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This guide is based on the style book which is given to all journalists at *The Economist*.

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**SHOP****Metaphors**

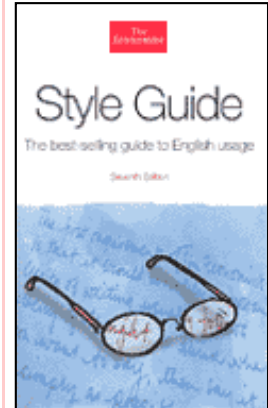
“A newly invented metaphor assists thought by evoking a visual image,” said Orwell, “while on the other hand a metaphor which is technically ‘dead’ (eg, iron resolution) has in effect reverted to being an ordinary word and can generally be used without loss of vividness. But in between these two classes there is a huge dump of wornout metaphors which are merely used because they save people the trouble of inventing phrases for themselves.”

Every issue of *The Economist* contains scores of metaphors: trails of crushed rivals, billing and cooing politicians, projects falling at the first hurdle, track records on inflation, tabloid reporters lapping up stories, reports leaving the door ajar, irresistible forces about to meet immovable objects, roadblocks in the path of reform, investors crying foul, doors slammed shut in China, blind eyes turned in Taiwan, investors jumping the gun, heat off in America, the reins of power in Japan, bargaining chips in South Africa, U-turns everywhere, honeymoons (always at an end), foot-dragging, run-ups, counterweights, shadows cast, bureaucratic barriers, grass-roots organisations, mainstream conservatives, young turks, leading wets, crash-courses, grinding poverty, flabby banks getting into shape, politicians turning deaf ears, binges of brand acquisitions and so on.

Some of these are tired, and will therefore tire the reader. Most are so exhausted that they may be considered dead, and are therefore permissible. But use all metaphors, dead or alive, sparingly, otherwise you will make trouble for yourself.

An issue of *The Economist* chosen at random had a package cutting the budget deficit, the administration loth to sign on to higher targets, liberals accused of playing politics on the court (Supreme, not tennis), only to find in the next sentence that the boot was on the other foot, the lure of eastern Germany as a springboard to the struggling markets of Eastern Europe, West Europeanness helping to dilute an image, someone finding a pretext to stall the process before looking for a few integrationist crumbs, an end-of-millennium spring clean that became in the next sentence a stalking-horse for greater spending, and Michelin axing jobs in painful surgery in order to stay at the top of a league table. Soon the Michelin man was plunging his company even further in to debt, though if it were to stay afloat his ambitions would have to be deflated.

Two pages on, the reader had to go down to the seas again when a flotilla of mutual and quoted life-assurance outfits were confident of surviving turbulent waters. The galleons were afloat, but the medium-sized and smaller mutuals quickly turned into fodder for domestic and foreign predators. Further on, banks going to the altar in the expectation of a tax-free dowry saw it become a sweetener in the next sentence and the bill that delivered it transformed into a panacea. Those who wanted to learn about Japanese equity financing were told of a stockmarket

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crawling back (not on its feet, it was explained) towards its old high, of commercial banks keeping the wolf from the door and, three paragraphs later, of the stockmarket's double whammy. One whammy was a crash which made a big dent in shares, the other blew a hole (a gaping one) in the so-called *tokkin* funds. On, on went the reader past masked bunglings, key measures, money-supply growth out of hand, a haunted Bank of Japan redoubling its squeeze, banks slashing growth lest they found themselves on a tight leash before being cracked down on. Few could have been surprised to learn at the end of the article that another dose of higher interest rates might be forced on the banks if the present inflationary symptoms turned into measles-like spots, and if the apothecaries at the finance ministry agreed with the diagnosis.

Others are even more extravagant in their figures of speech. These two sentences were used as an opening paragraph to arrest the attention of the readers of *A.N. Other* newspaper:

Bulgaria is on its knees. A long-simmering economic crisis has erupted, gripping the country in a fierce and unrelenting embrace.

Another publication reported:

The basic question for the Bush campaign, as the fervour from the Republican convention in Houston last week dissipates, is whether or not it is barking up the wrong social tree by painting an exclusionary picture of an American society that has otherwise long been characterised as a melting-pot eternally susceptible to change. This may only be part of the broader election canvas, which also runs to more legitimate criticism of the opposition . . .

On another occasion, it lamented:

Mr Clinton has had to pull the plug on a plan that had been tarred as a bail-out for an incompetent regime and the Wall Street fat cats who invested in it.

And poor Reuters had to report that:

A BBC statement said today: "This is an off-the-wall programme with a track record of cutting-edge humour, but on this occasion we appear to have overstepped the mark."

So did Léon Dion, cited as "an important constitutional expert" by another publication:

In his opinion, give the Anglophones an inch and they will demand a mile. "The signs issue is just the Trojan horse," he says. "It is the tip of the iceberg. Once the dam is open you won't be able to close it."

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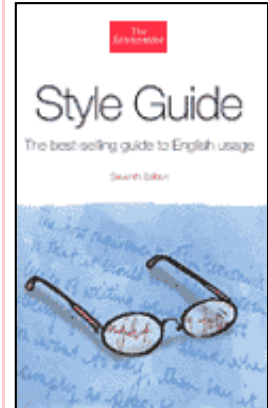
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Use them. They are often Anglo-Saxon rather than Latin in origin. They are easy to spell and easy to understand. Thus prefer **about** to **approximately**, **after** to **following**, **let** to **permit**, **but** to **however**, **use** to **utilise**, **make** to **manufacture**, **plant** to **facility**, **take part** to **participate**, **set up** to **establish**, **enough** to **sufficient**, **show** to **demonstrate** and so on. **Underdeveloped** countries are often better described as **poor**. **Substantive** often means **real** or **big**. "Short words are best and the old words when short are best of all." (Winston Churchill)

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## Unnecessary words

Some words add nothing but length to your prose. Use adjectives to make your meaning more precise and be cautious of those you find yourself using to make it more emphatic. The word **very** is a case in point. If it occurs in a sentence you have written, try leaving it out and see whether the meaning is changed. **The omens were good** may have more force than **The omens were very good**.

Avoid **strike action** (**strike** will do), **cutbacks** (**cuts**), **track record** (**record**), **wilderness area** (usually either a **wilderness** or a **wild area**), **large-scale** (**big**), **weather conditions** (**weather**), etc.

Shoot off, or rather shoot, as many prepositions after verbs as possible. Thus people can **meet** rather than **meet with**; companies can be **bought** and **sold** rather than **bought up** and **sold off**; budgets can be **cut** rather than **cut back**; plots can be **hatched** but not **hatched up**; organisations should be **headed** by rather than **headed up** by chairmen, just as markets should be **freed**, rather than **freed up**. And children can be **sent** to bed rather than **sent off** to bed—though if they are to **sit up** they must first **sit down**.

This advice you are given **free**, or **for nothing**, but not **for free**.

Certain words are often redundant. The leader of the **so-called** Front for a Free Freedonia is the leader of the Front for a Free Freedonia. A **top politician** or **top priority** is usually just a **politician** or a **priority**, and a **major speech** usually just a **speech**. A **safe haven** is a **haven**. **Most probably** and **most especially** are **probably** and **especially**. **The fact that** can often be shortened to **That** (**That I did not do so was a self-indulgence**). Loans to the **industrial and agricultural sectors** are just **loans to industry and farming**.

**Community** is another word often best cut out. Not only is it usually unnecessary, it purports to convey a sense of togetherness that may well not exist. The **black community** means **blacks**, the **business community** means **businessmen**, the **homosexual community** means **homosexuals**, the **intelligence community** means **spies**, the **international community**, if it means anything, means **other countries**, **aid agencies** or, just occasionally, **the family of nations**.

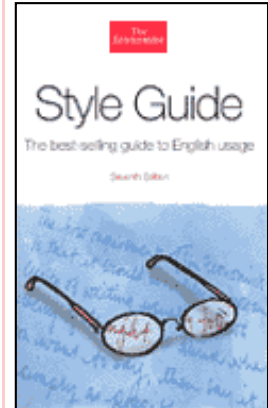
Use words with care. A **heart condition** is usually a **bad heart**. **Positive thoughts** (held by long-suffering creditors, according to *The Economist*) presumably means **optimism**, just as a **negative** report (eg, from the Department of Health on the side-effects of drugs) is probably a **critical** report. **Industrial action** is usually **industrial inaction**, **industrial disruption** or a **strike**. A **substantially finished** bridge is an **unfinished** bridge. Someone with **high name-recognition** is **well known**. Something with **reliability problems** probably **does not work**. If yours is a **live audience**, what would a dead one be like?

In general, be concise. Try to be economical in your account or argument

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(“The best way to be boring is to leave nothing out”—Voltaire). Similarly, try to be economical with words. “As a general rule, run your pen through every other word you have written; you have no idea what vigour it will give to your style.” (Sydney Smith)

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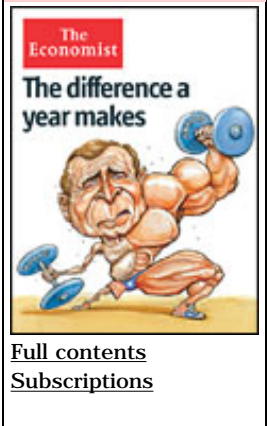
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Be direct. **A hit B** describes the event more concisely than **B was hit by A**.

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## Jargon

Avoid it. You may have to think harder if you are not to use jargon, but you can still be precise. Technical terms should be used in their proper context; do not use them out of it. In many instances simple words can do the job of **exponential** (try **fast**), **interface** (**frontier** or **border**) and so on. If you find yourself tempted to write about **affirmative action** or **corporate governance**, you will have to explain what it is; with luck, you will then not have to use the actual expression.

Avoid, above all, the kind of jargon that tries either to dignify nonsense with seriousness (**Working in an empowering environment**, a topic discussed at a recent Economist conference) or to obscure the truth (**We shall not launch the ground offensive until we have attrited the Republican Guard to the point when they no longer have an effective offensive capacity** —the Pentagon's way of saying that the allies would not fight on the ground until they had killed so many Iraqis that the others would not attack). What was meant by the Israeli defence ministry when it issued the following press release remains unclear: **The United States and Israel now possess the capability to conduct real-time simulations with man in the loop for full-scale theatre missile defence architectures for the Middle East**.

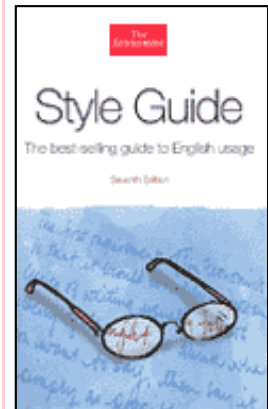
Try not to use foreign words and phrases unless there is no English alternative, which is unusual (so **a year** or **per year**, not **per annum**; **a person** or **per person**, not **per capita**; **beyond one's authority**, not **ultra vires**; and so on).

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## Tone

The reader is primarily interested in what you have to say. By the way in which you say it you may encourage him either to read on or to stop reading. If you want him to read on:

Do not be stuffy. "To write a genuine, familiar or truly English style", said Hazlitt, "is to write as anyone would speak in common conversation who had a thorough command or choice of words or who could discourse with ease, force and perspicuity setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes."

In "How to Be a Better Reporter", Arthur Brisbane put it like this: "Avoid fancy writing. The most powerful words are the simplest. 'To be or not to be, that is the question,' 'In the beginning was the word,' 'We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep,' 'Out, out, brief candle,' 'The rest is silence.' Nothing fancy in those quotations. A natural style is the only style."

Use the language of everyday speech, not that of spokesmen, lawyers or bureaucrats (so prefer **let** to **permit**, **people** to **persons**, **buy** to **purchase**, **colleague** to **peer**, **way out** to **exit**, **present** to **gift**, **rich** to **wealthy**, **break** to **violate**). It is sometimes useful to talk of **human-rights abuses** but often the sentence can be rephrased more pithily and more accurately. **The army is accused of committing numerous human-rights abuses** probably means **The army is accused of torture and murder**.

Avoid, where possible, euphemisms and circumlocutions promoted by interest-groups. In most contexts the **hearing-impaired** are simply **deaf**. It is no disrespect to the **disabled** sometimes to describe them as **crippled**. **Female teenagers** are **girls**, not **women**. The **underprivileged** may be **disadvantaged**, but are more likely just **poor**.

And **man** sometimes includes **women**, just as **he** sometimes makes do for **she** as well. It is often possible to phrase sentences so that they neither give offence to women nor become hideously complicated. Using the plural can be a helpful device. Thus **Instruct the reader without lecturing him** is better put as **Instruct readers without lecturing them**. But some sentences resist this treatment: **Find a good teacher and take his advice** is not easily rendered gender-neutral. Avoid, above all, the sort of scrambled syntax that the Commission for Racial Equality has to adopt because it cannot bring itself to use a singular pronoun: **We can't afford to squander anyone's talents, whatever colour their skin is**. Avoid also **chairpersons** (**chairwoman** is permissible), **businesspeople**, **humankind** and the **person in the street**—ugly expressions all. And, so long as you are not insensitive in other ways, few women will be offended if you restrain yourself from putting **or she** after every **he**.

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He or she which hath no stomach to this fight,  
Let him or her depart; his or her passport shall be made,  
And crowns for convoy put into his or her purse:  
We would not die in that person's company  
That fears his or her fellowship to die with us.

Be sparing with quotes. Direct quotes should be used when either the speaker or what he said is surprising, or when the words he used are particularly pithy or graphic. Otherwise you can probably paraphrase him more concisely. The most pointless quote is the inconsequential remark attributed to a nameless source: "Everyone wants to be in on the act," says one high-ranking civil servant.

Do not be hectoring or arrogant. Those who disagree with you are not necessarily **stupid** or **insane**. Nobody needs to be described as silly: let your analysis show that he is. When you express opinions, do not simply make assertions. The aim is not just to tell readers what you think, but to persuade them; if you use arguments, reasoning and evidence, you may succeed. Go easy on the oughts and shoulds.

Do not be too pleased with yourself. Don't boast of your own cleverness by telling readers that you correctly predicted something or that you have a scoop. You are more likely to bore or irritate them than to impress them.

Do not be too chatty. **Surprise, surprise** is more irritating than informative. So is **Ho, ho**, etc.

Do not be too didactic. If too many sentences begin **Compare**, **Consider**, **Expect**, **Imagine**, **Look at**, **Note**, **Prepare for**, **Remember** or **Take**, readers will think they are reading a textbook (or, indeed, a style book).

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## Journalese and slang

Do not be too free with slang (eg, **He really hit the big time in 1994**). Slang, like metaphors, should be used only occasionally if it is to have effect. Avoid expressions used only by journalists, such as giving people **the thumbs up**, **the thumbs down** or **the green light**. Stay clear of **gravy trains** and **salami tactics**. Do not use **the likes of**. And avoid words and expressions that are ugly or overused, such as **the bottom line**, **high profile**, **caring** (as an adjective), **carers**, **guesstimate** (use **guess**), **schizophrenic** (unless the context is medical), **crisis**, **key**, **major** (unless something else nearby is **minor**), **massive** (as in **massive inflation**), **meaningful**, **perceptions** and **prestigious**.

Politicians are often said to be highly **visible**, when **conspicuous** would be more appropriate. Regulations are sometimes said to be designed to create **transparency**, which presumably means **openness**. **Governance** usually means **government**.

Try not to be predictable, especially predictably jocular. Spare your readers any mention of **mandarins** when writing about the civil service, of **their lordships** when discussing the House of Lords, and of **comrades** when analysing communist parties.

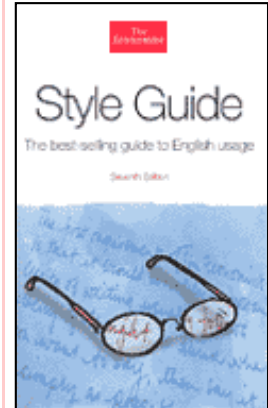
In general, try to make your writing fresh. It will seem stale if it reads like hackneyed journalese. One weakness of journalists, who on daily newspapers may plead that they have little time to search for the apposite word, is a love of the ready-made, seventh-hand phrase. Lazy journalists are always at home in **oil-rich** country A, ruled by **ailing** President B, the **long-serving strongman**, who is, according to the **chattering classes**, a **wily political operator**—hence the present **uneasy peace**—but, after his recent **watershed** (or **landmark** or **sea-change**) decision to arrest his prime minister (the **honeymoon is over**), will soon face a **bloody uprising** in the **breakaway** south. Similarly, lazy business journalists always enjoy describing the problems of **troubled** company C, a victim of the **revolution** in the gimbal-pin industry (change is always revolutionary in such industries), which, **well-placed insiders** predict, will be riven by a **make-or-break** strike unless one of the major players makes an **11th-hour** (or **last-ditch**) intervention in a **marathon negotiating** session.

