowatt**

abbreviate as follows: kg, km, kw

**King Edward potatoes**

**Kitemark** TM

**knockout**

one word

**knots**

measure of nautical miles an hour; not knots an hour

**Kosovo, Kosovans**

adjective **Kosovan** not Kosovar

**kow-tow**

**kukri**

Gurkha knife

**Kyrie Eleison**



**laager**

South African encampment

**lager**

beer

**Lady Blackstone, Jay, Thatcher**

not Baroness

**laissez-faire**

not italicised

**lamb's wool**

**lamp-post**

**lance-corporal**

**Land**

state of Federal German Republic: use state, eg Hesse, the German state

**landmine**

one word

**land registry**

**Land-Rover**

(but Range Rover)

**lang, kd**

(Canadian singer-songwriter and lesbian icon) lc

**largesse**

note final e

**La's**

defunct Liverpool rock band: keep apostrophe (abbreviation for Lads)

**lasso**

plural lassoes

**last post**

**law lords**

**lawsuit**

**layby**  
plural **laybys**

**lbw**

**leap year**

**left**  
lc for the left; **leftwing** (one word); **leftwinger** (one word); but on the left wing of the party; broad, soft, hard, old, cuddly left, all lc

**legal aid board**

**legionnaire's disease**

**lepers**  
Avoid: these days the term is regarded as inappropriate and stigmatising; prefer people affected by, people with, or people suffering from leprosy

**lese-majeste**

**less or fewer?**  
less means less in quantity, eg less money; fewer means smaller in number, eg fewer coins

**letdown, letup**

**leukaemia**

**level crossing**

**liaison**

**libretto**  
plural **librettos**

**licence** noun, **license** verb

**lied** singular, **lieder** plural

**lieutenant, lieutenant-colonel**  
abbreviate on second mention to Col: Lieutenant-Colonel Christopher Mackay, subsequently Col Mackay

**lifelong**  
one word

**light year**  
a measure of distance, not time

**like/as if**  
never use the former to mean the latter: "it looks as if he's finished" not "it looks like he's finished"

**like/such as**

like excludes; such as includes: "Cities like Manchester are wonderful" suggests the writer has in mind, say, Sheffield or Birmingham; she actually means "cities such as Manchester"

Do not be misled by Nevil Shute's *A Town Like Alice*: good title, but ungrammatical

**likely**

takes the infinitive (he is likely to win) or a qualifier (he will very likely win), not "he will likely win" — if you want to use that form, say "he will probably win"

**lilliputian**

**liquefy**

not liquify

**linchpin**

not lynchpin

**lineup, lineout**

**Live TV**

not L!ve TV

**Lloyds Bank**

**Lloyd's**

of London; **names** lc

**Lloyd-Webber, Lord**

but **Andrew Lloyd Webber**

Strange, but true

**loan**

noun; the verb is **to lend**

**loathe** detest; **loth** unwilling, not loath

**lockout**

noun, **lock out** verb

**London Eye**

official name of the millennium wheel

**Long Island iced tea**

**longitude**

eg 13 deg 17 min E

**looking-glass**

**lord chancellor**

currently Lord Irvine of Lairg

**lord chief justice**

currently Lord Bingham

**lord lieutenant**

no hyphen; plural **lords lieutenant**

**Lords, House of Lords**

but the house, not the House

**Lord's**

cricket ground

**lordships, their**

**lottery, national lottery**

**loyalists**

Northern Ireland

**lumpenproletariat**

**luvvies**

a silly cliché; do not use

**luxury** noun, **luxurious** adjective

**lying in state**

no hyphens

**Lyon**

not Lyons



**mace, the**  
(parliament)

**Mace**  
riot control spray

**MacDonald, Ramsay**  
(1866-1937) first Labour prime minister

**McDonald's**  
hamburgers

**machine gun** noun; **machine-gun** verb; **submachine gun**

**machiavellian**

**McLuhan, Marshall**  
(1911-80) Canadian author who coined the phrase "the medium is the message"

**Macmillan, Harold**  
(1894-1986) Tory prime minister

**MacMillan, Kenneth**  
(1929-92) British choreographer

**madeira**  
wine and cake

**maharajah**

**mailbag, mailvan, mail train**

**mainmast, mainsail**

**magistrates court**  
no apostrophe

**major**  
overused; avoid except in military context

**Major-General**  
abbreviate on second mention to Gen: Major-General Nikki Marshall, subsequently Gen Marshall

**Mamma Mia!**  
musical show featuring Abba songs

**manifesto**

plural **manifestos**

**mankind**

prefer humankind or humanity

**manoeuvre, manoeuvring**

**Mao Zedong**

Mao on second mention

**Marks & Spencer**

at first mention, then M&S

**marquis**

not marquess, except where it is the correct formal title, eg Marquess of Blandford

**Marseille**

not Marseilles

**Marshall Aid**

**martial law**

**massive**

massively overused; avoid

**masthead**

**Mathews, Meg**

**matinee**

no accent

**matins**

**mayor of London**

or anywhere else: lc

**MCC**

the MCC, not "MCC"

**meat and livestock commission**

**meat hygiene service**

**media**

plural of medium: the media are sex-obsessed etc; but **medium** spiritualist; plural **mediums**