Prose such as this is freighted with codewords (**respected** is applied to someone the writer approves of, **militant** someone he disapproves of, **prestigious** something you won't have heard of). The story can usually start with the words, **First the good news**, inevitably to be followed in due course by **Now the bad news**. A quote will then be inserted, attributed to **one** (never **an**) **industry analyst**. Towards the end, after an admission that the author has no idea what is going on, there is always room for **One thing is certain**, before rounding off the article with **As one wag put it...**

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Perhaps even more wearying for the reader is the trendy journalist's fondness of vogue words and expressions. Some of these are deliberately chosen (**bridges too far**; **empires striking back**; **kinder, gentler**; **F-words**; **flavours of the month**; **Generation X**; **\$64,000 questions**; **southern discomfort**; **back to the future**; **thirty-somethings**; **where's the beef?**), usually from a film or television, or perhaps a politician. Others come into use less wittingly, often from social scientists. If you find yourself using any of the following words, you should stop and ask yourself whether (a) it is the best word for the job (b) you would have used it in the same context five or ten years ago, and if not why not:

**address** (questions can be **answered**, issues **discussed**, problems **solved**, difficulties **dealt with**)

**care for** and all **caring** expressions (how about **look after**?)

**community** (see above, under [Unnecessary Words](#))

**environment** (in a writing environment you may want to make use of your Tipp-Ex, rubber or delete button)

**focus** (all the world's a stage, not a lens)

**participate** (**take part in**—more words but fewer syllables)

**partner** (“**Take your partners for the Gay Gordons!**” by all means, but dancing together does not necessarily mean sleeping together—just as a sleeping partner is not necessarily a lover)

**process** (a word properly applied to the Arab-Israeli peace affair, because it was meant to be evolutionary, but now often used in place of **talks**)

**relationship** (**relations** can nearly always do the job)

**resources** (especially human resources, which may be **personnel**, **staff** or just **people**)

**skills** (these are turning up all over the place—in learning skills, thinking skills, teaching skills—instead of **the ability to...He has the skills** probably means **He can**)

**supportive** (**helpful**?)

**target** (if you are tempted to **target** your efforts, try to **direct** them instead)

**transparency** (**openness**?)

Such words are not wrong, but if you find yourself using them only because you hear others using them, not because they are the most appropriate ones in the context, you should avoid them. Overused words and off-the-shelf expressions make for stale prose.

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## Americanisms

If you use Americanisms just to show you know them, people may find you a **tad** tiresome, so be discriminating. Many American words and expressions have passed into the language; others have vigour, particularly if used sparingly. Some are short and to the point (so prefer **lay off** to **make redundant**). But many are unnecessarily long (so use **and** not **additionally**, **car** not **automobile**, **company** not **corporation**, **court** not **courtroom** or **courthouse**, **transport** not **transportation**, **district** not **neighbourhood**, **oblige** not **obligate**, **rocket** not **skyrocket**, **stocks** not **inventories** unless there is the risk of confusion with stocks and shares). **Spat** and **scam**, two words beloved by some journalists, have the merit of brevity, but so do **row** and **fraud**; **squabble** and **swindle** might sometimes be used instead. The **military**, used as a noun, is nearly always better put as **the army**. **Gubernatorial** is an ugly word that can almost always be avoided.

Other Americanisms are euphemistic or obscure (so avoid **affirmative action**, **rookies**, **end runs**, **stand-offs**, **point men**, **ball games** and almost all other American sporting terms). Do not write **meet with** or **outside of**: **outside** America, nowadays, you just **meet** people. Do not **figure out** if you can **work out**. To **deliver on** a promise means to **keep** it. A **parking lot** is a **car park**. Use **senior** rather than **ranking**.

Put adverbs where you would put them in normal speech, which is usually after the verb (not before it, which usually is where Americans put them). Choose tenses according to British usage, too. In particular, do not fight shy—as Americans often do—of the perfect tense, especially where no date or time is given. Thus **Mr Clinton has woken up to the danger** is preferable to **Mr Clinton woke up to the danger**, unless you can add **last week** or **when he heard the explosion**.

Prefer **doctors** to **physicians** and **lawyers** to **attorneys**. They are to be found **in** Harley Street or Wall Street, not **on** it. And they rest from their labours **at** weekends, not **on** them. During the week their children are **at** school, not **in** it.

In an American context you may **run** for office (but please **stand** in countries with parliamentary systems) and your car may sometimes run on **gasoline** instead of **petrol**. But if you use **corn** in the American sense you should explain that this is **maize** to most people (unless it is an **old chestnut**). Trains run from **railway stations**, not **train stations**. The people in them, and on buses, are **passengers**, not **riders**. Cars are **hired**, not **rented**. **City centres** are not **central cities**. Cricket is a **game** not a **sport**. London is the **country's** capital, not the **nation's**. **Ex-servicemen** are not necessarily **veterans**. **Bullet-proof vests** are **bullet-proof waistcoats** unless, improbably, they are **singlets**. In Britain, though cattle and pigs may be **raised**, children are (or should be) **brought up**.

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Make a **deep** study or even a study **in depth**, but not an **in-depth** study. **On-site inspections** are allowed, but not **in-flight entertainment**. Throw **stones**, not **rocks**, unless they are of **slate**, which can also mean **abuse** (as a verb) but does not, in Britain, mean **predict** or **nominate**. **Regular** is not a synonym for **ordinary** or **normal**: Mussolini brought in the **regular** train, All-Bran the **regular** man; it is quite **normal** to be without either. **Hikes** are **walks**, not **increases**. Vegetables, not teenagers, should be **fresh**. Only the speechless are **dumb**, the well-dressed **smart** and the insane **mad**. **Scenarios** are best kept for the theatre, **postures** for the gym, **parameters** for the parabola.

**Grow** a beard or a tomato but not a company. By all means **call for** a record profit if you wish to exhort the workers, but not if you merely predict one. And do not **post** it if it has been achieved. If it has not, look for someone new to **head** the company, not to **head it up**.

You may **program** a computer but in all other contexts the word is **programme**.

Try not to verb nouns or to adjective them. So do not **access** files, **haemorrhage** red ink (haemorrhage is a noun), let one event **impact** another, **author** books (still less co-author them), **critique** style sheets, **host** parties or **loan** money. **Gunned down** means **shot**. And though it is sometimes necessary to use nouns as adjectives, there is no need to call an **attempted coup** a **coup attempt** or the **Californian legislature** the **California legislature**. Vilest of all is the habit of throwing together several nouns into one ghastly adjectival reticule: **Texas millionaire real-estate developer and failed thrift entrepreneur Hiram Turnipseed . . .**

Do not feel obliged to follow American fashion in overusing such words as **constituency** (try **supporters**), **perception** (try **belief** or **view**) and **rhetoric** (of which there is too little, not too much—try **language** or **speeches** or **exaggeration** if that is what you mean). And if you must use American expressions, use them correctly (a **rain-check** does not imply checking on the shower activity).

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## Syntax

Do not be sloppy in the construction of your sentences and paragraphs. Do not use a participle unless you make it clear what it applies to. Thus avoid **Having died, they had to bury him**, or **Proceeding along this line of thought, the cause of the train crash becomes clear**.

To never split an infinitive is quite easy. Don't overdo the use of **don't, isn't, can't, won't**, etc; one per issue is usually enough. And avoid the false possessive: **London's Heathrow Airport**.

Make sure that plural nouns have plural verbs. Too often, in the pages of *The Economist*, they do not. **Kogalym today is one of the few Siberian oil towns which are [not is] almost habitable**.

Use the subjunctive properly. If you are posing a hypothesis contrary to fact, you must use the subjunctive. Thus, **If I were you...** or **If Hitler were alive today, he could tell us whether he kept a diary**. If the hypothesis may or may not be true, you do not use the subjunctive. Thus **If this diary is not Hitler's, we shall be glad we did not publish it**. If you have **would** in the main clause, you must use the subjunctive in the **if** clause. **If you were to disregard this rule, you would make a fool of yourself**.

It is common nowadays to use the subjunctive in such constructions as **He demanded that the Russians withdraw, They insisted that the Americans also move back, The referee suggested both sides cool it, In soccer it is necessary that everyone remain civil**. This construction is correct, and has always been used in America, whence it has recrossed the Atlantic. In Britain, though, it fell into disuse some time ago except in more formal contexts: **I command the prisoner be summoned, I beg that the motion be put to the house**. In British English, but not in American, another course would be to insert the word **should**: **He demanded that the Russians should withdraw, The Americans should also move back, Both sides should cool it, Everyone should remain civil**. Alternatively, some of the sentences could be rephrased: **He asked the Russians to withdraw, It is necessary for everyone to remain civil**.

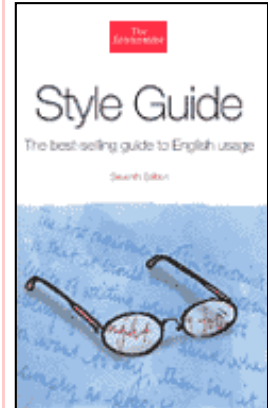
Take care with the genitive. It is fine to say a **friend of Bill's**, just as you would say a friend of mine, so you can also say **a friend of Bill's and Hillary's**. But it is also fine to say a **friend of Bill**, or a **friend of Bill and Hillary**. What you must not say is **Bill and Hillary's friend**. If you wish to use that construction, you must say **Bill's and Hillary's friend**, which is cumbersome.

Respect the gerund. Gerunds look like participles—**running, jumping, standing**—but are more noun-like, and should never therefore be preceded by a personal pronoun. So the following are wrong: **I was awoken by him snoring, He could not prevent them drowning, Please forgive me coming late**. Those sentences should have ended:

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**his snoring, their drowning, my coming late.** In other words, use the possessive adjective rather than the personal pronoun.

Do your best to be lucid (“I see but one rule: to be clear”, Stendhal). Simple sentences help. Keep complicated constructions and gimmicks to a minimum, if necessary by remembering the *New Yorker's* comment: “Backward ran sentences until reeled the mind.” The following readers' letters may be chastening.

SIR—“Big, earnest and well-conducted last Saturday's demonstrations, in Washington and San Francisco, against the war in Indochina undoubtedly were.”

Aided, chuffed and well-rewarded in his search for memorable journalese this reader, in your May 1st 1971 edition on the American mass demonstrations, most certainly was.

—DAVID C. BELDEN

SIR—At times just one sentence in *The Economist* can give us hours of enjoyment, such as “Yet German diplomats in Belgrade failed to persuade their government that it was wrong to think that the threat of international recognition of Croatia and Slovenia would itself deter Serbia” (August 15th 1992).

During my many years as a reader of your newspaper, I have distilled two lessons about the use of our language. Firstly, it is usually easier to write a double negative than it is to interpret it. Secondly, unless the description of an event which is considered to be not without consequence includes a double or higher-order negative, then it cannot be disproven that the writer has neglected to eliminate other interpretations of the event which are not satisfactory in light of other possibly not unrelated events which might not have occurred at all.

For these reasons, I have not neglected your timely reminder that I ought not to let my subscription lapse. It certainly cannot be said that I am an unhappy reader.

—WILLARD DUNNING

Mark Twain described how a good writer treats sentences: “At times he may indulge himself with a long one, but he will make sure there are no folds in it, no vaguenesses, no parenthetical interruptions of its view as a whole; when he has done with it, it won't be a sea-serpent with half of its arches under the water; it will be a torch-light procession.”

Long paragraphs, like long sentences, can confuse the reader. “The paragraph”, according to Fowler, “is essentially a unit of thought, not of length; it must be homogeneous in subject matter and sequential in treatment.” One-sentence paragraphs should be used only occasionally.

Clear thinking is the key to clear writing. “A scrupulous writer”, observed Orwell, “in every sentence that he writes will ask himself at least four questions, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?”

by Sir Ernest Gowers.

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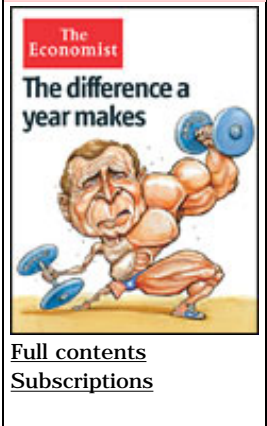
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## Introduction

Clarity of writing usually follows clarity of thought. So think what you want to say, then say it as simply as possible. Keep in mind George Orwell's six elementary rules ("Politics and the English Language", 1946):

- i. Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
- ii. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- iii. If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out.
- iv. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
- v. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
- vi. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

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### Some dos and don'ts

**An** should be used before a word beginning with a vowel or an h if, and only if, the h is silent. So **a hospital**, **a hotel**, but **an honorary degree**, **an historical event**.

**As of** (April 5th or April): prefer **on** (or **after**, or **since**) April 5th, **in** April.

**As to**: there is usually a more appropriate preposition.

**Bale**: in boats and in the hayfield, yes, otherwise **bail**, **bail out**.

**Biannual** can mean **twice a year** or **once every two years**. Avoid. Since **biennial** also means **once every two years**, that is best avoided too.

**Bicentennial**: prefer **bicentenary** (as a noun).

**Black**: **in the black** means **in profit** in Britain, but **making losses** in some places. Use **in profit**.

**Case**: "There is perhaps no single word so freely resorted to as a trouble-saver," says Gowers, "and consequently responsible for so much flabby writing." Often you can do without it. **There are many cases of it** **being unnecessary** is better as **It is often unnecessary**. **If it is the case that** simply means **If**. **It is not the case** means **It is not so**.

**Come up with**: try **suggest**, **originate** or **produce**.

**-ee**: **employees**, **evacuees**, **detainees**, **referees**, **refugees** but, please, no **attendees** (those attending), **draftees** (conscripts), **escapees** (escapers), **retirees** (the retired), or **standees**. A **divorcee** may be male or female.

**Environment**: often unavoidable, but not a pretty word. Avoid **the business environment**, **the school environment**, **the work environment**, etc. Try to rephrase the sentence—**conditions for business**, **at school**, **at work**, etc. **Surroundings** can sometimes do the job.

**Fact**: **The fact that** can usually be boiled down to **That**.

**Former**: avoid wherever possible use of **the former** and **the latter**. It usually causes confusion.

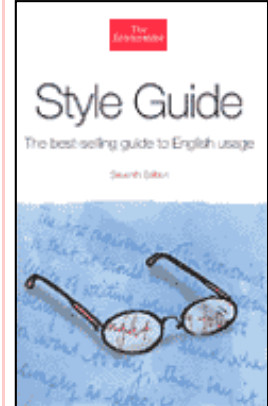
**Gentlemen's agreement**, not **gentleman's**.

**Important**: if something is important, say why and to whom. Use sparingly.

**Last**: the **last** issue of *The Economist* implies its extinction; prefer **last week's** or the **latest** issue. **Last year**, in 1996, means 1995; if you mean the 12 months up to the time of writing, write the **past year**. The same goes for the **past** month, **past** week, **past** (not **last**) ten years. **Last week** is best avoided; anyone reading it several days after publication may be confused. **This week** is permissible.

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**Lifestyle:** prefer **way of life**.

**Locate**, in all its forms, can usually be replaced by something less ugly. **The missing scientist was located** means he was **found**. **The diplomats will meet at a secret location** means either that they will meet **in a secret place** or that they will meet **secretly**. **A company located in Texas** is simply **a company in Texas**.

**Millionaires:** the time has gone when girls in the Bois du Boulogne would think that the term **millionaire** adequately described the man who broke the Bank at Monte Carlo. If you wish to use it, make it plain that **millionaire** refers to income (in dollars or pounds), not to capital. Otherwise try **plutocrat** or **rich man**.

**Move:** do not use if you mean **decision**, **bid**, **deal** or something more precise. But **move** rather than **relocate**.

**One:** try to avoid **one** as a personal pronoun. **You** will often do instead.

**Phase:** when discussing incomes policies, monetary unions, extended plans, etc, prefer **stage** to **phase**.

**Phone:** permissible, if used sparingly, but prefer **telephone**.

**Photo:** not permissible, so use **photograph**.

**Premier**, as a noun, should be confined to the first ministers of Canadian provinces, German Länder and other sub-national states. Do not use it as a synonym for the prime minister of a country.

**Problem:** the problem with problem is it is overused, so much so that it is becoming a problem word.

**Proper nouns:** if they have adjectives, use them. Thus a **Californian** (not **California**) **judge**, the **Pakistani** (not **Pakistan**) **government**, the **Texan** (not **Texas**) **press**.

**Pry:** use **prize**, unless you mean **peer**.

**Relationship** is a long word often better replaced by **relations**. **The two countries hope for a better relationship** means **The two countries hope for better relations**.

**Relative:** fine as an adjective, but as a noun prefer **relation**.

**Rocketed**, not **skyrocketed**.

**Same:** often superfluous. If your sentence contains **on the same day that**, try **on the day that**.

**Sector:** try **industry** instead or, for example, **banks** instead of **banking sector**.

**Simplistic:** prefer **simple-minded**, **naive**.

**-style:** avoid **German-style supervisory boards**, **an EU-style rotating presidency**, etc. Explain what you mean.

**Table:** avoid it as a transitive verb. In Britain to **table** means to bring something forward for action. In America it means exactly the opposite.

**There is, there are:** often unnecessary. **There were smiles on every face** is better as **A smile was on every face**. **There are three issues facing the prime minister** is better as **Three issues face the prime minister**.

**Total:** all right as a noun, but as a verb prefer **amount to** or **add up to**.

**Venues:** avoid them. Try **places**.

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## Some common solecisms

## Some common solecisms

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**Acronym:** this is a word, like radar or NATO, not a set of initials, like the BBC or the IMF.

**Aggression** is an unattractive quality, so do not call a **keen** salesman an aggressive one (unless his foot is in the door or beyond).