**medieval**

not mediaeval

**meet, met**

not meet with, met with someone

**mega**

horrible; do not use

**memento**

plural **mementoes**

**memorandum**

plural **memorandums**

**menage**

no accent

**mental handicap, mentally handicapped**

Do not use; say person with learning disabilities

**mentally ill people**

not "the mentally ill"

Take care using language about mental health issues. In addition to such clearly offensive, and hence unacceptable, expressions as loony, maniac, nutter, psycho and schizo, terms to avoid — because they stereotype and stigmatise — include victim of, suffering from, and afflicted by; "a person with" is clear, accurate and preferable to "a person suffering from"

**Messiaen, Olivier**

(1908-92) French composer

**meteorological office**

met office is acceptable

**metric system**

The Guardian uses the metric system for weights and measures; exceptions are the mile and the pint

Since understanding of the two systems is a matter of generations, conversions (in brackets) to imperial units should be provided wherever this seems useful. Imperial units in quoted matter should be retained, and converted to metric [in square brackets]

It is not necessary to convert moderate distances between metres and yards, which are close enough for rough and ready purposes, or small domestic quantities: two litres of wine, a kilogram of sugar, a couple of pounds of apples, a few inches of string. Small units should be converted when precision is required: 44mm (1.7in) of rain fell in two hours. Tons and tonnes (metric) are also close enough for most purposes to do without conversion

Body weights and heights should always be converted in brackets: metres to feet and inches, kg to stones and pounds. Geographical heights and depths, of people, buildings, monuments etc, should be converted, metres to feet

In square measurement, land is given in sq metres, hectares and sq km; with sq yards, acres or sq miles in brackets. The floor areas of buildings are conventionally expressed in sq metres or sq ft

**Metropolitan police**

the Met at second mention; commissioner of the Metropolitan police (currently Sir John Stevens), Met commissioner is acceptable

**mexican wave**

**mid-Atlantic**

but transatlantic

**midday**

**middle ages**

**middle America**

**Middle East**

never Mid, even in headlines

**midweek**

**midwest, the**

US

**militate/mitigate**

to militate against something is to influence it (his record militated against his early release); to mitigate means to lessen an offence (in mitigation, her counsel argued that she came from a broken home)

**mileage**

**millenary, millennium, millennia**

**Millennium Dome**

at first mention; then just the dome

**millennium wheel**

its official name is London Eye

**million**

use **m** in headlines and copy: £10m, 238m people

**mimic, mimicked, mimicking**

**min**

contraction of minute/minutes, no full point

**mineworker**

**minimum**

plural **minima**

**miniskirt**

**ministers**

**minuscule**

not miniscule

**mistakable, unmistakable**

**mistakes**

Correct versions of some of our most common mistakes include:

linchpin, not lynchpin

no one, not no-one

rebut or deny, not refute

seize, not sieze

siege, not seige

supersede, not supercede

targeted, targeting, not targetted, targetting

under way, not underway

**misuse, misused**

no hyphen

**Mohamed Al Fayed**

second reference: Mr Fayed

**Mohammed**

the prophet

**moneys**

not monies; **moneyed**, not monied

**Mongol**

one of the peoples of Mongolia

**Montenegro**

inhabited by Montenegrins

**Morissette, Alanis**

**morris dance**

**mosquito**

plural **mosquitoes**

**motorcar, motorcycle**

**motorways**

use M1, not M1 motorway

**motor vehicle**

**mottoes**

**movable**

**mph**

no points

## **MPs**

### **Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms**

Use after first mention on news (but not sport) pages, unless you are writing about an artist, author, journalist, musician, criminal or dead person

### **Mrs, Miss or Ms?**

We use whichever the woman in question prefers: with most women in public life (Ms Booth, Mrs Gorman, Miss Widdecombe) that preference is well known; if you don't know, try to find out; if that proves impossible, use Ms

## **MSP**

member of the Scottish parliament, plural MSPs

## **Muhammad Ali**

**multicultural, multimedia, multimillion**  
but **multi-ethnic**

## **Murphy's law**

## **museums**

initial caps, eg British Museum, Natural History Museum, Museum of the Moving Image (Momi at second mention), Victoria and Albert Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, etc

## **Muslim**

not Moslem



**Nabokov, Vladimir**

(1899-1977) Russian-born author of *Lolita*; not Nabakov

**naive, naively, naivety**

no accent

**Nasa**

National Aeronautics and Space Administration, but no need to spell out

**national grid**

no definite article

**national insurance**

**nationalists**

(Northern Ireland)

**National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers**

(NASUWT) We are stuck with these horrible initials unless the organisation changes its name to something more sensible; call it "the union" after first mention

**national audit office**

**national consumer council**

**national savings**

**native Americans**

not American Indians (and especially not Red Indians)

**Nato**

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, but no need to spell out

**naught** nothing; **nought** the figure 0

**navy**

but **Royal Navy**

**Nazi**

but **nazism**

**nearby**

one word, whether adjective or adverb: the pub nearby; the nearby pub

**nearsighted, nearsightedness**

**nerve-racking**

**nevertheless**  
but **none the less**

**new, now**  
often redundant

**New Labour**  
but **old Labour**

**news agency**

**newsagent, newsprint, newsreel**

**newspaper titles**  
the Guardian, the New York Times etc

**new year**  
lc; but **New Year's Day, New Year's Eve**

**next week**  
Use "on Tuesday, on Saturday" etc up to the end of the week you are writing in; for the following week, say "next Tuesday" etc; if necessary to clarify, include the date