**Agony column:** when Sherlock Holmes perused this, it was a **personal column**, not letters to an **agony aunt**.

**Agree:** things are agreed **on**, **to** or **about**, not just agreed.

**Aggravate** means **make worse**, not **irritate** or **annoy**.

**Alibi:** an **alibi** is the proven fact of being elsewhere, not a false explanation.

**Alternate**, as an adjective, means **every other**.

**Alternative:** strictly, this is one of two, not one of three, four, five or more (which may be **options**).

**Among** and **between**. Some sticklers insist that, where division is involved, **among** should be used where three or more are concerned, **between** where only two are concerned. (So **The plum jobs were shared among the Socialists, the Liberals and the Christian Democrats, while the president and the vice-president divided the cash between themselves.** ) This distinction is unnecessary. But take care with **between**. **To fall between two stools**, however painful, is grammatically acceptable; **to fall between the cracks** is to challenge the laws of physics.

**Anarchy** means the **complete absence of law or government**. It may be harmonious or chaotic.

**Anticipate** does not mean **expect**. Jack and Jill expected to marry; if they anticipated marriage, only Jill might find herself expectant.

**Apostasy** and **heresy**. If you abandon your religion, you commit **apostasy**. If that religion is the prevailing one in your community, and your beliefs are contrary to its orthodoxy you commit **heresy**.

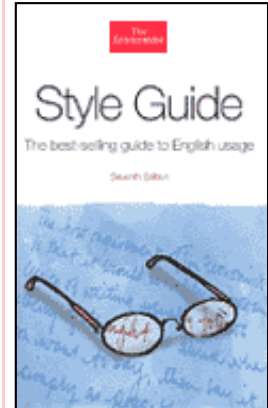
**Appeal** is intransitive nowadays (except in America), so appeal **against decisions**.

**Appraise** means **set a price on**. **Apprise** means **inform**.

**Autarchy** means absolute sovereignty. **Autarky** means self-sufficiency.

**Beg the question** means neither **raise the question**, **invite the question** nor **evade the answer**. To **beg the question** is to adopt an argument whose conclusion depends upon assuming the truth of the very conclusion the argument is designed to produce. **All governments should promote free trade because otherwise protectionism will**

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**increase. This begs the question.**

**Between:** see **Among and between.**

**Bon vivant**, not **bon viveur**.

**Both . . . and:** a preposition placed after **both** should be repeated after **and**. Thus, **both to right and to left**; but **to both right and left** is all right.

**Brokerage** is what a stockbroking firm does, not what it is.

**Canute's** exercise on the seashore was designed to persuade his courtiers of what he knew to be true but they doubted, ie, that he was not omnipotent. Don't imply he was surprised to get his feet wet.

**Cartel.** A cartel is a group that restricts supply in order to drive up prices. Do not use it to describe any old syndicate or association of producers.

**Cassandra's** predictions were correct but not believed.

**Catalyst:** this is something that speeds up a chemical reaction while itself remaining unchanged. Do not confuse it with one of the agents.

**Centred on**, not **around** or **in**.

**Charge:** if you **charge** intransitively, do so as a bull, cavalry officer or somesuch, not as an **accuser** (so avoid **The standard of writing was abysmal, he charged**).

**Circumstances** stand around a thing, so it is **in**, not **under**, them.

**Coiffed**, not **coiffured**

**Collapse** is not transitive. You may collapse, but you may not collapse something.

**Compare:** A is compared **with** B when you draw attention to the difference. A is compared **to** B only when you want to stress their similarity. ( "**Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?**")

**Compound** does not mean **make worse**. It may mean **combine** or, intransitively, it may mean to **agree or come to terms**. To **compound a felony** means to **agree for a consideration not to prosecute**.

**Comprise** means is **composed of**. **The Democratic coalition comprises women, workers, blacks and Jews. Women make up** (not **comprise**) **three-fifths of the Democratic coalition**. Alternatively, **Three-fifths of the Democratic coalition is composed of women**.

**Confectionary:** a sweet. **Confectionery:** sweets in general.

**Contemporary:** see **Current**.

**Contract:** see **Subcontract**.

**Convince.** Don't **convince** people **to** do something. In that context the word you want is **persuade**. **The prime minister was persuaded to call a June election; he was convinced of the wisdom of doing so only after he had won.**

**Crescendo.** This is not an acme, apogee, peak, summit or zenith but a **passage of increasing loudness**. You cannot therefore **build to a crescendo**.

**Crisis.** This is a decisive event or turning-point. Many of the economic

and political troubles wrongly described as **crises** are really **persistent difficulties, sagas or affairs**.

**Critique** is a noun. If you want a verb, try **criticise**.

**Current** and **contemporary** mean **at that time**, not necessarily **at this time**. So a series of current prices from 1960 to 1970 will not be in **today's prices**, just as **contemporary art** in 1800 was not **modern art**. **Contemporary history** is a contradiction in terms.

**Decimate** means to destroy a proportion (originally a tenth) of a group of people or things, not to destroy them all or nearly all.

**Deliver** is transitive. So if someone is to **deliver**, he must deliver **letters, babies or the goods**—whether **groceries** or **what he promised**.

**Different from**, not **to** or **than**.

**Dilemma**. This is not just any old awkwardness, it is one with horns, being, properly, a form of argument (the horned syllogism) in which you find yourself committed to accept one of two propositions each of which contradicts your original contention. Hence a dilemma offers the choice between two alternatives, each with equally nasty consequences.

**Discreet** means **circumspect** or **prudent**; **discrete** means **separate** or **distinct**. Remember that **“Questions are never indiscreet. Answers sometimes are.”** (Oscar Wilde)

**Disinterested** means **impartial**; **uninterested** means **bored**. ( **“Disinterested curiosity is the lifeblood of civilisation.”**G.M. Trevelyan)

**Due to**: when used to mean **caused by**, it must follow a noun, as in **The cancellation, due to rain, of . . .** Do not write **It was cancelled due to rain**. If you mean **because of** and for some reason are reluctant to say it, you probably want **owing to**. **It was cancelled owing to rain** is all right.

**Earnings**: do not write **earnings** when you mean **profits** (try to say if they are **operating, gross, pre-tax** or **net**).

**Effectively** means **with effect**; if you mean **in effect**, say it. **The matter was effectively dealt with on Friday** means it was **done well** on Friday. **The matter was, in effect, dealt with on Friday** means it was **more or less attended to** on Friday. **Effectively leaderless** would do as a description of the demonstrators in East Germany in 1989 but not those in Tiananmen Square. The devaluation of the Slovak currency in 1993, described by some as **an effective 8%**, turned out to be a rather ineffective 8%.

**Either . . . or**. See **None**.

**Enormity** means a **crime, sin** or **monstrous wickedness**. It does not mean **immensity**.

**Epicentre** means that point on the earth's surface above the centre of an earthquake. To say that **Mr Yeltsin was at the epicentre of the dispute** suggests that the argument took place underground.

**Ex-** (and **former**): be careful. A **Communist ex-member** has lost his seat; an **ex-Communist member** has lost his party.

**Fellow**: often unnecessary, especially before **countrymen** (**“Friends, Romans, fellow-countrymen”?**).

**Fewer** (not **less**) **than seven speeches, fewer than seven samurai**.



Use **fewer**, not **less**, with numbers of individual items or people. **Less than £200, less than 700 tonnes of oil, less than a third**, because these are measured quantities or proportions, not individual items.

**Fief**, not **fiefdom**.

**Finally**: do not use **finally** when you mean **at last**. **Richard Burton finally marries Liz Taylor** would have been all right second time round but not first.

**Flaunt** means **display**; **flout** means **disdain**. If you flout this distinction, you will flaunt your ignorance.

**Forgo** means **do without**; it forgoes the e. **Forego** means **go before**. A **foregone conclusion** is one that is predetermined; a **forgone conclusion** is non-existent.

**Former**: see **Ex-**.

**Frankenstein** was not a monster, but its creator.

**Free** is an adjective or an adverb, so you cannot have or do anything **for free**. Either you have **it free** or you have it **for nothing**.

**Fund** is a technical term, meaning to convert floating debt into more or less permanent debt at fixed interest. Do not use it if you mean to **finance** or to **pay for**.

**Garner** means **store**, not **gather**.

**Gender** is a word to be applied to grammar, not people. If someone is female, that is her **sex**, not her **gender**. (The gender of *Mädchen*, the German word for girl, is neuter.)

**Generation**: take care. You can be a second-generation Frenchman, but if you are a second-generation immigrant that means you have left the country your parents came to.

**Get**: an adaptable verb, but it has its limits. A man does not **get** sacked or promoted, he is sacked or promoted.

**Gourmet** means **epicure**; **gourmand** means **greedy-guts**.

**Halve** is a transitive verb, so deficits can double but not **halve**. They must **be halved** or **fall by half**.

**Haver** means to **talk nonsense**, not **dither**, **swither** or **waver**.

**Healthy**: if you think something is **desirable** or **good**, say so. Do not call it **healthy**.

**Heresy**: see **Apostasy**.

**Hoards**: few secreted treasures (**hoards**) are multitudes on the move (**hordes**).

**Hobson's choice** is not **the lesser of two evils**; it is **no choice at all**.

**Homogeneous** means **of the same kind or nature**. **Homogenous** means **similar because of common descent**.

**Homosexual**: since this word comes from the Greek word *homos* (same), not the Latin word *homo* (man), it applies as much to women as to men. It is therefore as daft to write **homosexuals and lesbians** as to write **people and women**.

**Hopefully**: by all means begin an article hopefully, but never write

**Hopefully, it will be finished by Wednesday.** Try **With luck, if all goes well, it is hoped that.** . .

**Hypothermia** is what kills old folk in winter. If you say it is **hyperthermia**, that means they have been carried off by heat stroke.

**Ilk** means **same**, so **of that ilk** means **of the place of the same name as the family**, not **of that kind**. Best avoided.

**Immolate** means to **sacrifice**, not to **burn**.

**Investigations of**, not **into**.

**Key:** keys may be **major** or **minor**, but not **low**. Few of the decisions, people, industries described as **key** are truly **indispensable**, and fewer still **open locks**.

**Lag.** If you **lag** transitively, you lag a pipe or a loft. Anything failing to keep up with a front-runner, rate of growth, fourth-quarter profit or whatever is **lagging behind it**.

**Like** governs nouns and pronouns, not verbs and clauses. So **as in America** not **like in America**. But **authorities like Fowler and Gowers** is a perfectly acceptable alternative to **authorities such as Fowler and Gowers**.

**Masterful** means **imperious**. **Masterly** means **skilled**.

**May** and **might** are not always interchangeable, and you may want **may** more often than you think. If in doubt, try **may** first. You need **might** in the past tense. **I may go to Leeds later** becomes, in the past, **I might have gone to Leeds later**. And in indirect past speech it becomes **I said I might go to Leeds later**. Conditional sentences using the subjunctive also need **might**. Thus **If I were to go to Leeds, I might have to stand all the way**. This could be rephrased **If I go to Leeds, I may have to stand all the way**. Conditional sentences stating something contrary to fact, however, need **might**: **If pigs had wings, birds might raise their eyebrows**.

**Do not write George Bush might be a grown-up, but he does not eat broccoli.** It should be **George Bush may be a grown-up, but he does not eat broccoli**. Only if you are putting forward a hypothesis that may or may not be true are **may** and **might** interchangeable. Thus **If Al Gore always eats his broccoli, he may (or might) become president of the United States**.

**Media:** prefer **press and television** or, if the context allows it, just **press**. If you have to use the **media**, remember it is plural.

**Mete:** you may **mete out** punishment, but if it is to fit the crime it is **meet**.

**Mitigates** mollifies; **militates** does the opposite.

**Monopoly.** A **monopolist** is the sole seller; a monopoly buyer is a **monopsonist**.

**Neither. . .nor.** See **None**.

**None** usually takes a singular verb. So does **neither** (or **either**) **A nor (or) B**, unless B is plural, as in **Neither the Dutchman nor the Danes have done it**, where the verb agrees with the element closest to it. Similarly,

**“Come live with me and be my love,**

**And we will all the pleasures prove  
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,  
Or woods or steepy mountain yields.”**

(Christopher Marlowe)

**Nor** means **and not**, so should not be preceded by **and**.

**Only.** Put **only** as close as you can to the words it qualifies. Thus, **These animals mate only in June.** To say **They only mate in June** implies that in June they do nothing else.

**Overwhelm** means **submerge utterly, crush, bring to sudden ruin.** Majority votes, for example, seldom do any of these things. As for the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, although 90% of the population, they are more likely to be a **overwhelmed majority** than an **overwhelming one**.

**Oxymoron:** an **oxymoron** is not an unintentional contradiction in terms but **a figure of speech in which contradictory terms are deliberately combined**, as in bitter-sweet, cruel kindness, sweet sorrow, etc.

**Per cent** is not the same as a **percentage point**. Nothing can fall, or be devalued, by more than 100%. If something trebles, it increases by 200%.

**Percolate** means to pass **through**, not **up** or **down**.

**Presently** means **soon**, not **at present**. (“**Presently Kep opened the door of the shed, and let out Jemima Puddle-Duck.**” Beatrix Potter)

**Prevaricate** means **evade the truth**; **procrastinate** means **delay**. (“**Procrastination—or punctuality, if you are Oscar Wilde—is the thief of time.**”)

**Pristine** means **original** or **former**; it does not mean clean.

**Propaganda** (which is singular) means a **systematic effort to spread doctrine or opinions**. It is not a synonym for **lies**.

**Protagonist** means the **chief actor** or **combatant**. If you are referring to several people, they cannot all be protagonists.

**Real.** Is it really necessary? When used to mean **after taking inflation into account**, it is legitimate. In other contexts (**Investors are showing real interest in the country, but Bolivians wonder if real prosperity will ever arrive**) it is often better left out.

**Rebut** and **refute** mean **to put to flight, or disprove, in argument**. They are not synonyms for **deny**. (“**Shakespeare never has six lines together without a fault. Perhaps you may find seven: but this does not refute my general assertion.**” Samuel Johnson)

**Report on**, not **into**.

**Reshuffle, resupply:** **shuffle** and **supply** will do.

**Scotch:** to **scotch** means to **disable**, not to **destroy**. (“**We have scotched the snake, not killed it.**”) The people may also be **Scotch**, **Scots** or **Scottish**; choose as you like. **Scot-free** means free from

payment of a fine (or punishment), not **free from Scotsmen**.

Second-biggest (third-oldest, fourth-wisest, fifth-commonest, etc): think before you write. **Apart from New York, a Bramley is the second-biggest apple in the world. Other than home-making and parenting, prostitution is the third-oldest profession. After Tom, Dick and Harriet, Henry I was the fourth-wisest fool in Christendom. Besides justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude, the fifth-commonest virtue of the Goths was punctuality.** None of these sentences should contain the ordinal (second-, third-, fourth-, fifth-, etc).

**Sequestered** means **secluded**. **Sequestrated** means **confiscated** or **made bankrupt**.

**Soft** is an adverb, as well as an adjective and a noun. **Softly** is also an adverb. You can speak softly and carry a big stick, but if you have a quiet voice you are **soft**—not softly—**spoken**.

**Specific:** a **specific** is a **medicine**, not a **detail**.

**Stationary:** still. **Stationery:** writing paper and so on.

**Straight** means **direct** or **uncurved**; **strait** means **narrow** or **tight**. The **strait-laced** tend to be **straight-faced**.

**Subcontract.** If you engage someone to do something, you are **contracting** the job to him; only if he then asks someone else to do it is the job **subcontracted**.

**Target** is a noun. If you are tempted to use it as a verb, try **aim** or **direct**. **Targeted** means **provided with a shield**.

**Times:** take care. **Three times more than X** means **four times as much as X**.

**To** or **and**? **To try and end the killing** does not mean the same as **to try to end the killing**.

**Transpire** means **exhale**, not **happen**, **occur** or **turn out**.

**Underprivileged.** Since a privilege is a special favour or advantage, it is by definition not something to which everyone is entitled. So **underprivileged**, by implying the right to privileges for all, is not just ugly jargon but also nonsense.

**Unlike** should not be followed by **in**. Like **like**, **unlike** governs nouns and pronouns, not verbs and clauses.

**Use and abuse:** two words much used and abused. You **take** drugs, not **use** them (Does he use sugar?). And **drug abuse** is just **drug taking**, as is **substance abuse**, unless it is **glue sniffing** or **bun throwing**.

**Venerable** means **worthy of reverence**. It is not a synonym for **old**.

**Verbal:** every agreement, except the nod-and-wink variety, is **verbal**. If you mean that one was not written down, describe it as **oral**.

**Viable** means **capable of living**. Do not apply it to things like railway lines. **Economically viable** means profitable.

**Warn** is transitive, so you must either **give warning** or **warn somebody**.

**Which** informs, **that** defines. **This is the house that Jack built**. But **This house, which Jack built, is now falling down**. Americans tend to be fussy about making a distinction between **which** and **that**. Good

writers of British English are less fastidious. (“**We have left undone those things which we ought to have done.**”)

**While** is best used temporally. Do not use it in place of **although** or **whereas**.

**Wrack** is an old word meaning **vengeance**, **punishment** or **wreckage**. It can also be **seaweed**. It is not an instrument of torture or a receptacle for toast: that is **rack**. Hence **racked with pain, by war drought**, etc. **Rack** your brains—unless they be **wracked**.

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## Abbreviations

Unless an abbreviation or acronym is so familiar that it is used more often than the full form (eg, **BBC**, **CIA**, **DNA**, **FBI**, **GATT**, **IMF**, **NATO**, **OECD**), write the words in full on first appearance: thus, Trades Union Congress (not **TUC**). After the first mention, try not to repeat the abbreviation too often; so write **the agency** rather than **the IAEA**, **the Union** rather than **the EU**, to avoid spattering the page with capital letters. There is no need to give the initials of an organisation if it is not referred to again.

If an abbreviation can be pronounced (eg, **EFTA**, **NATO**, **UNESCO**), it does not generally require the definite article (**GATT**, however, is sometimes called **the GATT**). Other organisations, except companies, should usually be preceded by **the** (**the BBC**, **the KGB**, **the NHS**, **the UNHCR** and **the NISER**). Except in the Britain section, use **MP** only after first spelling out member of Parliament in full (in many places an **MP** is a military policeman).

Abbreviations that can be pronounced and are composed of bits of words rather than just initials should be spelt out in upper and lower case: **Cocom**, **Frelimo**, **Legco**, **Mercosur**, **Renamo**, **Unicef**, **Unisom**, **Unprofor**. There is generally no need for more than one initial capital letter, unless the word is a company or a trade name: **MiG**, **ConsGold**.

In bodymatter, all such abbreviations, whether they can be pronounced as words or not (**GNP**, **GDP**, **FOB**, **CIF**, **A-levels**, **D-marks**, **T-shirts**, **X-rays**), should be set in small capitals, with no points—unless they are currencies like **DM** or **FFr**, elements like **H** and **O** or degrees of temperature like **°F** and **°C**. Brackets, apostrophes and all other typographical furniture accompanying small capitals are generally set in ordinary roman, with a lower-case s (also roman) for plurals and genitives. Thus **IOUs**, **MPs'** salaries, (**SDRs**), etc. But ampersands are set as small capitals, as are numerals and any hyphens attaching them to a small capital. Thus **R&D**, **A23**, **M1**, **F-16**, etc. Abbreviations that include upper-case and lower-case letters must be set in a mixture of small capitals and roman: **BAe**, **BPhils**, **PhDs**.

Use lower case for **kg**, **km**, **lb** (never **lbs**), **mph** and other measures, and for **ie**, **eg**, which should both be followed by commas. When used with figures, these lower-case abbreviations should follow immediately, with no space (**11am**, **15kg**, **35mm**, **100mph**, **78rpm**), as should **AD** and **BC** (**76AD**, **55BC**), though they should be set in small capitals. Two abbreviations together, however, must be separated: **60m b/d**.

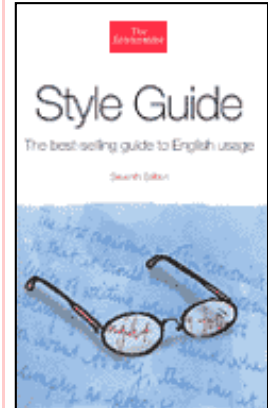
Most scientific units, except those of temperature, that are named after individuals should be set in small capitals, though any attachments denoting multiples go in lower case. Thus a **watt** is **W**, whereas **kilowatt**, **milliwatt** and **megawatt**, meaning **1,000 watts**, **one thousandth of a watt** and **1m watts**, are abbreviated to **kW**, **mW** and **MW** (**k**, **m** and **M** are standard international metric abbreviations for **thousand**, **thousandth** and **million**).

The elements are not scapped. **Lead** is **Pb**, **carbon dioxide** is **CO<sub>2</sub>**, **methane** is **CH<sub>4</sub>**. **Chlorofluorocarbons** are, however, **CFCs**, and the

## Abbreviations

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**oxides of nitrogen** are generally **NOX**. Different isotopes of the same element are distinguished by raised prefixes: **carbon-14** is <sup>14</sup>**C**, **helium-3** is <sup>3</sup>**He**.

Most upper-case abbreviations take upper-case initial letters when written in full (eg, the **LSO** is the London Symphony Orchestra), but there are exceptions: **CAP** but **common agricultural policy**, **EMU** but **economic and monetary union**, **GDP** but **gross domestic product**, **PSBR** but **public-sector borrowing requirement**, **VLSI** but **very large-scale integration**.

Initials in people's names, or in companies named after them, take points (with a space between initials and name, but not between initials). Thus **F.W. de Klerk**, **V.P. Singh**, **E.I. Du Pont de Nemours**, **F.W. Woolworth**. (The only exceptions are for companies that deliberately leave them out (eg, **B.A.T Industries**). In general, follow the practice preferred by people, companies and organisations in writing their own names.

Do not use **Prof**, **Sen**, **Col**, etc. **Lieut-Colonel** and **Lieut-Commander** are permissible. So is **Rev**, but it must be preceded by the and followed by a Christian name or initial: **the Rev Jesse Jackson** (thereafter **Mr Jackson**).

Always spell out **page**, **pages**, **hectares**, **miles**. But **kilograms** (not **kilogrammes**) and **kilometres** can be shortened to **kg** (or **kilos**) and **km**. Miles per hour are **mph** and kilometres per hour are **kph**.

Ampersands should be used (1) when they are part of the name of a company (eg, **AT&T**, **Pratt & Whitney**); (2) for such things as constituencies where two names are linked to form one unit (eg, **The rest of Brighouse & Spenborough joins with the Batley part of Batley & Morley to form Batley & Spen**. Or **The area thus became the Pakistani province of Kashmir and the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir**); (3) in **R&D** and **S&L**.

Remember that **EFTA** is the **European Free-Trade Association**, the **FAO** is the **Food and Agriculture Organisation**, the **FDA** is the **Food and Drug Administration**, **IDA** is the **International Development Association**, the **MFA** is the **Multi-Fibre Arrangement**, **NAFTA** is the **North American Free-Trade Agreement**, the **OAU** is the **Organisation of African Unity**, the **PLO** is the **Palestine Liberation Organisation**. Remember, too, that the v of **HIV** stands for virus, so do not write **HIV virus**.

Write **Euro-MPs**, not **MEPs**.

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**SHOP****Accents**

On words now accepted as English, use accents only when they make a crucial difference to pronunciation: **cliché**, **soupçon**, **façade**, **café**, **communiqué**, **exposé** (but **chateau**, **élite**, **feted**).

If you use one accent (except the tilde—strictly, a diacritical sign), use all: **émigré**, **mêlée**, **protégé**, **résumé**.

Put the accents and cedillas on French names and words, umlauts on German ones and tildes (but not other accents) on Spanish ones: **Françoise de Panafieu**, **Wolfgang Schäuble**, **Federico Peña**. Leave the accents off other foreign names.

Any foreign word in italics should, however, be given all its proper accents.

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**SHOP****Capitals**

A balance has to be struck between so many capitals that the eyes dance and so few that the reader is diverted more by our style than by our substance. The general rule is to dignify with capital letters organisations and institutions, but not people. More exact rules are laid out below. Even these, however, leave some decisions to individual judgment. If in doubt use lower case unless it looks absurd. And remember that “a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds” (Emerson).

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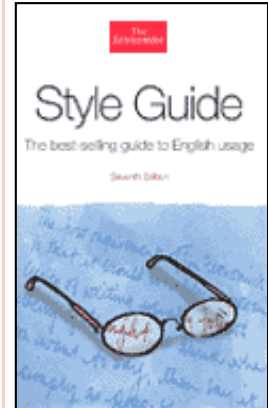
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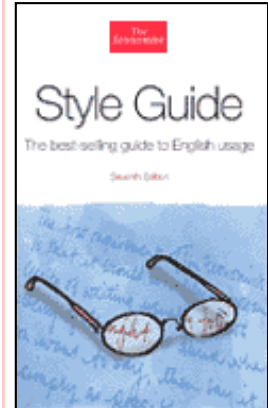
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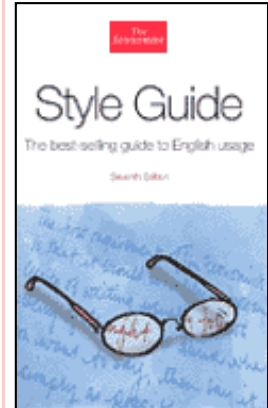
**European Commission****European Parliament****European Union****Treaty of Rome****Treaty on European Union.**

Informally, these become:

**the commission****the parliament****the Rome treaty****the Maastricht treaty**but **the Union**.

The IGC is the **inter-governmental conference**, the CAP is the **common agricultural policy** and the ERM is the **exchange-rate mechanism**. When making **Euro-words**, always introduce a hyphen, except for **Europhile**, **Europhobe** and **Eurosceptic**. Remember EMU stands for **economic and monetary union**.

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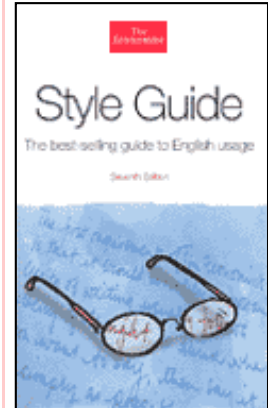
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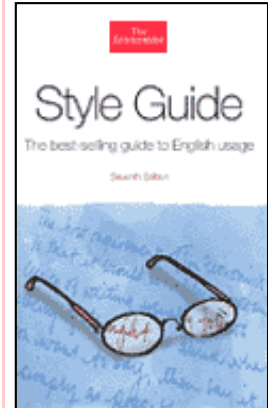


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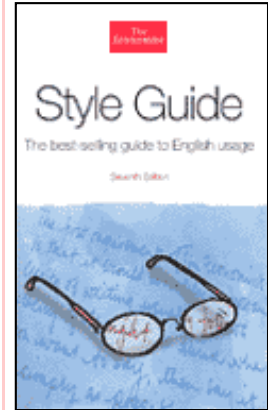
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## Places

Use upper case for definite geographical places, regions, areas and countries (**The Hague**, **Transylvania**, **Germany**), and for vague but recognised political or geographical areas: **the Middle East**, **South Atlantic**, **East Asia** (which is to be preferred to **the Far East**), **the West** (as in the decline of the West), **the Gulf**, **the North Atlantic**, **South-East Asia**, **the Midlands**, **Central America**, **the West Country**, **Eastern Europe**, **Central Europe**, **Western Europe**.

Lower case for **east**, **west**, **north**, **south** except when part of a name (**North Korea**, **South Africa**, **West End**) or when part of a thinking group: **the South** (in the United States), **the Highlands** (of Scotland). But use lower case if you are, say, comparing regions of the United States some of which are merely geographical areas: **House prices in the north-east and the south are rising faster than those in the mid-west and the south-west**.

Use **West Germany** (**West Berlin**) and **East Germany** (**East Berlin**) only in historical references. They are now **western Germany** (**western Berlin**) and **eastern Germany** (**eastern Berlin**).

The **third world** (an unsatisfactory term now that the communist second world has disappeared) is lower case. If in doubt use lower case (**the sunbelt**).

Use capitals for particular buildings even if the name is not strictly accurate (eg, the **Foreign Office**).

Lower case for province, county, river, state, city when not strictly part of the name: the **Limpopo river**, **Washington state**, **Cabanas province**, **Guatemala city**, **Kuwait city**, **Mexico city**, **New York city**, **Panama city**, **Quebec city** (but the **River Thames**, **Mississippi River**, **Dodge City**, **Ho Chi Minh City**, **Kansas City**, **Quezon City**, **Oklahoma City**, **Salt Lake City**).

Use capitals to avoid confusion, especially with no (and therefore yes). **In Bergen no votes predominated** suggests a stalemate, whereas **In Bergen No votes predominated** suggests a triumph of noes over yeses. Otherwise, though, yes and no should be lower-case: "The answer is no."

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**Organisations, acts, etc**

Organisations, ministries, departments, treaties, acts, etc, generally take upper case when their full name (or something pretty close to it, eg, **State Department**) is used. Thus, **European Commission, Forestry Commission, Arab League, Amnesty International, the Household Cavalry, Ministry of Agriculture, Department of the Environment, Treasury, Metropolitan Police, High Court, Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Senate, Central Committee, Politburo, Oxford University, the New York Stock Exchange, Treaty of Rome, the Health and Safety at Work Act**, etc.

So too the **House of Commons, House of Lords, House of Representatives, St Paul's Cathedral (the cathedral), Bank of England (the Bank), Department of State (the department)**.

But organisations, committees, commissions, special groups, etc, that are either impermanent, ad hoc, local or relatively insignificant should be lower case. Thus: **the subcommittee on journalists' rights of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, the international economic subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Oxford University bowls club, Market Blandings rural district council**.

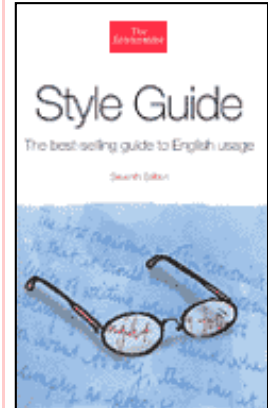
Use lower case for rough descriptions (**the safety act, the American health department, the French parliament**, as distinct from its **National Assembly**). If you are not sure whether the English translation of a foreign name is exact or not, assume it is rough and use lower case.

**Parliament** and **Congress** are upper case. But the **opposition** is lower case, even when used in the sense of **her majesty's loyal opposition**. The **government**, the **administration** and the **cabinet** are always lower case. In America acts given the names of their sponsors (eg, **Glass-Steagall, Gramm-Rudman**) are always rough descriptions and so take a lower-case act.

The full name of political parties is upper case, including the word party: **Republican Party, Labour Party, Peasants' Party**. Note that usually only people are **Democrats, Christian Democrats, Liberal Democrats** or **Social Democrats**; their parties, policies, committees, etc, are **Democratic, Christian Democratic, Liberal Democratic** or **Social Democratic** (although a committee may be **Democrat-controlled**). The exceptions are Britain's **Liberal Democrat Party** and Thailand's **Democrat Party**.

When referring to a specific party, write **Labour, the Republican nominee**, a prominent **Liberal**, etc, but use lower case in looser references to **liberals, conservatism, communists**, etc. **Tories**, however, are upper case.

A political, economic or religious label formed from a proper name—eg,

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**Gaullism, Paisleyite, Leninist, Napoleonic, Wilsonian, Jacobite, Luddite, Marxist, Hobbesian, Thatcherism, Christian, Buddhism, Hindu, Maronite, Finlandisation**—should have a capital.

In finance and government there are particular exceptions to the general rule of initial caps for full names, lower case for informal ones. Use caps for the **World Bank** and the **Fed** (after first spelling it out as the **Federal Reserve**), although these are shortened, informal names. The **Bank of England** and its foreign equivalents have initial caps when named formally and separately, but collectively they are central banks in lower case (except Ireland's, which is actually named the **Central Bank**). Special drawing rights are lower case but abbreviated in small caps as SDRs, except when used with a figure as a currency (**SDR500m**). **Deutschemarks** are usually just D-**marks**. Treasury bonds issued by America's Treasury should be upper case; treasury bills (or bonds) of a general kind should be lower case. Avoid **T-bonds** and **t-bills**.

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## People

Use upper case for ranks and titles when written in conjunction with a name, but lower case when on their own. Thus **President Clinton**, but the **president**; **Vice-President Gore**, but the **vice-president**; **Colonel Qaddafi**, but the **colonel**; **Pope John Paul**, but the **pope**; **Queen Elizabeth**, but the **queen**; **Reza Shah Pahlavi**, but the **shah**.

Do not write **Prime Minister Blair** or **Defence Secretary Cohen**; they are **the prime minister**, **Mr Blair**, and **the defence secretary**, **Mr Cohen**. You may, however, write **Chancellor Schröder**.

All office holders when referred to merely by their office, not by their name, are lower case: **the chancellor of the exchequer**, **the foreign secretary**, **the prime minister**, **the speaker**, **the treasury secretary**, **the president of the United States**, **the chairman of British Coal**.

The only exceptions are (1) a few titles that would look unduly peculiar without capitals, eg, **Black Rod**, **Master of the Rolls**, **Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster**, **Lord Privy Seal**, **Lord Chancellor**; (2) a few exalted people, such as the **Dalai Lama** and the **Aga Khan**. Also **God**.

Some titles serve as names, and therefore have initial capitals, though they also serve as descriptions: **the Archbishop of Canterbury**, **the Emir of Kuwait**, **the Shah of Iran**. If you want to describe the office rather than the individual, use lower case: **The next archbishop of Canterbury will be a woman**.

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## Capitals

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## Organisations, acts, etc

Organisations, ministries, departments, treaties, acts, etc, generally take upper case when their full name (or something pretty close to it, eg, **State Department**) is used. Thus, **European Commission, Forestry Commission, Arab League, Amnesty International, the Household Cavalry, Ministry of Agriculture, Department of the Environment, Treasury, Metropolitan Police, High Court, Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Senate, Central Committee, Politburo, Oxford University, the New York Stock Exchange, Treaty of Rome, the Health and Safety at Work Act**, etc.

So too the **House of Commons, House of Lords, House of Representatives, St Paul's Cathedral (the cathedral), Bank of England (the Bank), Department of State (the department)**.

But organisations, committees, commissions, special groups, etc, that are either impermanent, ad hoc, local or relatively insignificant should be lower case. Thus: **the subcommittee on journalists' rights of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, the international economic subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Oxford University bowls club, Market Blandings rural district council**.

Use lower case for rough descriptions (**the safety act, the American health department, the French parliament**, as distinct from its **National Assembly**). If you are not sure whether the English translation of a foreign name is exact or not, assume it is rough and use lower case.

**Parliament** and **Congress** are upper case. But the **opposition** is lower case, even when used in the sense of **her majesty's loyal opposition**. The **government**, the **administration** and the **cabinet** are always lower case. In America acts given the names of their sponsors (eg, **Glass-Steagall, Gramm-Rudman**) are always rough descriptions and so take a lower-case act.