**next of kin**

**NHS**  
national health service, but not necessary to spell out; health service is also OK

**nightcap, nightdress, nightfall, nightgown, nightshade, nightshirt**  
all one word

**Nobel Prize**  
Nobel Peace Prize, but Nobel Prize for literature, etc

**No 1**  
in the charts, the world tennis No 1, etc — with thin space before the number (on QPS: apple-shift-alt-space bar)

**No 10**  
(Downing Street) — with thin space before the 10

**no**  
plural **noes**

**no man's land**  
no hyphens

**no one**  
not no-one

**noncommissioned officer**

**nonconformist**

**none**

takes singular verb: none is, not none are

**none the less**

**north**

north London, north-east England, the north-west: all lc

**northern hemisphere**

**north pole**

**nosy**

not nose-y

**notebook, notepaper**

**Nottingham Forest, Notts County**

**numbers**

spell out from one to nine; integers from 10 to 999,999; thereafter 1m, 3.2bn etc: "the population had grown from three to 3bn in 2.5m years"



**obligato**

not obligato

**obscenities**

see swearwords

**oceans, seas**

lc, eg Atlantic ocean, Red sea

**OECD**

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development at first mention

**offhand, off-licence, offside**

**office for national statistics**

**office of fair trading**

OFT on second mention

**Oh!**

not O!

**oilfield**

**oil painting**

**oil production platform**

for production of oil; **oil rig** for exploration and drilling

**OK**

is OK; "okay" is not

**O-levels**

hyphen

**omelette**

**on board**

for ship or plane, not aboard

**ONdigital**

**ongoing**

prefer continuous or continual

**only**

should stand next to the word(s) qualified: I have only one ambition, not I only have one ambition

**online**

**on to**

but **into**

**Op 58, No 2**

music style

**opencast**

**ophthalmic**

**opossum**

**opposition, the**

**or**

Do not use "or" when explaining or amplifying — rather than "the NUT, or National Union of Teachers" say "The NUT (National Union of Teachers)" or, even better, "The National Union of Teachers" at first mention and then just "the NUT" or "the union"

**ordinance**

direction, decree

**ordnance survey**

maps (originally undertaken by army)

**outgrow, outgun, outmanoeuvre, outpatient**

one word

**outward bound**

We have been sued twice by the Outward Bound Trust when we have reported that people have died on "outward bound" courses that were nothing to do with the trust. Use a safer term such as outdoor adventure or adventure training

**over or more than?**

Over and under answer the question "how much?"; more than and fewer than answer the question "how many?": she is over 18, there were more than 20,000 at the game, etc



**Pacific ocean**

**paean**

**Palmer-Tomkinson, Tara**

**papier-mache**

hyphen, no accent

**Pandora's box**

**panel, panelled, panelling**

**paparazzo**

plural **paparazzi**

**paralleled**

**Parker-Bowles, Camilla**

**Parkinson's disease**

**Parkinson's law**

**parliament, parliamentary**

**party**

lc in name of organisation, eg Labour party

**passerby**

**passport agency**

**password**

**pasteurise**

**patent office**

**patients**

are discharged from hospital, not released

**payback, payday, payout**

**peacetime**

**Pearl Harbour**

not Harbor

**pedaller** cyclist

**pedlar** hawker

**peddler** drug dealer

**peewit**

**peking duck**

**pendant** noun

**pendent** adjective

**peninsula**

noun, **peninsular** adjective

**penknife**

one word

**peony**

**per**

avoid. Use English! "She earns £30,000 a year" is better than "per year". If you must use it, the Latin preposition is followed by another Latin word, eg per capita, not per head.

Exception: miles per hour, abbreviation mph

**per cent**

% in headlines and copy

**percentage rises**

an increase from 3% to 5% is a 2 percentage point increase or a 2-point increase, not a 2% increase

**Performing Right Society**

not rights

**permissible**

**personal equity plan**

Pep

**persons**

No! They are people (can you imagine Barbra Streisand singing "Persons who need persons"?)

**phenomenon**

plural **phenomena**

**Philippines**

inhabited by **Filipinos** (male) and **Filipinas** (female); adjective **Filipino** for both sexes, but **Philippine** for, say, a Philippine island or the Philippine president

**philistine**

**phone**

no apostrophe

**phone numbers**

like this: 020-7278 2332, 01892 456789

**phosphorous** adjective, **phosphorus** noun

**photocopy**

not Photostat or Xerox (trade names)

**picketed, picketing**

**picket**

noun (one who pickets); not picketer

**piecework**

**pigeonhole**

verb or noun

**pigsty**

plural **pigsties**

**pillbox**

**Pimm's**

**Pin number**

not PIN number

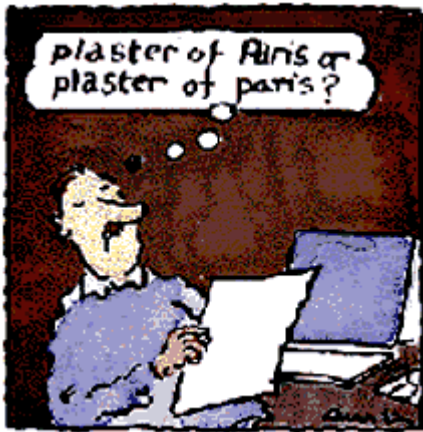
**pipeline**

**Pissaro, Camille**

(1830-1903) French impressionist painter; his son **Lucien** (1863-1944) was also an artist