The full name of political parties is upper case, including the word party: **Republican Party, Labour Party, Peasants' Party**. Note that usually only people are **Democrats, Christian Democrats, Liberal Democrats** or **Social Democrats**; their parties, policies, committees, etc, are **Democratic, Christian Democratic, Liberal Democratic** or **Social Democratic** (although a committee may be **Democrat-controlled**). The exceptions are Britain's **Liberal Democrat Party** and Thailand's **Democrat Party**.

When referring to a specific party, write **Labour, the Republican nominee**, a prominent **Liberal**, etc, but use lower case in looser references to **liberals, conservatism, communists**, etc. **Tories**, however, are upper case.

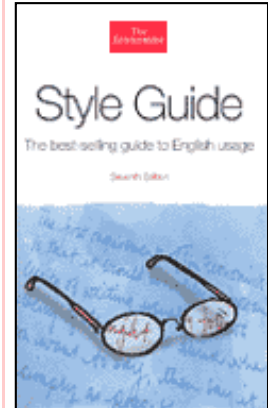
A political, economic or religious label formed from a proper name—eg,

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## Figures

## Figures

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Never start a sentence with a figure; write the number in words instead.

Use figures for numerals from 11 upwards, and for all numerals that include a decimal point or a fraction (eg, **4.25**, **4¼**). Use words for simple numerals from one to ten, except: in references to pages; in percentages (eg, **4%**) and in sets of numerals, some of which are higher than ten, eg, **Deaths from this cause in the past three years were 14, 9 and 6**. It is occasionally permissible to use words rather than numbers when referring to a rough or rhetorical figure (such as a **thousand curses**).

Fractions should be hyphenated (**one-half**, **three-quarters**, etc) and, unless they are attached to whole numbers (**8½**, **29¾**), spelled out in words, even when the figures are higher than ten: **He gave a tenth of his salary to the church, a twentieth to his mistress and a thirtieth to his wife**.

Do not compare a fraction with a decimal (so avoid **The rate fell from 3¼% to 3.1%**).

Fractions are more precise than decimals (**3.14** neglects an infinity of figures that are embraced by **22/7**), but your readers probably do not think so. You should therefore use fractions for rough figures (**Kenya's population is growing at 3½% a year, A hectare is 2½ acres**) and decimals for more exact ones: **The retail price index is rising at an annual rate of 10.6%**. But treat all numbers with respect; that usually means resisting the precision of more than one decimal place, and generally favouring rounding off. Beware of phoney over-precision.

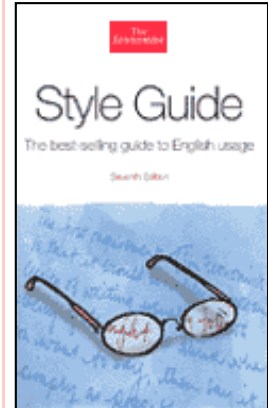
Use **m** for **million**, but spell out **billion**—which to *The Economist* means 1,000m—except in charts, where **bn** is permissible but not obligatory. Thus: **8m, £8m, 8 billion, DM8 billion**. A **billion** is a thousand million, a **trillion** a thousand billion, a **quadrillion** a thousand trillion.

Use **5,000-6,000**, **5-6%**, **5m-6m** (not **5-6m**) and **5 billion-6 billion**. But **sales rose from 5m to 6m** (not **5m-6m**); **estimates ranged between 5m and 6m** (not **5m-6m**).

Where **to** is being used as part of a ratio, it is usually best to spell it out. Thus **They decided, by nine votes to two, to put the matter to the general assembly which voted, 27 to 19, to insist that the ratio of vodka to tomato juice in a bloody mary should be at least one to three, though the odds of this being so in most bars were put at no better than 11 to 4**. Where a ratio is being used adjectivally, figures and hyphens may be used, but only if one of the figures is greater than ten: thus **a 50-20 vote, a 19-9 vote**. Otherwise, spell out the figures and use **to: a two-to-one vote, a ten-to-one probability**.

Do not use a hyphen in place of **to** except with figures: **He received a sentence of 15-20 years in jail** but **He promised to have escaped within three to four weeks**.

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With figures, use **a person** or **per person**, **a year** or **per year**, not **per caput**, **per capita** or **per annum**.

In most contexts that are not American or British, prefer **hectares** to **acres**, **kilometres** (or **km**) to **miles**, **metres** to **yards**, **litres** to **gallons**, **kilos** to **lb**, **tonnes** to **tons**, **Celsius** to **Fahrenheit**, etc. Regardless of which you choose, you should give an equivalent, on first use, in the other units: **It was hoped that after improvements to the engine the car would give 20km to the litre (47 miles per American gallon), compared with its present average of 15km per litre.**

Remember that in few countries do you now buy petrol in imperial gallons. In America it is sold in American gallons; in most other places it is sold in litres.

The style for aircraft types can be confusing. Some have hyphens in obvious places (eg, **F-22**, **B-2 bomber**), some in unusual places (**MiG-31M**) and some none at all (**Airbus A340**, **BAe RJ70**). Others have both name and number (**Lockheed P-3 Orion**). When in doubt, use Jane's "[All The World's Aircraft](#)". Its index also includes makers' correct names.

The style for calibres is **50mm** or **105mm** with no hyphen, but **5.5-inch** and **25-pounder**.

Use the sign % instead of **per cent**. But write **percentage**, not **%age** (though in most contexts **proportion** or **share** is preferable).

A fall from 4% to 2% is a drop of two percentage points, or of 50%, but not of 2%.

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## Hyphens

Use hyphens for

 1. FRACTIONS (whether nouns or adjectives): **two-thirds**, **four-fifths**, **one-sixth**, etc.

 2. MOST WORDS THAT BEGIN with **anti**, **non** and **neo**. Thus **anti-aircraft**, **anti-fascist**, **anti-submarine** (but **antibiotic**, **anticlimax**, **antidote**, **antiseptic**, **antitrust**); **non-combatant**, **non-existent**, **non-payment**, **non-violent** (but **nonaligned**, **nonconformist**, **nonplussed**, **nonstop**); **neo-conservative**, **neo-liberal** (but **neoclassicism**, **neolithic**, **neologism**).

 Words beginning **Euro** should also be hyphenated, except **Europhile**, **Europhobe** and **Eurosceptic**.

 Some words that become unmanageably long with the addition of a prefix. Thus **under-secretary** and **inter-governmental**. **Antidisestablishmentarianism** would, however, lose its point if it were hyphenated.

 A sum followed by the word worth also needs a hyphen. Thus **\$25m-worth of goods**.

3. SOME TITLES

**vice-president****director-general****under-secretary****secretary-general****attorney-general****lieutenant-colonel****major-general****field-marshal**

but

**general secretary****deputy secretary****deputy director****district attorney**

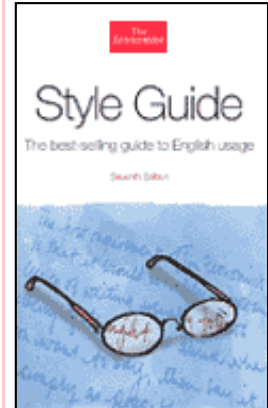
4. TO AVOID AMBIGUITIES

**a little-used car**

## Hyphens

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**a little used-car**

**cross complaint**

**cross-complaint**

**high-school girl**

**high schoolgirl**

**fine-tooth comb** (most people do not comb their teeth)

**third-world war**

**third world war**

5. AIRCRAFT

**DC-10**

**Mirage F-1E**

**MiG-23**

**Lockheed P-3 Orion**

(If in doubt, consult Jane's "[All the World's Aircraft](#)".)

6. ADJECTIVES FORMED FROM TWO OR MORE WORDS

**right-wing groups** (but **the right wing** of the party)

**balance-of-payments difficulties**

**private-sector wages**

**public-sector borrowing requirement**

**a 70-year-old judge**

**state-of-the-union message**

**value-added tax (VAT)**

Adverbs do not need to be linked to participles or adjectives by hyphens in simple constructions: **The regiment was ill equipped for its task; The principle is well established; Though expensively educated, the journalist knew no grammar.** But if the adverb is one of two words together being used adjectivally, a hyphen may be needed: **The ill-equipped regiment was soon repulsed; All well-established principles should be periodically challenged.** The hyphen is especially likely to be needed if the adverb is short and common, such as **ill, little, much** and **well**. Less-common adverbs, including all those that end -ly, are less likely to need hyphens: **Never employ an expensively educated journalist.**

Do not overdo the literary device of hyphenating words that are not usually linked: the stringing-together-of-lots-and-lots-of-words-and-ideas tendency can be tiresome.

7. SEPARATING IDENTICAL LETTERS:

**book-keeping** (but **bookseller**), **coat-tails**, **co-operate**, **unco-operative**, **pre-eminent**, **pre-empt** (but **predate**, **precondition**), **re-emerge**, **re-entry** (but **rearrange**, **reborn**, **repurchase**), **trans-ship**. Exceptions include **override**, **overrule**, **underrate**, **withhold**.

## 8. NOUNS FORMED FROM PREPOSITIONAL VERBS:

**bail-out, build-up, call-up, get-together, round-up, set-up, shake-up**, etc.

## 9. THE QUARTERS OF THE COMPASS:

**north-east(ern), south-east(ern), south-west(ern), north-west(ern)**, the **mid-west(ern)**.

Words gathered together in quotation marks to serve as adjectives do not usually need hyphens as well: **the "Live Free or Die" state**.

**Makers, miners, owners** and **workers** can stand unattached and hyphenless: **car maker, coal miner, mill owner, steel worker**. But **policymakers, policymaking**.

## ONE WORD

**airfield**

**antibiotic**

**anticlimax**

**antidote**

**antiseptic**

**antitrust**

**backlog**

**bilingual**

**blackboard**

**blueprint**

**businessman**

**bypass**

**ceasefire**

**cloudcuckooland**

**coastguard**

**comeback**

**commonsense** (adj)

**figleaf**

**foothold**

**forever**

**goodwill**

**halfhearted**

**handout**

**handpicked**

**hardline**

**headache**

**hijack**

**hobnob**

**kowtow**

**lacklustre**

**landmine**

**loophole**

**lopsided**

**lukewarm**

**machinegun**

**minefield**

**multilingual**

**nationwide**

**nevertheless**

**nationwide**

**nonetheless**

**offshore**

**oilfield**

**onshore**

**overpaid**

**overrated**

**override**

**overrule**

**overrun**

**peacekeepers (-ing)**

**petrochemical**

**placename**

**policymakers (-ing), but foreign-policy makers (-ing)**

**profitmaking**

**rainforest**

**salesforce**

**seabed**

**shipbuilders**

**shipbuilding**

**shortlist**

**shutdown**

**soyabean**

**statewide**

**stockmarket**

**strongman**

**subcommittee**

**subcontinent**

**subcontract**

**subhuman**

**submachinegun**

**sunbelt**

**takeover**

**threshold**

**timetable**

**transatlantic**

**transpacific**

**turnout**

**underdog**

**underpaid**

**underrated**

**videodisc**

**videocassette**

**wartime**

**workforce**

**worldwide**

TWO WORDS

**ad hoc** (always)

**air base**

**air force**

**aircraft carrier**

**arm's length**

**any more**

**ballot box**

**birth rate**

**car maker**

**child care** (noun)

**chip maker**

**coal miner**

**common sense** (noun)

**drug dealer** (-ing)

**drug trafficker** (-ing)

**errand boy**

**girl friend**

**health care** (noun)

**Land Rover**

**microchip maker**

**on to**

**steel maker**

**steel worker**

**under way**

**vice versa**

TWO HYPHENATED WORDS

**agri-business**

**asylum-seekers**

**build-up**

**cash-flow**

**catch-phrase**

**death-squads**

**drawing-board**

**end-game**

**end-year**

**faint-hearted**

**front-line**

**front-runner**

**fund-raiser** (-ing)

**heir-apparent**

**hot-head**

**ice-cream**

**infra-red**

**inter-governmental**



**interest-group**

**joint-venture**

**know-how**

**like-minded**

**long-standing**

**machine-tool**

**mid-week, mid-August**, etc

**nation-state**

**post-war**

**pot-hole**

**pre-war**

**pull-out** (noun, not verb)

**question-mark**

**rain-check**

**re-create** (meaning create again)

**re-present** (meaning present again)

**re-sort** (meaning sort again)

**starting-point**

**sticking-point**

**stumbling-block**

**talking-shop**

**task-force**

**tear-gas**

**think-tank**

**time-bomb**

**turning-point**

**working-party**

THREE WORDS

**ad hoc agreement** (meeting, etc)

**armoured personnel carrier**

**chiefs of staff**

**half a dozen**

**in as much**

**in so far**

**multiple rocket launcher**

**nuclear aircraft carrier**

**nuclear power station**

**third world war** (if things get bad)

THREE HYPHENATED WORDS

**A-turned-B**

**brother-in-law**

**chock-a-block**

**commander-in-chief**

**no-man's-land**

**prisoners-of-war**

**second-in-command**

Avoid **from 1947-50** (say **in 1947-50** or **from 1947 to 1950**) and **between 1961-65** (say **in 1961-65**, **between 1961 and 1965** or **from 1961 to 1965**).

“If you take hyphens seriously, you will surely go mad” (Oxford University Press style manual).

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## Italics

## Italics

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1. FOREIGN WORDS AND PHRASES, such as *cabinet* (French type), *de jure*, *glasnost*, *intifada*, *Mitbestimmung*, *papabile*, *perestroika*, *ujamaa*, unless they are so familiar that they have become anglicised. (Thus **ad hoc**, **angst**, **apartheid**, **machismo**, **putsch**, **pogrom**, **realpolitik**, **status quo**, etc, are in roman). Remember to put appropriate accents and diacritical marks on all foreign words in italics (and give initial capital letters to German nouns when in italics, but not if not). Make sure that the meaning of any foreign word you use is clear.

For the Latin names of animals, plants, etc, see [Spelling: Miscellaneous](#)

2. NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS. Note that only *The Economist* has *The* italicised. Thus the *Daily Telegraph*, the *New York Times*, the *Observer*, the *Spectator* (but *Le Monde*, *Die Welt*, *Die Zeit*). Books, pamphlets, plays, radio and television programmes are roman, with capital letters for each main word, in quotation marks. Thus: "**Pride and Prejudice**", "**Much Ado about Nothing**", "**Any Questions**", "**Crossfire**", etc. But **the Bible** and its books (**Genesis**, **Ecclesiastes**, **John**, etc) without inverted commas.

3. LAWSUITS. Thus: *Brown v Board of Education*, *Coatsworth v Johnson*. If abbreviated, *versus* should always be shortened to *v*, with no point after it.

4. THE NAMES OF SHIPS, AIRCRAFT, SPACECRAFT. Thus: *HMS Illustrious*, *Spirit of St Louis*, *Challenger*, etc. Note that a ship is **she**; a country is **it**.

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## Titles

The overriding principle is to treat people with respect. That usually means giving them the title they themselves adopt. But some titles are ugly (Ms), some misleading (all Italian graduates are Dr), and some tiresomely long (Mr Dr Dr Federal Sanitary-Inspector Schmidt). Do not therefore indulge people's self-importance unless it would seem insulting not to.

Do not use Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms or Dr on first mention even in bodymatter. Plain Bill Clinton, Tony Blair or other appropriate combination of first name and surname will do. But thereafter the names of all living people should be preceded by Mr, Mrs, Miss or some other title. Knights, dames, lords, princes, kings, etc, should be given their title on first and subsequent mentions.

Titles are not necessary in headings or captions (surnames are: no Kens, Tonys, Newts, etc). Sometimes they can also be dispensed with for athletes and pop stars, if titles would make them seem more ridiculous than dignified, and for criminals whose misdeeds are egregious. No titles for the dead, except those whom you are writing about because they have just died. On the obituary page, therefore, titles are required. **Dr Johnson** and **Mr Gladstone** are also permissible.

**Ms** is permissible though ugly. Avoid it if you can. To call a woman **Miss** is not to imply that she is unmarried, merely that she goes by her maiden name. Married women who are known by their maiden names—eg, Aung San Suu Kyi, Benazir Bhutto, Jane Fonda—are therefore Miss, unless they have made it clear that they want to be called something else.

Take care with foreign titles. Malaysian titles are so confusing that it may be wise to dispense with them altogether. Do not, however, call **Tunku Razaleigh Hamzah Mr Razaleigh Hamzah**; if you are not giving him his Tunku, refer to him, on each mention, as **Razaleigh Hamzah**. Avoid, above all, **Mr Tunku Razaleigh Hamza**.

Use **Dr** only for qualified medical people, unless the correct alternative is not known or it would seem perverse to use **Mr**. And try to keep **Professor** for those who hold chairs, not just a university job or an inflated ego.

If you use a title, get it right. **Rear-Admiral** Jones should not, at least on first mention, be called **Admiral** Jones.

**Governor X**, **President Y**, the **Rev John Z** may be **Mr**, **Mrs** or **Miss** on second mention.

Life peeresses should be called **Lady**, not **Baroness**, just as barons are called **Lord**.

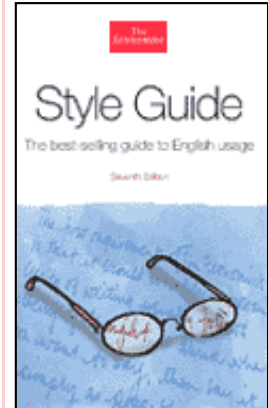
On first mention use forename and surname; thereafter drop forename (unless there are two people with the same surname mentioned in the article). **Jacques Chirac**, then **Mr Chirac**.

Avoid nicknames and diminutives unless the person is always known (or

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prefers to be known) by one: **Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Bill Emmott, Newt Gingrich, Tiny Rowland.**

Avoid the habit of joining office and name: **Prime Minister Blair, Budget Commissioner Liikanen.** But **Chancellor Kohl** is permissible.

Omit middle initials. Nobody will imagine that the **Lyndon Johnson** you are writing about is **Lyndon A. Johnson** or **Lyndon C. Johnson**.

Some titles serve as names, and therefore have initial capitals, though they also serve as descriptions: **the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Emir of Kuwait, the Shah of Iran.** If you want to describe the office rather than the individual, use lower case: **The next archbishop of Canterbury will be a woman.** Use lower case, too, in references simply to the **archbishop, the emir, the shah: The Duchess of Scunthorpe was in her finery, but the duke wore jeans.**

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## Spelling

Use British English rather than American English or any other kind. Sometimes, however, this injunction will clash with the rule that people and companies should be called what they want to be called, short of festooning themselves with titles. If it does, adopt American (or Canadian or other local) spelling when it is used in the name of an American (etc) company or private organisation (**Alcan Aluminum, Pulverizing Services Inc, Travelers Insurance**), but not when it is used for a place or government institution (**Pearl Harbour, Department of Defence, Department of Labour**). The principle behind this ruling is that placenames are habitually changed from foreign languages into English: **Deutschland** becomes **Germany**, **München Munich, Torino Turin**, etc. And to respect the local spelling of government institutions would present difficulties: a sentence containing both the **Department of Labor** and the **secretary of labour**, or the **Defense Department** and the **need for a strong defence**, would look unduly odd. That oddity will arise nonetheless if you have to explain that **Rockefeller Center Properties is in charge of Rockefeller Centre**, but with luck that will not happen too often.

The Australian **Labor Party** should be spelt without a u not only because it is not a government institution but also because the Australians spell it that way, even though they spell **labour** as the British do.

**Sandinist**, not **Sandinista**.

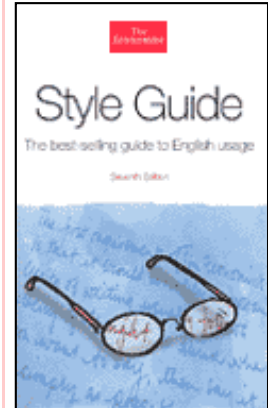
Use **-ise, -isation (realise, organisation)** throughout. But please do not **hospitalise**.

Use **amid** not **amidst** and **while** not **whilst**.

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## Places

Use English forms when they are in common use:

**Basle, Cologne, Leghorn, Lower Saxony, Lyons, Marseilles, Naples, Nuremberg, Turin.**

And English rather than American—**Rockefeller Centre, Bar Harbour, Pearl Harbour**—unless the place name is part of a company name, such as **Rockefeller Center Properties Inc.** But

follow local practice when a country expressly changes its name, or the names of rivers, towns, etc, within it. Thus **Almaty** not **Alma Ata**; **Chemnitz** not **Karl-Marx-Stadt**; **Chennai** not **Madras**; **Côte d'Ivoire** not **Ivory Coast**; **Mumbai** not **Bombay**; **Myanmar** not (alas) **Burma**; **Nizhny Novgorod** not **Gorky**; **Yangon** not (alas, alack) **Rangoon**; and **St Petersburg** not **Leningrad**.

**Zaire** has now reverted to **Congo**. In contexts where there can be no confusion with the ex-French country of the same name, plain **Congo** will do. But if there is any risk of misunderstanding, call it **Congo-Kinshasa**. The other Congo should always be **Congo-Brazzaville**. The river is now also the **Congo**. The people of either country are also **Congolese**.

Do not use the definite article before **Krajina, Lebanon, Piedmont, Punjab, Sudan, Transkei, Ukraine**. But it is **the Caucasus, the Gambia, The Hague, the Maghreb, the Netherlands**—and **La Paz, Le Havre, Los Angeles**, etc.

Do not use the names of capital cities as synonyms for their governments. **Britain will send a gunboat** is fine, but **London will send a gunboat** suggests that this will be the action of the people of London alone. To write **Washington and Moscow now differ only in their approach to Havana** is absurd.

Although the place is **Western** (or **Eastern**) **Europe**, euphony dictates that the people are **West** (or **East**) **Europeans**.

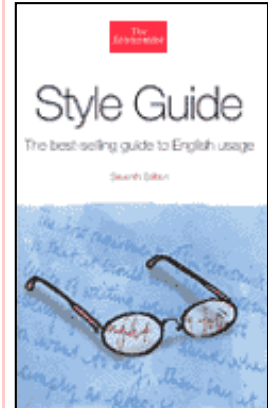
## SOME PLACENAMES

**Abkhazia****Argentina** (adj and people **Argentine**, not **Argentinian**)**Ashgabat****Azerbaijan****Baden-Württemberg****Baghdad****Bahrain****Bangladesh****Basle****Belarus**

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**Berlin Wall**

**Bermuda, Bermudian**

**Bophuthatswana**

**Bosporus**

**Brittany**

**Cameroon**

**Cape Town**

**Caribbean**

**Chechnya**

**Cincinnati**

**Colombia** (South America)

**Columbia** (university, **District of**); **British Columbia**

**the Comoros**

**Côte d'Ivoire** (not **Ivory Coast**), **Ivorian**

**Cracow**

**Czech Republic; Czech Lands**

**Dar es Salaam**

**Dhaka**

**Djibouti**

**Dominica** (Caribbean island)

**Dominican Republic** (part of another island)

**Dusseldorf** (not Düsseldorf)

**El Salvador, Salvadorean**

**the Gambia**

**Gaza strip**

**Gettysburg**

**Gothenburg**

**Grozny**

**Guatemala city**

**Gujarat, Gujarati**

**Gurkha**

**Guyana** (but French Guiana)

**Hanover**

**Harare**

**Hercegovina**

**Hong Kong** (unless it is part of the name of a company which spells it as one word: **Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation**)

**Issyk-Kul**

**Jeddah**

**KaNgwane**

**Katmandu**

**Kazakhstan**

**Kirgizstan**

**Krajina**

**Kuwait city**

**KwaNdebele**

**KwaZulu-Natal**

**Luhansk**

**Luxembourg**

**Macau**

**Mafikeng**

**Mauritania**

**Mexico city**

**Middlesbrough**

**Mpumalanga** (formerly Eastern Transvaal)

**Myanmar** (not **Burma**)

**Nagorno-Karabakh**

**Nizhny Novgorod**

**New York city**

**North Rhine-Westphalia**

**Nuremberg**

**Odessa**

**Panama city**

**Philippines** (the people are **Filipinos** and **Filipinas**)

**Phnom Penh**

**Pittsburgh**

**Pyrenean**

**Quebec, Quebecker** (but **Parti Québécois**)

**Quebec city**

**Quezon City**

**Reykjavik**

**Romania**

**Rwanda, Rwandan** (not Rwandese)

**St Antony's** (college)

**Salonika** (not Thessaloniki)

**Salzburg**

**St Petersburg**

**Sebastopol**

**Sindh**

**Srebrenica**

**Sri Lanka**

**Strasbourg**

**Suriname**

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**Tehran**

**Teesside**

**Tigray, Tigrayan**

**Transdnistria**

**Uffizi**

**Uzbekistan**

**Valletta**

**Württemberg**

**Yugoslavia**

**Zaire, Zairean** (not Zairian)

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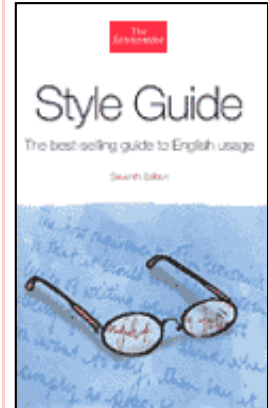
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**Grigory Yavlinsky**  
**Vladimir Zhirinovskiy**  
**Goodwill Zwelithini**  
**Gennady Zyuganov**

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— Swiss-Swedish international engineering group

**ABN Amro****Abraham & Straus**

— American department-store chain

**Accor**

— French leisure firm

**Advanced Micro Devices****Aegon**

— Dutch insurance firm

**Agip**

— Italian oil company

**Airbus Industrie****AirTouch Communications****Aérospatiale**

— French Airbus partner

**Affymax****Akbank****Alcatel Alsthom****Alenia****Allied Domecq****American Bankers Association****American Home Products****American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T)**

— also Ma Bell; a Baby Bell

**Andersen Consulting****Anglo American (Corporation of South Africa)****Aramco**

— Saudi state energy firm

**Asturiana de Zinc**

— mining company

**Autodesk**

— software firm

**Avions de Transport Régional****AXA**

— French insurance company

**Bacon & Woodrow**

— actuaries

**Banacci**

— Mexican financial group

**Banc One****Banco Bilbao Vizcaya****Banco Central Hispano****Banco Español de Credito (Banesto)****Banco Santander****Banco Totta & Acores**

— Portuguese bank

**Bankers Trust****Bank Julius Baer****Bank Leumi Le-Israel****Bank Nederland****BankAmerica****Baker & McKenzie****Spelling**
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— lawyers

**Barr Rosenberg**

— Californian firm

**B.A.T Industries**

**Bayer**

— drug firm

**Bayerische Hypotheken- und Wechsel-Bank**

— space before the und

**BellSouth**

**Benetton**

**Bertelsmann**

**BfG**

— German bank

**Bloomingdale's**

— American department-store chain

**Body Shop International**

— ignore the **The** and use Body Shop after first reference

**Boeing**

**Boots**

— the chemist

**Boston Consulting Group**

**Bouygues**

— French construction firm

**Bristol-Myers Squibb**

**British Aerospace (BAe)**

**British Airports Authority (BAA)**

**British Airways (BA)**

**British & Commonwealth**

**Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP)**

— Australian

**BSkyB**

**Cable and Wireless**

**Cablevision Industries**

**Cadbury Schweppes**

**Cambridge Econometrics**

— forecasting group

**Capital Cities/ABC**

**W.I. Carr**

— stockbroking firm sometimes known as **WICO**

**CASA**

— Spanish Airbus partner; not Construcciones Aeronauticas SA in full

**CASE**

— Warsaw think-tank

**Cazenove**

— British stockbroker

**Cedel Bank**

— was Cedel; part of Cedel Group

**Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, CMIE**

**Centres for Disease Control**

**CFM**

— consortium of **GE** and France's **SNECMA**

**Chase Manhattan**

**Chemical Bank**

**Chevron**

— oil firm

**Chiat/Day**

— American advertising agency

**Chiron**

— Californian biotechnology firm

**Ciba**

— drug firm

**Citicorp**

**Coats Viyella**

— textiles firm



**Coca-Cola**

**COFINEC**

— Vienna-based packaging group

**Coles Myer**

— Australian retailer

**Columbia/HCA**

— health-care provider

**Commerz International**

**Commerzbank**

**Compagnie Immobilière-Phenix**

— property subsidiary of Générale des Eaux

**Compaq**

**Conoco**

— American oil company

**ConsGold**

**Consolidated Gold Fields**

**County NatWest**

— investment bank of National Westminster Bank group

**Crédit Agricole**

**Crédit Lyonnais**

— French bank

**Credit Suisse**

**Credito Italiano**

— Italian bank

**Credito Romagnolo**

— Italian bank

**CS First Boston**

**Cummins Engine**

— engine maker from Columbus, Indiana, not Ohio

**Cynamid**

**Daimler-Benz**

**Daewoo Securities**

**Dalgety**

**Daiwa**

**DASA**

**DBS Land**

— Singaporean company

**Den Danske Bank**

**Den norske**

**Deutsche Bank**

**Deutsche Bundespost**

**Deutsche Telekom**

**DG Bank**

— German bank

**Direct Line**

— insurance subsidiary of the Royal Bank of Scotland

**Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette**

— US investment bank

**Du Pont**

**Eastman Kodak**

**Electrolux**

— Swedish white-goods producer

**Elf Aquitaine**

**Eli Lilly**

**Ericsson**

— Swedish telecoms company

**Ernst & Young**

— accountants and management consultants

**Euro Disney**

**European Passenger Services**

**Eurostar**

**Exxon**

— oil company

**Federal Reserve Board**

**Fidelity Investments**

**First Direct**

**Fokker**

**Forte**

**Foster's (beer)**

**France Télécom**

**Fried. Krupp**

**Gazprom**

— Russian energy company

**Genentech**

**General Electric (GE)**

— American

**GEC**

— British

**Gimbels**

— defunct American department store

**GiroCredit Bank**

**Glaxo Wellcome**

**Goldman Sachs**

**Groupe des Assurances Nationales**

**Hamleys**

**Hanson**

— (not Trust)

**Hanson Industries**

— the American bit

**Harrods**

**Hewlett-Packard**

**Hiram Walker**

— spirits division of Allied-Domecq

**Hoare Govett**

**Hoechst**

— German chemical giant

**Hoffmann-La Roche**

but more likely **Roche Holding**

**Hongkong and Shanghai Bank**

but more likely **HSBC Holdings**

**Hydra**

— media consultancy

**Hyundai**

— South Korean firm

**IATA**

— airlines' association

**IBCA**

— British rating agency

**IBM**

**Insead**

— European business school

**Istituto Mobiliare Italiano (IMI)**

**Intel**

**Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN)**

**International Distillers and Vintners (IDV)**

**ITT**

**Japan Airlines**

**Japan Satellite Broadcasting**

— commercial channel

**Jardine Fleming**

— stockbroker

**KHD**

— German diesel-engine maker

**Kidder Peabody**

— American investment bank

**Kiel Institute of World Economics**

**Kohlberg Kravis Roberts**

**Kmart**

**Knight-Ridder**

**Kraft Foods**

**Lafarge-Coppée**

**La Poste**

— French post office

**Legal & General**

— British insurer

**Lehman Brothers**

**Levi Strauss**

**LG**

— new name for Lucky Goldstar

**Lipper Analytical Services**

**Lloyd's**

— London insurance market

**Lloyds Bank**

**Lockheed**

**Lonrho**

**Lord & Taylor**

— American department store

**Lufthansa**

**Luxottica**

**Lyonnaise des Eaux**

— French utility

**McCann-Erickson**

— advertising agency

**McDonald's**

— the hamburger chain

**McDonnell Douglas**

**McKinsey**

— management consultants

**Mannesmann**

**Marks and Spencer plc**

but **Marks & Spencer** is the name above the shop

**Mars**

**Marshall Field**

— American department store

**Martin Marietta**

**Martini & Rossi**

**Mediobanca**

— Italian bank

**Mellon Bank**

**Mercedes-Benz**

**E. Merck**

**Merrell**

— drugs subsidiary of Dow Chemical

**Merrill Lynch**

**Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm (MBB)**

**Metallgesellschaft (MG)**

— engineering conglomerate

**Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM)**

**Microsoft**

**Moët and Chandon**

**Moody's**

— rating agency

**J.P. Morgan**

**Morningstar**

— financial research firm

**Morgan Grenfell**

**Morgan Stanley**

**Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA)**

**Motoren Turbine Union (MTU)**

— part of Daimler-Benz

**Motoroil Hellas**

— Greek oil-refining firm

**National Australia Bank (NAB)**

— Australia's largest

**National Gypsum**

— American plasterboard maker

**National Institutes of Health (NIH)**

**Nedcor Bank**

**Nestlé**

**New Holland**

— producer of farm machinery

**NeXT**

— computer company

**Nikko Securities**

**Nippon Telegraph and Telephone (NTT)**

**Nomura Securities**

**North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA)**

**Novell**

— software house

**OfficeMax**

**Ogilvy & Mather**

— advertising agency

**Olympia & York**

— Canadian property group

**OS/2**

**Ovum**

— British consultancy

**PaineWebber**

**Packard Bell**

**Paramount**

**J.C. Penney**

**Peoples Bank**

— South African bank

**Pfizer**

**Philips**

— Dutch electronics multinational

**Pillsbury**

**Pioneer Group**

— fund-management firm

**PlanEcon**

**PolyGram**

**Pratt & Whitney**

**Preussag**

**Procter & Gamble**

**Rabobank**

— Dutch bank

**Ranks Hovis McDougall**

**Rating Agency of Malaysia (RAM)**

**Reckitt & Colman**

**Repsol**

— oil company

**Reuters**

(**Reuter** can be used adjectivally)

**Rhône-Poulenc**

— French chemical and drug company

**Rich's**

— a Robert Campeau-owned department store

**Roche**

**Rolls-Royce**

**Rover Group**

**Royal Dutch/Shell**

**RTZ** (not **Rio Tinto-Zinc**)

**Rustenburg Platinum Holdings**

**M&C Saatchi**

**J. Sainsbury**

**Saint-Gobain**

**Saint Louis**

— French industrial group

**Saks Fifth Avenue**

— American department store

**Same**

— Italian tractor maker

**Sandoz**

— chemical company

**Sanford C. Bernstein**

— New York stockbroker

**Sankyo**

**Sanwa Bank**

**savings and loan associations**

— not loans

**Scudder, Stevens & Clark**

— investment firm

**Seagram**

**Sears, Roebuck**

**Securities and Investments Board**

**Schneider**

— electronics group

**S-E-Banken (Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken)**

**Shearson Lehman Hutton**

**Short Brothers**

**Siemens**

**Singapore International Monetary Exchange (SIMEX)**

**Skoda**

— Czech engineering firm

**WH Smith**

**SmithKline Beecham**

**SPEA Software**

— German developer of multi-media

**SNCF**

**SNECMA**

**Société Générale**

— private bank

**Société Générale Strauss Turnbull**

**Société Marseillaise de Crédit**

**Softbank**

— Japanese software distributor

**Spie-Batignolles**

— developer and civil engineering firm

**Standard & Poor's**

**Standard Bank**

**Sumitomo Bank**

— Japanese bank

**Svenska Handelsbanken**

**Swiss Bank Corporation (SBC)**

**Tate & Lyle**

**Tele-Communications Inc**

— American cable company

**Telefonica**

— Spain's telecoms monopoly

**Thai Rating and Information Services (TRIS)**

**Thorn EMI**

**Thyssen**

**Time Warner**

**Tonen Corporation**

**Toys "R" Us**

**Trafalgar House**

**Trans Union**

— American rating agency

**Trans World Metals**

— London-based metals trader

**Tyson Foods**  
— poultry company  
**UBS**  
**Unilever**  
**Unisource**  
**Unisys**  
**United Distillers**  
**Universal Postal Union (UPU)**  
**Unix**  
**USAir**  
**U.S. Shoe**  
**Viacom**  
**Virgin Atlantic**  
**Virgin group**  
**Wachovia Bank**  
**Wal-Mart**  
**S.G. Warburg**  
**Wartsila Marine**  
— Finnish shipbuilder  
**WEFA Group**  
**Weir Group**  
— Scottish engineering group  
**Wells Fargo Nikko**  
**Westpac Banking Corp**  
**Whirlpool**  
— American white-goods maker  
**Windows 95**  
**Wood & Co**  
**WordPerfect**  
**World Trade Organisation (WTO)**  
**Zeneca**  
**Zenith**

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## Miscellaneous

### ANIMALS, PLANTS, ETC

When it is necessary to use a Latin name, follow the standard practice. Thus for all creatures higher than viruses, write the binomial name in italics, giving an initial capital to the first word (the genus): *Turdus turdus*, the song thrush; *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, the dawn redwood; *Culicoides clintoni*, a species of midge.