**placename**

**planning inspectorate**



**plaster of paris**

**plateau**

plural **plateaux**

**plateglass**

**playbill, playgoer, playwright**

**play-off**

**plc**

not PLC

**P&O**

**pocketbook, pocketknife**

**poet laureate**

lc, currently Andrew Motion

**pointe**

(ballet): on pointe, not on point or en pointe

**police forces**

Metropolitan police (the Met after first mention), West Midlands police, New York police department (NYPD at second mention), etc

**police ranks**

PC on all references to police constable (never WPC), other ranks full out and initial cap at first reference; thereafter abbreviation plus surname: Sgt Campbell, DC, Insp, Ch Insp, Det Supt, Ch Supt, etc

**politburo**

**political parties**

Abbreviate in parliamentary reporting as C, Lab, Lib Dem, SNP, Plaid Cymru, UUP (Ulster Unionist party), DUP (Democratic Unionist party); PUP (Progressive Unionist party); SDLP (Social Democratic and Labour party); SF (Sinn Fein); UDP (Ulster Democratic party)

**Pope, the**

**poppadoms**

**portland cement**

**port of London authority**

PLA on second mention

**Post-It TM**

**postcode**

**postgraduate**

**postmodern, postmodernist**

**postmortem**

means after death; use **postmortem examination** or **autopsy**

**Post Office**

cap up the organisation, but buy stamps in a **post office** or **sub-post office**

**postwar, prewar**

**practice** noun, **practise** verb

**precis**

singular and plural

**pre-eminent**

**prefabricated**

**premier**

Use only when constitutionally correct (eg leaders of Australian states or Canadian provinces), therefore not for Britain — do not use in headlines for British prime minister.

Exception: the Chinese traditionally give their PMs the title of Premier, eg Premier Zhu Rongji

**premiere**

no accent

**Premiership**

Use for English football (FA Premier League is the governing body, not the competition); in Scotland, however, it is the Premier League

**premises**

of buildings and logic

**president**

lc except in title: President Clinton, but Bill Clinton, the US president

**press, the**

**Press Gazette**

formerly UK Press Gazette

**pressurised**

use pressured, put pressure on or pressed to mean apply pressure, ie not "they pressurised the Wolves defence"

**prestigious**

having prestige: nothing wrong with this, despite what wise old subeditors used to tell us

**preventive**

not preventative

**PricewaterhouseCoopers**

one word

**prima donna**

plural **prima donnas**

**prima facie**

not italicised

**Primate**

another word for archbishop

Primate of All England: Archbishop of Canterbury

Primate of England: Archbishop of York

**primate**

higher mammals of the order Primates, essentially apes and humans

**prime minister**

**Prince of Wales**

first mention; thereafter Prince Charles or the prince

**principal**

first in importance; **principle** standard of conduct

**principality**

lc (Wales, Monaco)

**privy council**

but **privy counsellor**

**probe**

a dental implement, not an inquiry or investigation

**procurator fiscal**

**profile**

a noun, not a verb

**program** (computer); otherwise **programme**

**prohibition**

lc for US prohibition

**propeller**

**prophecy** noun, **prophesy** verb

**pros and cons**

**protege**

masculine, **protegee** feminine; no accents

**protester**

not protestor

**proviso**

plural provisos

**Ps and Qs**

**publication note**

at end of story: round blob (QPS: alt-8), then title; author; publisher or source; price, all in roman

**publicly**

not publically

**public record office**

**pundit**

self-appointed expert

**purchase**

as a noun, perhaps, but use buy as a verb

**putt** golf; **put** athletics

**pygmy**

plural **pygmies**: lc except for members of Equatorial African ethnic group

**pyjamas**

**pyrrhic**



**Qantas**

**QC**

use without comma, eg Cherie Booth QC

**quarterdeck, quartermaster**

**Queen, the**

if it is necessary to say so, she is HM, never HRH

**Queen Mother, the**

**Queen's College** Oxford

**Queens' College** Cambridge

**queueing**

not queuing

**quicklime, quicksand, quicksilver**

one word

**quixotic**

**quiz**

a suspect is questioned, never quizzed (however tempting for headline purposes)

**Quorn TM**

vegetable substitute for meat

**quotation marks**

Use double quotes at start and end of quoted section, with single quotes for quoted words within that section. Place full points and commas inside the quotes for a complete quoted sentence; otherwise point comes outside.

"Mary said, 'Your style guide needs updating,' and I said, 'I agree.' "

but: "Mary said updating the guide was 'a difficult and time consuming task'."