### COUNTRIES AND INHABITANTS

In most contexts sacrifice precision to simplicity and use **Britain** rather than **Great Britain** or the **United Kingdom**, and **America** rather than the **United States**. ("In all pointed sentences, some degree of accuracy must be sacrificed to conciseness." Dr Johnson.)

Sometimes, however, it may be important to be precise. Remember therefore that **Great Britain** consists of **England**, **Scotland** and **Wales**, which together with **Northern Ireland** (which we generally call **Ulster**, though Ulster strictly includes three counties in **Ireland**) make up the **United Kingdom**.

**Holland**, though a nice, short, familiar name, is strictly only two of the 11 provinces that make up **the Netherlands**, and the **Dutch** are increasingly indignant about misuse of the shorter name. So use **the Netherlands**.

**Ireland** is simply **Ireland**. Although it is a republic, it is not the Republic of Ireland. Neither is it, in English, Eire.

Remember too that, although it is usually all right to talk about the inhabitants of the United States as **Americans**, the term also applies to everyone from Canada to Cape Horn. It may sometimes be necessary to write **United States** and even **United States citizens**.

The primary definition of **Scandinavia** is Norway and Sweden, but it is often used to include Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, which, with Finland, make up the **Nordic countries**.

Where countries have made it clear that they wish to be called by a new (or an old) name, respect their requests. Thus **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Myanmar**, etc, awkward as they are, along with **Burkina Faso**, **Sri Lanka**, **Thailand**, **Zimbabwe**, etc.

Former Soviet republics that are now independent countries include:

**Belarus** (not Belorus or Belorussia), **Belarussian**

**Kazakhstan**

**Kirgizstan** (not Kirgizia or Kyrgyzstan)

**Moldova** (not Moldavia)

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**Tajikistan**

**Turkmenistan** (not Turkmenia)

**Uzbekistan****ETHNIC GROUPS**

Avoid giving offence. This should be your first concern. But also avoid mealy-mouthed euphemisms and terms that have not generally caught on despite promotion by pressure-groups. If and when it becomes plain that American blacks no longer wish to be called **black**, as some years ago it became plain that they no longer wished to be called **coloured**, then call them **African-American** (or whatever). Till then they are **blacks**.

When writing about Spanish-speaking people in the United States, use either **Latino** or **Hispanic** as a general term, but try to be specific (eg, Mexican-American).

Africans may be black or white. If you mean blacks, write **blacks**.

People of mixed race in South Africa are **Coloureds**.

The inhabitants of **Azerbaijan** are **Azerbaijanis**, some of whom, but not all, are **Azeris**. Those **Azeris** who live in other places, such as Nakhichevan, are not **Azerbaijanis**. Similarly, many Croats are not Croatian, and many Serbs not Serbian.

**Anglo-Saxon** is not a synonym for English-speaking.

The language spoken in Iran (and Tajikistan) is **Persian**, not **Farsi**. **Flemings** speak **Dutch**.

**FOREIGN NAMES**

**Arab**. Try to leave out the **al-**. If the name looks odd without it, include it (lower-case, followed by a hyphen).

**Bangladeshi**. If the name includes the Islamic definite article, it should be lower-case and without any hyphens: **Mujib ur Rahman**.

**Chinese**. In general, follow the Pinyin spelling of Chinese names, which has replaced the old Wade-Giles system, except for people from the past, and people and places outside mainland China. **Peking** is therefore **Beijing** and **Mao** is **Zedong**, not **Tse-tung**.

There are no hyphens in Pinyin spelling. So:

**Jiang Zemin**

**Guangdong** (Kwangtung)

**Guangzhou** (Canton)

**Hu Yaobang**

**Jiang Qing** (Mrs Mao)

**Mao Zedong** (Tse-tung)

**Qingdao** (Tsingtao)

**Tianjin** (Tientsin)

**Xinjiang** (Sinkiang)

**Zhao Ziyang**

But

**Chiang Kai-shek**

**Hong Kong**

**Li Ka-shing**

**Lee Teng-hui**

The family name in China comes first, so **Jiang Zemin** becomes **Mr Jiang** on a later mention.

Names from **Singapore, Korea, Vietnam** have no hyphens:

**Lee Kuan Yew**

**Ho Chi Minh**

**Kim Jong Il**

Again, the family name comes first.

**Dutch.** If using first name and surname together, **vans** and **dens** are lower case: **Dries van Agt** and **Joop den Uyl**. But without their first names they become **Mr Van Agt** and **Mr Den Uyl**; **Hans van den Broek** becomes **Mr Van den Broek**. These rules do not always apply to Dutch names in Belgium and South Africa; **Karel Van Miert**, for instance (as well as **Mr Van Miert**).

**French.** Any **de** is likely to be lowercase, unless it starts a sentence. **De Gaulle goes up; Charles de Gaulle goes down.** So does **Yves-Thibault de Silguy**.

**German.** Any **von** is likely to be uppercase only at the start of a sentence.

**Italian.** Any **De** is likely to be uppercase, but there are exceptions, so check.

**Pakistani.** If the name includes the Islamic definite article **ul**, it should be lowercase and without any hyphens: **Zia ul Haq, Mahbub ul Haq** (but **Sadrudin, Mohieddin** and **Saladin** are single words).

• **Russian.** Each of the different approaches to transliterating Russian has its drawbacks. The following rules of thumb are chosen chiefly for reasons of simplicity, not phonetic accuracy.

(i) No y before e: **Belarus, perestroika**. Exception: if the e starts the word: **Yeltsin, Yevgeny**.

(ii) Where pronunciation demands it, use y before a at the start of a word, but not at the end. **Yavlinsky, Yakovlev, Alia** (not **Aliya**). Special case: the president of Turkmenistan is **Saparmurat Niyazov**. Also **Chechnya**.

(iii) Anything pronounced yo is usually spelled e: **Fedorov, Gorbachev**.

(iv) With words ending -ski, -skii or -sky, choose -sky. But with all other words ending -i, -ii or -y, choose -i. Thus: **Zhirinovsky** and **Tchaikovsky**, but **Bolshoi, Ruskoi, Yuri**. Exceptions: **Grigory** (because of the association with Gregory), **Nizhni Novgorod**.

Replace dzh with j. So: **Jokar (Dudaev), Jaba (Iosseliani)**.

• **Ukranian.** Ukrainians are engaged in an orgy of retransliterating Russian versions of their words, often several times. It is impossible to

keep up, so go for the familiar, if there is one.

One generalisation: Ukrainian has no g, so it is **Yevhen** (not **Yevgeny**), **Ihor** (not **Igor**) and **Luhansk** (not **Lugansk**). The new currency is the **hryvnia**.

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**cipher**  
**clubable**  
**combating, combated**  
**commemorate**  
**connection**  
**consensus**  
**cooled, cooler, cooly**  
**coral** (stuff found in sea), **corral** (cattle pen)  
**coruscate**  
**cosseted, cossetting**  
**defendant**  
**dependant** (person), **dependent** (adj)  
**depository** (unless referring to American **depository** receipts)  
**desiccate, desiccation**  
**detente** (not détente)  
**Deutschemark, D-mark**  
**dexterous**  
**, (not dextrous)**  
**dilapidate**  
**disk** (in a computer context), **otherwise disc** (including compact disc)  
**dispatch** (not despatch)  
**dispel, dispelling**  
**distil, distiller**  
**divergences**  
**doppel-ganger(s)**  
**dwelt**  
**dyeing** (colour)  
**dyke**  
**embarrass** (but harass)  
**encyclopedia**  
**enroll, enrolment**  
**ensure** (make certain), **insure** (against risks)  
**enthrall**  
**farther** (distance), **further** (additional)  
**favour, favourable**  
**ferreted**  
**fetus** (not foetus, misformed from the Latin *fetus*)  
**field-marshal** (soldier), **Marshall Field's** (Chicago department store)  
**Filipino, Filipina** (person), **Philippine** (adj of the Philippines)  
**filleting, filleted**  
**flier, high-flier**  
**flotation**  
**focused, focusing**  
**forbear** (abstain), **forebear** (ancestor)  
**forbid, forbade**  
**foreboding**  
**foreclose**  
**forefather**  
**forestall**  
**forewarn**  
**forgather**  
**forgo** (do without), **forego** (precede)  
**forsake**  
**forswear, forsworn**  
**fuelled**  
**-ful, not -full** (thus armful, bathful, handful, etc)  
**fulfil, fulfilling**  
**fullness**  
**fulsome**  
**funnelling, funnelled**  
**glamour, glamorous**  
**graffito, graffiti**

**gram (not gramme)**  
**grey**  
**guerrilla**  
**gypsy**  
**hallo (not hello)**  
**harass (but embarrass)**  
**hiccup (not hiccough)**  
**high-tech**  
**honour, honourable**  
**hotch-potch**  
**humour, humorous**  
**hurrah, (not hooray)**  
**impostor**  
**impresario**  
**inadvertent**  
**incur, incurring**  
**innocuous, inoculate**  
**inquire, inquiry (not enquire, enquiry)**  
**install, instalment, installation**  
**instil, instilling**  
**intransigent**  
**jail (not gaol)**  
**jewellery (not jewelry)**  
**judgment**  
**kilogram or kilo (not kilogramme)**  
**Koran**  
**labelling, labelled**  
**laissez-faire**  
**lama (priest), llama (beast)**  
**lambast (not lambaste)**  
**leukaemia**  
**levelled**  
**libelling, libelled**  
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**limited**  
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**liquefy**  
**literal, littoral (shore)**  
**loth (reluctant), loathe (hate), loathsome**  
**low-tech**  
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**mêlée**  
**mileage**  
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**minuscule**  
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**modelling, modelled**  
**mould**  
**mujahideen**  
**Muslim (not Moslem)**  
**naivety**  
**'Ndrangheta**  
**nonplussed**  
**nought (for numerals), otherwise naught**  
**obbligato**  
**occur, occurring**  
**optics (optician, etc) ophthalmic (ophthalmology, etc)**  
**paediatric, paediatrician**  
**panel, panelled**  
**parallel, paralleled**  
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**pastime**  
**pavilion**  
**phoney (not phony)**  
**piggyback (not pickaback)**  
**plummeted, plummeting**  
**Politburo**  
**practice (noun), practise (verb)**  
**predilection**  
**preferred (preferring, but proffered)**  
**preventive (not preventative)**  
**principal (head, loan; or adj), principle (abstract noun)**  
**proffered (proffering, but preferred)**  
**profited**  
**program (only in a computer context), otherwise programme**  
**protester**  
**pygmy**  
**pzazz**  
**queuing**  
**rack, racked, racking (as in racked with pain, nerve-racking)**  
**racket**  
**rankle**  
**rarefy**  
**razzmatazz**  
**recur, recurrent, recurring**  
**regretted, regretting**  
**resuscitate**  
**rococo**  
**rottweiler**  
**sacrilegious**  
**sanatorium**  
**seize**  
**shaky**  
**shibboleth**  
**Sibylline**  
**siege**  
**sieve**  
**skulduggery**  
**smelt**  
**smidgen (not smidgeon)**  
**smoky**  
**smooth (both noun and verb)**  
**sobriquet**  
**soothe**  
**souped up**  
**soyabean**  
**specialty (only in context of medicine, steel and chemicals),  
otherwise speciality**  
**sphinx**  
**spoilt**  
**storey (floor)**  
**straitjacket and strait-laced but straight-faced**  
**stratagem**  
**strategy**  
**supersede**  
**swap (not swop)**  
**swathe**  
**synonym**  
**tariff**  
**threshold**  
**titbits**  
**titillate**  
***tonton-macoutes***  
**tormentor**  
**trade union**

**trade unions (but Trades Union Congress)**  
**transatlantic**  
**transferred, transferring**  
**transpacific**  
**travelled**  
**tricolor**  
**trouper (as in old trouper)**  
**tyres**  
**unparalleled**  
**untrammelled**  
**vaccinate**  
**vacillate**  
**vermillion**  
**wagon (not waggon)**  
**wilful**  
**withhold**  
**yogurt**

**—able**

**debatable**  
**dispensable**  
**disputable**  
**indescribable**  
**indictable**  
**indispensable**  
**indistinguishable**  
**implacable**  
**movable**  
**salable (but prefer sellable)**  
**tradable**  
**unmistakable**  
**unshakable**

**—eable**

**likeable**  
**manageable**  
**rateable**  
**traceable**  
**serviceable**  
**sizeable**  
**unenforceable**  
**unpronounceable**

**—ible**

**accessible**  
**convertible**  
**digestible**  
**inadmissible**  
**indestructible**  
**investible**  
**irresistible**  
**permissible**  
**submersible**

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## Singular or plural?

## COLLECTIVE NOUNS

There is no firm rule about the number of a verb governed by a singular collective noun. It is best to go by the sense—that is, whether the collective noun stands for a single entity (**The council was elected in March, The me generation has run its course, The staff is loyal**) or for its constituents: (**The council are at sixes and sevens, The preceding generation are all dead, The staff are at each other's throats**). Do not, in any event, slavishly give all singular collective nouns singular verbs: **The couple have a baby boy** is preferable to **The couple has a baby boy**.

A rule for **majority**. When it is used in an abstract sense, it takes the singular; when it is used to denote the elements making up the majority, it should be plural. **A two-thirds majority is needed to amend the constitution** but **A majority of the Senate were opposed**.

A rule for **number**. **The number is. . . , A number are. . .**

A **pair** and a **couple** are both plural.

## OTHER NOUNS

A **government**, a **party**, a **company** (whether Tesco or Marks and Spencer) and a **partnership** (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill) are all **it** and take a singular verb. So does a **country**, even if its name looks plural. Thus **The Philippines has a congressional system, as does the United States; the Netherlands does not**. The **United Nations** is also singular. So is **politics** ("Politics is the art of the possible"—Bismarck); so are **dynamics, economics, mathematics, mechanics, physics** and **statics**—though not **antics, hysterics, tactics** or **statistics**.

Brokers too. **Legg Mason Wood Walk is preparing a statement**. Avoid **stockbrokers Furman Selz Mager, bankers Chase Manhattan** or **accountants Ernst & Young**. And remember that **Barclays** is a **British bank**, not **the British bank**, just as **Ford** is a **car company**, not **the car company**, and **Luciano Pavarotti** is **an opera singer**, not **the opera singer**.

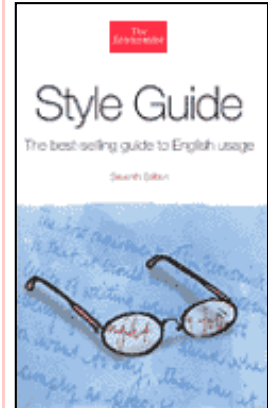
**Propaganda** looks plural but is not. **Data** are plural. So are **whereabouts**.