Headlines and standfirsts (sparingly), captions and pullout quotes all take single quotes



**racecourse, racehorse**

**racial terminology**

Do not use "ethnic" to mean black or Asian people. In a UK sense, they are an ethnic minority; in a world sense, of course, white people are an ethnic minority

Just as in the Balkans or anywhere else, internal African peoples should be called ethnic groups rather than "tribes", a term that carries the baggage of years of negative racial stereotyping

Avoid the word "immigrant", which is very offensive to many black and Asian people, not only because it is often incorrectly used to describe people who were born here, but also because it has been used negatively for so many years that it carries imagery of "flooding", "swamping", "bogus", "scroungers" etc

The words black and Asian should not be used as nouns, but adjectives: black people rather than "blacks", an Asian woman rather than "an Asian", etc

**rack and ruin**

**racked**

with pain, not wracked

**rackets**

not racquets, except in club titles

**Rada**

Royal Academy of Dramatic Art; normally no need to spell out

**Radio 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Live**

**a radiographer**

takes x-rays; a **radiologist** reads them

**radius**

plural radii

**raincoat, rainfall, rainproof**

**Range Rover**

no hyphen; but **Land-Rover**

**Rangers**

not Glasgow Rangers

**rarefy, rarefied**

**rateable**

**Rawlplug** TM

**Ray-Ban** TM

**realpolitik**

lc, no italics

**Rear Admiral Horatio Hornblower**

at first mention; thereafter Admiral Hornblower

**re/re-**

Use re- (with hyphen) when followed by the vowels e or u (not pronounced as "yu"): eg re-entry, re-examine, re-urge

Use re (no hyphen) when followed by the vowels a, i, o or u (pronounced as "yu"), or any consonant: eg rearm, rearrange, reassemble, reiterate, reorder, reuse, rebuild, reconsider

Exceptions: re-read; or where confusion with another word would arise: re-cover/recover, re-form/reform, re-creation/recreation, re-sign/resign

**reafforestation**

not reforestation

**recent**

avoid; if the date is relevant, use it

**Red Cross**

**referendum, referendums**

**re-form**

to form again

**reform**

to change for the better; we should not take initiators' use of the word at its face value, particularly in cases where the paper believes no improvement is likely

**refute**

Use this much-abused word only when an argument is disproved; otherwise, contest, deny, rebut

**regalia**

plural, of royalty; "royal regalia" is tautologous

**regime**

no accent

**register office**

not registry office

**registrar general**

**regrettable**

**reinstate**

**reopen**

**repellent**

adjective, **repellant** noun: you fight repellent insects with an insect repellant

**repertoire**

an individual's range of skills or roles

**repertory**

a selection of works that a theatre or ballet company might perform

**replaceable**

**report**

lc in titles, eg Lawrence report

**reported speech**

goes in the past tense: "she said that it was" not "she said that it is"

**republicans**

lc

**restaurateur**

not restauranteur

**retail price index**

(RPI); normally no need to spell it out

**Reuters**

**the Rev**

not Reverend, the Reverend or Rev (first mention); then courtesy title: eg the Rev Joan Smith, subsequently Ms Smith

**Revelation**

last book in the New Testament: not Revelations, a very common error; its full name is The Revelation of St John the Divine

**veille**

**rickety**

**ricochet, ricocheted, ricocheting**

**right**

the right; rightwinger, noun; rightwing, adjective (but on the right wing of the party)

**rivers**

lc, eg river Thames, Amazon river

**riveted, riveting**

**roadside**

**Rock**

cap R if referring to Gibraltar

**rock'n'roll**

one word

**role**

no accent

**Rollerblade** TM

Use inline skates or rollerskates

**rollercoaster**

one word

**Rolls-Royce**

hyphen

**Rorschach test**

psychological test based on the interpretation of inkblots

**roughshod**

**Rovers Return, the**

Coronation Street (no apostrophe)

**Royal Academy of Arts**

usually know as the Royal Academy

**Royal Ballet**

**Royal Botanic Garden**

(Edinburgh)

**Royal Botanic Gardens**

(London) also known as **Kew Gardens** or simply **Kew**

**Royal College of Surgeons**

the college or the royal college is preferable to the RCS on later mention

**royal commission**

**royal family**

**Royal London hospital**

**Royal Mail**

**Royal Opera, Royal Opera House**

**royal parks**

**RSPB, RSPCA**

do not normally need to be spelt out

**rugby league, rugby union**

**russian roulette**



**Saatchi**

**Sadler's Wells**

**Sainsbury's**

for the stores; the company's name is J Sainsbury plc

**Saint**

in running text should be spelt in full: Saint John, Saint Paul. For names of towns, churches, etc, abbreviate St (no point) eg St Mirren, St Stephen's Church. In French placenames a hyphen is needed, eg St-Nazaire, Ste-Suzanne, Stes-Maries-de-la-Mère

**St Paul's Cathedral**

**St Thomas' hospital, London**

not St Thomas's

**saleable**

**salvo**

plural **salvoes**

**sanatorium**

not sanitorium, plural **sanatoriums**

**San Siro stadium**

Milan

**Sats**

standard assessment tasks

**Scandinavia**

Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland; does not include Finland

**scare**

unfounded, not genuine, fear

**scherzo**

plural **scherzos**

**schizophrenia, schizophrenic**

Use only in a medical context, never to mean "in two minds", which is wrong, as well as offensive to people diagnosed with this illness

**schoolboy, girl, children, master, mistress, room, teacher**

all one word

**schools**

Alfred Salter primary school, Rotherhithe; King's school, Macclesfield, etc

**Schwarzenegger, Arnold**

**scientific terms**

no need to italicise — E coli (Escherichia coli) etc. The first name (the genus) is capped, the second (the species) is lc — eg Quercus robur (oak tree)

**scotch whisky, mist**

**ScotchTape** TM

**Scottish Enterprise**

**Scottish parliament**

members are MSPs

**scottish terrier**

not scotch; once known as Aberdeen terrier

**scouse, scouser**

**seas, oceans**

lc, Red sea, Caspian sea, Pacific ocean

**seacoast, seaplane, seaport, seashore, seaside, seaweed**

one word

**sea change, sea level, sea serpent, sea sickness**

two words

**seasons**

spring, summer, autumn, winter all lc

**seize**

not sieze

**Sellotape** TM

**senior**

abbreviate to **Sr** not Sen or Snr, eg Frank Sinatra Sr

**sentence structure**

Beware of incongruous ordering of phrases: "Joe Bloggs was arrested for riding his bicycle naked by a traffic warden"

**Sergeant-Major**

Sergeant-Major Trevor Prescott, subsequently Sgt-Maj (not RSM or CSM) Prescott

**serious fraud office**

SFO on second mention

**serjeant at arms**

**services, the**  
armed forces

**shadow strategic rail authority**  
SSRA on second mention

**Shankill Road**  
Belfast

**shareholder**

**sheepdog**

**sheikh**

**ships**  
not feminine: it ran aground, not she ran aground

**shipbuilding, shipbuilder, shipmate, shipowner, shipyard**

**shoo-in**  
not shoe-in

**shopkeeper**

**siege**  
not seige

**Siena**  
not Sienna

**single quotes**  
in headlines (but sparingly), standfirsts and captions

**siphon**  
not syphon

**ski, skis, skier, skied, skiing**

**skipper**  
usually only of a trawler

**smallholding**

**Smith & Wesson**

**Smithsonian Institution**  
not Institute

**snowplough**

**socialism, socialist**  
lc unless name of a party, eg Socialist Workers party

**social security agency**

**social security benefits**

all lc: income support, working families tax credit, etc

**sod's law**

**soiree**

**south**

south London, south-west England, the south-east: all lc

**southern hemisphere**

**south pole**

**span of years**

1995-99; but between 1995 and 1999, not between 1995-99

**spastic**

Do not use. The former Spastics Society, a charity that works with people with cerebral palsy, has been renamed Scope

**Speaker, the** (Commons), but **deputy speaker** (of whom there are several)

**special**

usually redundant

**Spice Girls**

Baby Spice, Emma Bunton; Scary Spice, Mel G (formerly Mel B), aka Melanie Gulzar (nee Brown; has a daughter, Phoenix Chi, with her estranged husband Jimmy Gulzar); Sporty Spice, Mel C, aka Melanie Chisholm; Posh Spice, Victoria Beckham (has a son, Brooklyn, with her husband David Beckham); former member: Geri Halliwell (Ginger Spice)

**spicy**

not spicey

**spokesman, spokeswoman, spokesperson**

If possible, attribute quote to the organisation eg "The AA said..."

**sponsorship**

Try to avoid: we are under no obligation to carry sponsors' names. So London Marathon, not Flora London Marathon; the Oval, not the Fosters Oval, etc. When a competition is named after a sponsor, it is unavoidable: Nationwide League, AXA League (cricket)

**spoonful**

plural **spoonfuls** not spoonsful

**square brackets**

use for interpolated words in quotations, eg Mr Portillo said: "William [Hague] has my full support"

**stadium**  
plural **stadiums**

**stalactites**  
hang from the roof; **stalagmites** rise from the floor

**stalemate**  
Do not use to mean deadlock or impasse: a stalemate is the end of the game, and cannot be broken or resolved

**stamp**  
not stomp

**state of the union message**  
US

**stationary** not moving; **stationery** writing materials

**steadfast**

**steamboat, steamship; steam engine; steamhammer**

**sten gun**

**stepfather, stepmother**

**sterling**  
(the pound)

**stiletto**  
plural **stilettoes**

**stilton**  
cheese

**stimulus**  
plural **stimuli**

**stock in trade**

**stock market, stock exchange**

**storey**  
plural **storeys** (buildings)

**straightforward**

**straitjacket**

**strait-laced**

**strait of Dover, strait of Hormuz**

**stratum**  
plural **strata**

**Street-Porter, Janet**

**streetwise**

**stretchered off**

do not use; say carried off on a stretcher

**stumbling block**

**subcommittee, subcontinent, subeditor, sublet, sublieutenant, subplot, subsection**

one word

**submachine gun**

**submarines**

are boats, not ships

**subpoena, subpoenaed**

**suchlike**

**summer**

**supersede**

not supercede

**supply, supply days**

(parliament)

**surge**

prefer rise or increase, if that is the meaning

**surrealist**

**swap**

not swop

**swath, swaths**

broad strip, eg cut a wide swath

**swathe, swathes** baby clothes, bandage, wrappings

**swearwords**

We are more liberal than any other newspaper, using words such as cunt and fuck that most of our competitors would not use, even in direct quotes

The editor's guidelines are straightforward:

First, remember the reader, and respect demands that we should not casually use words that are likely to offend

Second, use such words only when absolutely necessary to the facts of a piece, or to portray a character in an article; there is almost never a case in which we need to use a swearword outside direct quotes