**Law and order** defies the rules of grammar and is singular.

## Singular or plural?

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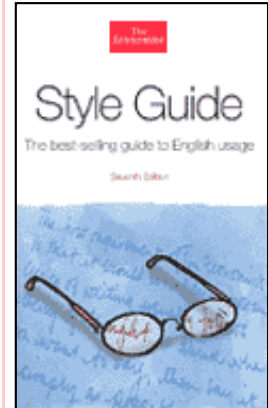
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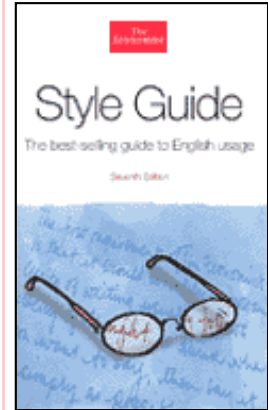
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**SHOP****Semi-colons**

Semi-colons should be used to mark a pause longer than a comma and shorter than a full stop. Don't overdo them.

Use them to distinguish phrases listed after a colon if commas will not do the job clearly. Thus, **They agreed on only three points: the ceasefire should be immediate; it should be internationally supervised, preferably by the OAU; and a peace conference should be held, either in Geneva or in Ouagadougou.**

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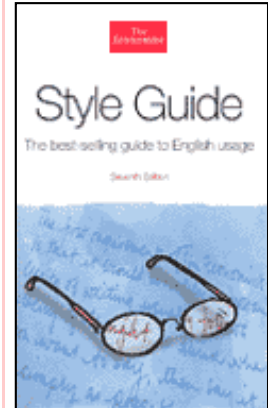
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**SHOP****Question-marks**

Except in sentences that include a question in inverted commas, question-marks always come at the end of the sentence. Thus:

**Where could he get a drink, he wondered?**

**Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?**

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## Inverted commas

Use single ones only for quotations within quotations. Thus: **“When I say ‘immediately’, I mean some time before April,” said the spokesman.**

For the relative placing of quotation marks and punctuation, follow Hart's rules. Thus, if an extract ends with a full stop or question-mark, put the punctuation before the closing inverted commas. **His maxim was that “love follows laughter.” In this spirit came his opening gambit: “What's the difference between a buffalo and a bison?”**

If a complete sentence in quotes comes at the end of a larger sentence, the final stop should be inside the inverted commas. Thus, **The answer was, “You can't wash your hands in a buffalo.” She replied, “Your jokes are execrable.”**

If the quotation does not include any punctuation, the closing inverted commas should precede any punctuation marks that the sentence requires. Thus: **She had already noticed that the “young man” looked about as young as the New Testament is new. Although he had been described as “fawnlike in his energy and playfulness”, “a stripling with all the vigour and freshness of youth”, and even as “every woman's dream toyboy”, he struck his companion-to-be as the kind of old man warned of by her mother as “not safe in taxis”. Where, now that she needed him, was “Mr Right”?**

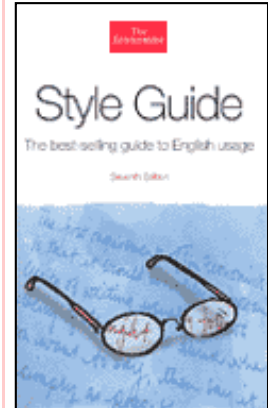
When a quotation is broken off and resumed after such words as **he said**, ask yourself whether it would naturally have had any punctuation at the point where it is broken off. If the answer is yes, a comma is placed within the quotation marks to represent this. Thus, **“If you'll let me see you home,” he said, “I think I know where we can find a cab.”** The comma after home belongs to the quotation and so comes within the inverted commas, as does the final full stop.

But if the words to be quoted are continuous, without punctuation at the point where they are broken, the comma should be outside the inverted commas. Thus, **“My bicycle”, she assured him, “awaits me.”**

## Punctuation

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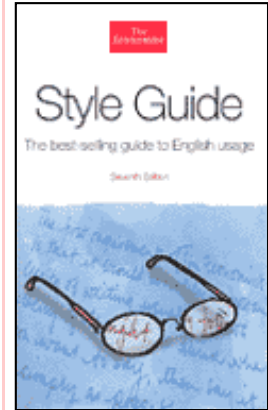
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**SHOP****Full stops**

Use plenty. They keep sentences short. This helps the reader.

Do not use full stops in abbreviations or at the end of rubrics.

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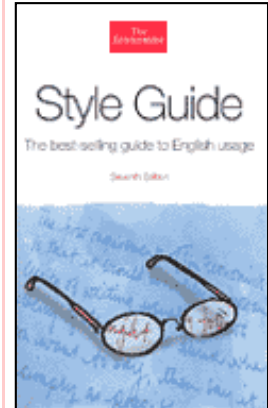
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**SHOP****Dashes**

You can use dashes in pairs for parenthesis, but not more than one pair per sentence, ideally not more than one pair per paragraph.

Use a dash to introduce an explanation, amplification, paraphrase, particularisation or correction of what immediately precedes it. Use it to gather up the subject of a long sentence. Use it to introduce a paradoxical or whimsical ending to a sentence. Do not use it as a punctuation maid-of-all-work (Gowers).

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## Commas

Use commas as an aid to understanding. Too many in one sentence can be confusing.

It is not always necessary to put a comma after a short phrase at the start of a sentence if no natural pause exists there: **On August 2nd he invaded. Next time the world will be prepared.** But a breath, and so a comma, is needed after longer passages: **When it was plain that he had his eyes on Saudi Arabia as well as Kuwait, America responded.**

Use two commas, or none at all, when inserting a clause in the middle of a sentence. Thus, do not write: **Use two commas, or none at all when inserting . . .** or **Use two commas or none at all, when inserting . . .**

If the clause ends with a bracket, which is not uncommon (this one does), the bracket should be followed by a comma.

Commas can alter the sense of a sentence. To write **Mozart's 40th symphony, in G minor**, with commas indicates that this symphony was written in G minor. Without commas, **Mozart's 40th symphony in G minor** suggests he wrote 39 other symphonies in G minor.

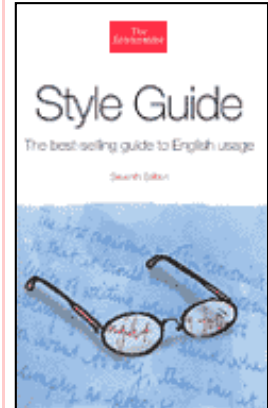
Do not put a comma before **and** at the end of a sequence of items unless one of the items includes another and. Thus **The doctor suggested an aspirin, half a grapefruit and a cup of broth. But He ordered scrambled eggs, whisky and soda, and a selection from the trolley.**

Do not put commas after question-marks, even when they would be separated by quotation marks: **"May I have a second helping?" he asked.**

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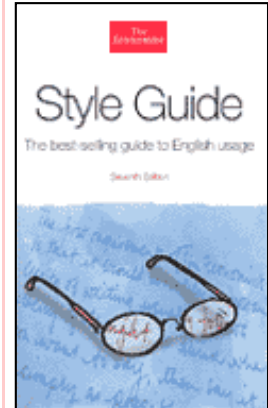
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**SHOP****Colons**

Use a colon “to deliver the goods that have been invoiced in the preceding words” (Fowler). **They brought presents: gold, frankincense and oil at \$35 a barrel.**

Use a colon before a whole quoted sentence, but not before a quotation that begins in mid-sentence. **She said: “It will never work.” He retorted that it had “always worked before”.**

Use a colon for antithesis or “gnomic contrasts” (Fowler). **Man proposes: God disposes.**

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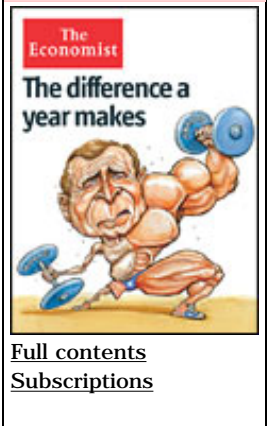
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**SHOP****Brackets**

If a whole sentence is within brackets, put the full stop inside.

Square brackets should be used for interpolations in direct quotations: **“Let them [the poor] eat cake.”** To use ordinary brackets implies that the words inside them were part of the original text from which you are quoting.

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## Apostrophes

Use the normal possessive ending **'s** after singular words or names that end in **s**: **boss's**, **caucus's**, **Delors's**, **St James's**, **Jones's**, **Shanks's**. Use it after plurals that do not end in **s**: **children's**, **Frenchmen's**, **media's**.

Use the ending **s'** on plurals that end in **s**—**Danes'**, **bosses'**, **Joneses'**—including plural names that take a singular verb, eg, **Reuters'**, **Barclays'**, **Stewarts & Lloyds'**, **Salomon Brothers'**.

Although singular in other respects, the United States, the United Nations, the Philippines, etc, have a plural possessive apostrophe: eg, **Who will be the United States' next president?**

**People's = of (the) people.**

**Peoples' = of peoples.**

Try to avoid using **Lloyd's** (the insurance market) as a possessive; it poses an insoluble problem. The vulnerable part of the hero of the Trojan war is best described as an **Achilles heel**.

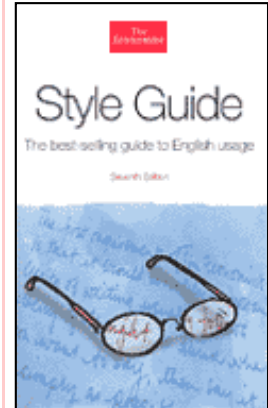
Do not put apostrophes into decades: the **1990s**.

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No rules here. The spelling of the following plurals may be decided by either practice or derivation.

**—oes**

archipelagoes  
buffaloes  
cargoes  
desperadoes  
dominoes  
echoes  
embargoes  
haloes  
innuendoes  
mementoes  
mosquitoes  
mottoes  
noes  
potatoes  
salvoes  
tomatoes  
tornadoes  
torpedoes  
vetoes  
volcanoes

**—ums**

conundrums  
crematoriums  
curriculum  
forums  
nostrums  
moratoriums  
quorums  
referendums  
stadiums  
symposiums  
ultimatums  
vacuums

**—ves**

hooves  
scarves  
wharves

**—os**

commandos  
dynamos  
embryos  
Eskimos  
fascos  
folios  
ghettos  
impresarios  
librettos  
manifestos  
mulattos  
oratorios  
peccadillos  
pianos  
provisos  
quangos  
radios  
silos  
solos  
stilettos  
studios

**—a**

consortia  
corrigenda  
data  
media  
memoranda  
phenomena  
sanatoria  
spectra  
strata

**—fs**

dwarfs  
roofs  
turfs

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## Miscellaneous

### ANIMALS, PLANTS, ETC

When it is necessary to use a Latin name, follow the standard practice. Thus for all creatures higher than viruses, write the binomial name in italics, giving an initial capital to the first word (the genus): *Turdus turdus*, the song thrush; *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, the dawn redwood; *Culicoides clintoni*, a species of midge.

### COUNTRIES AND INHABITANTS

In most contexts sacrifice precision to simplicity and use **Britain** rather than **Great Britain** or the **United Kingdom**, and **America** rather than the **United States**. ("In all pointed sentences, some degree of accuracy must be sacrificed to conciseness." Dr Johnson.)

Sometimes, however, it may be important to be precise. Remember therefore that **Great Britain** consists of **England**, **Scotland** and **Wales**, which together with **Northern Ireland** (which we generally call **Ulster**, though Ulster strictly includes three counties in **Ireland**) make up the **United Kingdom**.

**Holland**, though a nice, short, familiar name, is strictly only two of the 11 provinces that make up **the Netherlands**, and the **Dutch** are increasingly indignant about misuse of the shorter name. So use **the Netherlands**.

**Ireland** is simply **Ireland**. Although it is a republic, it is not the Republic of Ireland. Neither is it, in English, Eire.

Remember too that, although it is usually all right to talk about the inhabitants of the United States as **Americans**, the term also applies to everyone from Canada to Cape Horn. It may sometimes be necessary to write **United States** and even **United States citizens**.

The primary definition of **Scandinavia** is Norway and Sweden, but it is often used to include Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, which, with Finland, make up the **Nordic countries**.

Where countries have made it clear that they wish to be called by a new (or an old) name, respect their requests. Thus **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Myanmar**, etc, awkward as they are, along with **Burkina Faso**, **Sri Lanka**, **Thailand**, **Zimbabwe**, etc.

Former Soviet republics that are now independent countries include:

**Belarus** (not Belorus or Belorussia), **Belarussian**

**Kazakhstan**

**Kirgizstan** (not Kirgizia or Kyrgyzstan)

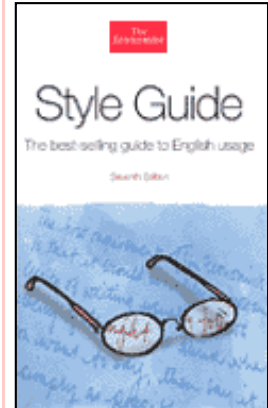
**Moldova** (not Moldavia)

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**Tajikistan**

**Turkmenistan** (not Turkmenia)

**Uzbekistan****ETHNIC GROUPS**

Avoid giving offence. This should be your first concern. But also avoid mealy-mouthed euphemisms and terms that have not generally caught on despite promotion by pressure-groups. If and when it becomes plain that American blacks no longer wish to be called **black**, as some years ago it became plain that they no longer wished to be called **coloured**, then call them **African-American** (or whatever). Till then they are **blacks**.

When writing about Spanish-speaking people in the United States, use either **Latino** or **Hispanic** as a general term, but try to be specific (eg, Mexican-American).

Africans may be black or white. If you mean blacks, write **blacks**.

People of mixed race in South Africa are **Coloureds**.

The inhabitants of **Azerbaijan** are **Azerbaijanis**, some of whom, but not all, are **Azeris**. Those **Azeris** who live in other places, such as Nakhichevan, are not **Azerbaijanis**. Similarly, many Croats are not Croatian, and many Serbs not Serbian.

**Anglo-Saxon** is not a synonym for English-speaking.

The language spoken in Iran (and Tajikistan) is **Persian**, not **Farsi**. **Flemings** speak **Dutch**.

**FOREIGN NAMES**

**Arab**. Try to leave out the **al-**. If the name looks odd without it, include it (lower-case, followed by a hyphen).

**Bangladeshi**. If the name includes the Islamic definite article, it should be lower-case and without any hyphens: **Mujib ur Rahman**.

**Chinese**. In general, follow the Pinyin spelling of Chinese names, which has replaced the old Wade-Giles system, except for people from the past, and people and places outside mainland China. **Peking** is therefore **Beijing** and **Mao** is **Zedong**, not **Tse-tung**.

There are no hyphens in Pinyin spelling. So:

**Jiang Zemin**

**Guangdong** (Kwangtung)

**Guangzhou** (Canton)

**Hu Yaobang**

**Jiang Qing** (Mrs Mao)

**Mao Zedong** (Tse-tung)

**Qingdao** (Tsingtao)

**Tianjin** (Tientsin)

**Xinjiang** (Sinkiang)

**Zhao Ziyang**

But

**Chiang Kai-shek**

**Hong Kong**

**Li Ka-shing**

**Lee Teng-hui**

The family name in China comes first, so **Jiang Zemin** becomes **Mr Jiang** on a later mention.

Names from **Singapore, Korea, Vietnam** have no hyphens:

**Lee Kuan Yew**

**Ho Chi Minh**

**Kim Jong Il**

Again, the family name comes first.

**Dutch.** If using first name and surname together, **vans** and **dens** are lower case: **Dries van Agt** and **Joop den Uyl**. But without their first names they become **Mr Van Agt** and **Mr Den Uyl**; **Hans van den Broek** becomes **Mr Van den Broek**. These rules do not always apply to Dutch names in Belgium and South Africa; **Karel Van Miert**, for instance (as well as **Mr Van Miert**).

**French.** Any **de** is likely to be lowercase, unless it starts a sentence. **De Gaulle goes up; Charles de Gaulle goes down.** So does **Yves-Thibault de Silguy**.

**German.** Any **von** is likely to be uppercase only at the start of a sentence.

**Italian.** Any **De** is likely to be uppercase, but there are exceptions, so check.

**Pakistani.** If the name includes the Islamic definite article **ul**, it should be lowercase and without any hyphens: **Zia ul Haq, Mahbub ul Haq** (but **Sadrudin, Mohieddin** and **Saladin** are single words).

• **Russian.** Each of the different approaches to transliterating Russian has its drawbacks. The following rules of thumb are chosen chiefly for reasons of simplicity, not phonetic accuracy.

(i) No y before e: **Belarus, perestroika**. Exception: if the e starts the word: **Yeltsin, Yevgeny**.

(ii) Where pronunciation demands it, use y before a at the start of a word, but not at the end. **Yavlinsky, Yakovlev, Alia** (not **Aliya**). Special case: the president of Turkmenistan is **Saparmurat Niyazov**. Also **Chechnya**.

(iii) Anything pronounced yo is usually spelled e: **Fedorov, Gorbachev**.

(iv) With words ending -ski, -skii or -sky, choose -sky. But with all other words ending -i, -ii or -y, choose -i. Thus: **Zhirinovsky** and **Tchaikovsky**, but **Bolshoi, Rutskoi, Yuri**. Exceptions: **Grigory** (because of the association with Gregory), **Nizhni Novgorod**.

Replace dzh with j. So: **Jokar (Dudaev), Jaba (Iosseliani)**.

• **Ukranian.** Ukrainians are engaged in an orgy of retransliterating Russian versions of their words, often several times. It is impossible to

keep up, so go for the familiar, if there is one.

One generalisation: Ukrainian has no g, so it is **Yevhen** (not **Yevgeny**), **Ihor** (not **Igor**) and **Luhansk** (not **Lugansk**). The new currency is the **hryvnia**.

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