Third, the stronger the swearword, the harder we ought to think about using it

Finally, never use asterisks, which are just a copout

**swingeing**

**synopsis**

plural **synopses**



**table d'hote**

**tableau**  
plural **tableaux**

**tactics**  
singular and plural

**takeoff** noun  
**take off** verb

**takeover**  
one word

**takeover panel**

**talkshow**

**talk to**  
not talk with

**tam o'shanter**  
woollen cap

**Tampax** TM  
Use tampon, sanitary towel

**Tannoy** TM

**targeted, targeting**

**tariff**

**taskforce**

**Tate Gallery**  
The original London gallery in Millbank, now known as **Tate Britain**, houses British art from the 16th century; **Tate Modern**, at Southwark, south London, **Tate Liverpool** and **Tate St Ives** all house modern art

**tax avoidance** is legal; **tax evasion** is illegal

**Tbilisi**  
capital of Georgia

**taxi, taxiing**

**teacup, teapot, teaspoon, teabag**

**team-mate**

**teams**

plural, on news as well as sport pages — Sheffield Wednesday are deeply in debt, England were forced to follow on, etc

**teargas**

**Teasmade** TM

use teamaker

**Technicolor** TM

**teetotaller**

**Teflon** TM

use non-stick pan

**telephone numbers**

like this: 020-7278 2332, 01892 456789

**Teletubbies**

Tinky Winky (purple), Laa-Laa (yellow), Dipsy (green), Po (red)

**Temazepam**

**temperatures**

thus: 30C (85F) — ie celsius, with fahrenheit in brackets

**terrace houses**

not terraced

**Tessa**

tax-exempt special savings account, now replaced by Isas

**Test**

(cricket) the third Test etc

**textbook**

**that or which?**

that defines, which informs: this is the house that Jack built, but this house, which Jack built, is now falling down

(Thanks to Guy Keleny for this superb definition)

**that**

is too often omitted or deleted from clauses, producing ambiguity

**the**

is also omitted too often

Avoid the "chancellor Gordon Brown" syndrome: do not use constructions, beloved of the tabloids, such as "chancellor Gordon Brown said". Prominent figures can just be named, with their function at second mention: "Gordon Brown said last night" (first mention); "the chancellor said" (subsequent mentions). Where it is thought necessary to explain who someone is, use "Neil Warnock, the Sheffield United manager, said" or "the Sheffield United manager, Neil Warnock, said" etc

**the**

lc for newspapers (the Guardian), magazines (the New Statesman), pubs (the Coach and Horses), rock bands (the Beatles, the Verve, the The, but Los Lobos), sports grounds (the Oval)

Sometimes omitting "the" reads like jargon: say the conference agreed to do something, not "conference agreed"; the government has to do, not "government has to"; the Super League (rugby), not "Super League"

**theatregoer**

**theirs**

no apostrophe

**thermonuclear**

**Thermos TM**

use vacuum flask

**thinktank**

one word

**Third Reich**

**third way**

**third world**

but prefer developing countries

**thoroughbred, thoroughgoing**

**threefold, threescore**

**three-line whip**

**thunderstorm**

**Tiananmen Square**

in Beijing

**tidal wave**

is just what it says it is; a **tsunami** is a massive wave caused by an underwater earthquake

**tidewater**

**times**

1am, 6.30pm etc; 10 o'clock last night but 10pm yesterday; half past two, a quarter to three, etc; for 24-hour clock, 00.47, 23.59

**tinfoil**

**titbit**

not tidbit

**titles**

Do not italicise or quote titles of books, films, paintings, songs, albums or anything else. Words in titles take initial caps except for a, and, for, from, in, of, the, to: Shakespeare in Love, War and Peace, Happy End of the World etc

**T-junction**

**to-do**

(commotion)

**tomato**

plural **tomatoes**

**tonne**

not ton: the metric tonne is 1,000 kilograms (2,204.62lb), the British ton is 2,240lb, and the US ton is 2,000lb; usually there is no need to convert

**top hat**

**tornado**

plural **tornadoes** (storm)

**Tornado**

plural **Tornados** (aircraft)

**tortuous**

a tortuous road — one that winds or twists

**torturous** a torturous experience — one that involves pain or suffering

**Tory party**

**totalisator, the tote**

**totalled**

**touchdown**

**town councillor, town hall**

**Townshend, Pete**

Member of the Who who didn't die before he got old

**trademarks (TM)**

Take great care: use a generic alternative unless there is a very good reason not to: eg ballpoint pen, not biro (unless it really is a Biro, in which case it takes a cap B); say photocopy rather than Xerox, etc

**trades council, trade unionist, trade union, Trades Union Congress (TUC)**

**tragic**

use with care, especially avoiding clichés such as "tragic accident"

**Trans-siberian railway**

**Treasury, the**

**tricolour**

French and Irish

**trooping the colour**

**tropic of cancer, tropic of capricorn**

**try**

to, never try and: eg I will try to do something about this misuse of language

**tsar**

not czar

**tsetse fly**

**T-shirt**

not tee-shirt

**tsunami**

wave caused by an undersea earthquake — not a tidal wave

**tube, the**

(London Underground) lc; individual lines thus: Jubilee line, Northern line, etc; the underground

**TUC**

Trades Union Congress, so TUC Congress is tautological; the reference should be to the TUC conference

**turkish delight**

**turnover** noun, **turn over** verb

**20th century**

**twofold**

**tying**



**Ulster**

acceptable in headlines to mean Northern Ireland

**Umist**

University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology

**UN**

no need to spell out United Nations, even at first mention

**Unesco** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; no need to spell it out

**UN general assembly**

**UNHCR**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; not Commission

**Unicef**

United Nations Children's Fund; no need to spell it out

**UN secretary general**

currently Kofi Annan

**UN security council**

**United Kingdom**

(UK) includes Northern Ireland; Britain does not

**unbiased**

**unchristian**

**uncooperative**

**underground**

but London Underground for name of company

**under way**

not underway

**uninterested**

means not taking an interest; not synonymous with disinterested, which means free unbiased, objective

**union flag**

not union jack

**Umist**

University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology

**universities**

cap up, eg Sheffield University, Free University of Berlin

**Unknown Soldier**

tomb of the

**unmistakable**

**unionists**

(Northern Ireland) lc except in the name of a party, eg Ulster Unionist party

**upmarket**

**up to date**

but in an up-to-date fashion

**US**

for United States, not USA: no need to spell out, even at first mention; America is also acceptable

**utopian**

**u-turn**



**v**

(roman) for versus, not vs: Manchester United v Arsenal etc

**Vallance, Sir Iain**

chairman of BT

**valuation office**

**ValuJet**

**Vaseline** TM

**VAT**

value added tax; no need to spell it out

**vehicle inspectorate**

**Velcro** TM

**veld**

not veldt

**venetian blind**

**veranda**

not verandah

**verdicts**

recorded by coroners; returned by inquest juries

**vermillion**

**veterinary**

**vie, vying**

**virtuoso**

plural **virtuosos**

**vortex**

plural **vortexes**



**wagon**

**wah-wah pedal**

**walking-stick**

**Wall's**

ice-cream, sausages

**Wal-Mart**

**Wap (wireless application protocol) phones**

Include explanation in brackets at first mention until they become more widespread

**war**

first world war, second world war; Crimean/Boer/Vietnam/Gulf war; hundred years

war

Do not say "before/after the war" (which war?)

**Was (Not Was)**

defunct US rock band

**The Waste Land**

poem by TS Eliot (not The Wasteland)

**watercolour, course, mark, proof, works**

one word

**web, website**

**Weight Watchers** TM

**Welch Regiment, Royal Welch Fusiliers**

**Welsh assembly**

members are AMs

**welfare state**

**wellnigh**

**welsh rarebit**

**west, western, the west, western Europe**

## **Westminster Abbey**

### **wheelchair**

Say (if relevant) that someone uses a wheelchair, not that they are "in a wheelchair" or "wheelchair-bound" — stigmatising and offensive, as well as inaccurate

### **whereabouts**

singular: her whereabouts is not known

### **Which?**

magazine

### **whisky**

plural **whiskies**; but Irish and US **whiskey**

### **white**

lc in racial context

### **white paper**

### **Whitsuntide**

not Whitsun

### **who or whom?**

From a recent Guardian report: "The US kept up the pressure by naming nine Yugoslav military leaders operating in Kosovo whom it said were committing war crimes"

The "whom" should have been "who". That one was caught by the sub, but it is a common mistake

If in doubt, ask yourself how the clause beginning who/whom would read in the form of a sentence giving he, him, she, her, they or them instead: if the who/whom person turns into he/she/they, then "who" is right; if it becomes him/her/them, then it should be "whom"

In the story above, "they" were allegedly committing the crimes, so it should be "who"

In this example: "Blair was attacked for criticising Hague, whom he despised" — "whom" is correct because he despised "him"

But in "Blair criticised Hague, who he thought was wrong" — "who" is correct, because it is "he" not "him" who is considered wrong

### **wicketkeeper**

### **wide awake**

### **Wimpey**

houses; **Wimpy** burgers

### **Windermere**

not Lake Windermere; note that Windermere is also the name of the town

### **wines**

lc: barolo, beaujolais, bordeaux, burgundy, champagne, côtes du rhone, dao, saucerre, etc

**Wing Commander**

at first mention; thereafter Wing Co plus surname

**winter**

**wipeout** noun, **wipe out** verb

**withhold**

**wits' end**

**woeful**

**working families tax credit**

**world championship**

**World Cup**

(football, cricket, rugby)

**worldwide**

but **world wide web**

**wrack**

seaweed; racked with guilt, not wracked; rack and ruin



**xenophobe, xenophobia, xenophobic**

**Xerox** TM; use photocopy

**Xhosa**

South African ethnic group and language

**x-ray**



**Yahoo!**

(the company)

**year**

say 2000, not "the year 2000"

**yearbook**

**Yellow Pages** TM

**yo-yo**

**Yo-Yo Ma**

cellist

**yorkshire pudding, yorkshire terrier**

**yours**

no apostrophe



**ze**

endings: use se, eg emphasise, realise, but capsize

**zeitgeist**

**Zephaniah, Benjamin**

**zero**

plural **zeros**

**Zhu Rongji**

Chinese prime minister

Premier Zhu Rongji (the Chinese traditionally give their PMs the title of Premier); Mr Zhu at second mention

**zigzag**

no hyphen

**zloty**

Polish unit of currency

