**A/an**

Pronunciation is the key. Use 'an' before any word or abbreviation beginning with a vowel sound, including words beginning with a silent 'h' (as far as we know there are only four of these: **hour**, **honour**,**heir**,**honest**and their derivatives). You use 'a' with consonant sounds (eg: **unicorn**), including words beginning with an 'h' which is pronounced (eg: **hat**, **hotel**).

**Abbas, Mahmoud**

(Palestinian president.) We should call him **Mahmoud Abbas** alone, unless he is referred to in a quotation as Abu Mazen, when we can use the formula 'Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen' to explain. In feature-type pieces it would be acceptable to use both terms.

**Aboriginal**

Means indigenous; earliest known inhabitants of a particular country. Use a cap (**Aboriginal**) if the reference is to the indigenous Australians; otherwise, **aboriginal**. Likewise, **Aborigine**/**aborigine**.

**Abortion**

Avoid pro-abortion, and use **pro-choice** instead. Campaigners favour a woman's right to choose, rather than abortion itself. And use **anti-abortion** rather than pro-life, except where it is part of the title of a group's name.

**Abu Bakar Ba'asyir**

A Muslim cleric, alleged spiritual leader of militant group **Jemaah Islamiah**, convicted of charges relating to the bombings in Bali and at the Marriot Hotel in Jakarta. Give full name at first mention; subsequently **Ba'asyir**.

**Abu Hamza al-Masri**

At first mention only, spell out his full name - thereafter he can be referred to as **Abu Hamza**. Never shorten the name to 'Hamza', even in a headline.

**Abu Mazen**

(Palestinian Authority president.) We should call him Mahmoud Abbas alone, unless he is referred to in a quotation as Abu Mazen, when we can use the formula 'Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen' to explain. In feature-type pieces it would be acceptable to use both terms.

**Abu Qatada**

(Radical Palestinian-Jordanian cleric.) He remains **Abu Qatada** at second reference.

**Acas**

(ie initial cap only) NB: it is **not** the government's **Advisory**,**Conciliation and Arbitration Service**. It is independent.

**Accents**

We do **not** include accents - either in accented words that have passed into the English language or in foreign names - eg: **He had his breakfast in a cafe** and **The Brazilian football legend Pele scored twice**.

**Accidents**

For legal reasons, be careful about saying one vehicle 'hit' another. Err on the side of caution and use **collided with**/**was in collision with**. (Collisions involve two or more moving objects; they cannot involve something stationary.)

**Achilles heel**

ie no apostrophe and upper case 'A'.

**Acronyms**

Use the abbreviated form of a title without explanation only if there is no chance of any misunderstanding (eg **UN**, **Nato**, **IRA**, **BBC**). Otherwise, spell it out in full at first reference, or introduce a label (eg **the public sector union Unite**).

Where you would normally pronounce the abbreviation as a string of letters - an initialism - use all capitals with no full stops or spaces (eg **FA**,**UNHCR**, **NUT**). However, our style is to use lower case with an initial cap for acronyms where you would normally pronounce the set of letters as a word (eg **Aids**, **Farc**,**Eta**,**Nafta**,**Nasa**,**Opec**,**Apec**).

There are a few exceptions:

* The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is capped up ie **NICE**
* The UK Independence Party is capped up ie **UKIP**
* Strategic Health Authority becomes **SHA**('Sha' looks like a typo)
* Seasonal Affective Disorder becomes **SAD** ('Sad' would be confusing).

For names with initials, we avoid full stops and spaces (ie **JK** **Rowling** and **WH Smith**).

Whenabbreviating a phrase, rather than a name or title, use lower case (ie **lbw, mph**).

**Acts/acts (of parliament)**

Use lower case unless you are naming a specific act - eg: **He argued for a new government act on petrol taxes because, he said, the Finance Act had proved a disaster**. The same logic applies for a parliamentary **bill** ie lower case if non-specific, initial cap if named.

**Actor/actress**

using the term ‘actress’ (or comedienne) is OK. Actors is fine if describing a mixed group: **A number of people at the theatre were treated for smoke inhalation, including several of the actors.**

**AD**

(in the year of the Lord) ie unpunctuated. It goes **before** the year (eg **AD800**) - with no gap.

**Add, to**

As in: **'This is the end of the road,' he added.** Should be used sparingly; acceptable only if it really is the last addition to a set of quotes. And do NOT use with indirect quotes (eg 'He added that this was the end of the road.')

**Admit**

Use with care. To say: 'He admitted his companion had fired the first shot' suggests we accept what is being said as the truth. A more neutral term such as **said** is preferable.

NB: when using 'admit' in the sense of 'plead guilty to', there is no need for a preposition eg 'He admitted to manslaughter'. Just say '**He** **admitted manslaughter**'.

**Admit responsibility**

Avoid saying 'The Taliban admitted/claimed responsibility for planting the bomb.' Say simply: '**The Taliban say they planted the bomb**.'

**Adrenalin**

is our preferred spelling - **not**adrenaline.

**Advertising Standards Authority**

- and **not** 'Agency'.

**Adviser**

is our preferred spelling, **not** 'advisor'. But **advisory** - with an 'o'.

**Aeroplane**

is the correct spelling - do not use airplane, which is the American term. Better anyway just to write **plane**.

**Affect/effect**

Not synonymous. The verb 'to affect' means 'to have an influence on' eg '**Wine does not affect me**'; 'to effect' means 'to cause, accomplish' eg '**A month at the clinic effected my recovery.**'

**Afrikaans**

is the language (and the adjective). The people are **Afrikaners**.

**Age**

Always hyphenate the adjectival, whether it is eg **seven-year-old child** or **100-year-old coin**. Hyphens should also be included in the noun eg '**There are to be more school tests for eight-year-olds**' - though hyphens are not necessary in sentences such as '**The missing boy is three years old.**'

An age placed after a name should be sandwiched between commas eg '**John Jones, 61, has been knighted**.'

**Ageing**

is our preferred spelling - and **not** 'aging'.

**Agencies**

When quoting news agencies, we should use the full description if space allows, ie 'Reuters news agency/the Associated Press news agency.' But if we are pushed for space short-forms such as 'AFP says' or 'he told AP' are acceptable.

**Agenda**

Is singular eg '**The agenda was fiercely contested**'.

**Aids**

ie initial cap only. It stands for 'acquired immune deficiency syndrome'. People carrying the Aids antibody are **HIV-positive**or **carrying the Aids virus**. Only when they become ill can they be said to **have Aids**. They are best described as **patients**- or **people with Aids/people living with Aids**, and **not** victims or sufferers (NB: since HIV stands for 'Human Immunodeficiency Virus' it is, strictly speaking, tautological to refer to the 'HIV virus').

**Airbase/aircrew/airdrop/airlift**

ie in each case, one word - and no hyphen.

**Air force/air strike/air raid**

ie in each case, two words - and no hyphen.

**al-Aqsa mosque**

ie with a hyphen. We say '**the al-Aqsa mosque**', despite the fact that'al' is Arabic for 'the' so technically we are using the same word twice.

**al-Iraqiyya**

(the main Sunni-backed alliance in Iraq) ie with a hyphen and two 'y's.

**Alasdair/Alastair/Aleister/Alistair**

Be aware that there are several ways to spell this name.

**A-level**

ie with hyphen and lower case 'l'.

Also **AS-level** - the first stage of an A-level, and a qualification in its own right. It stands for Advanced Subsidiary.

And**A2** ie without a hyphen - the second stage of A-levels, following the AS-level. The plural is **A2s**.

**Al Fayed**

Egyptian businessman. Retain the 'Al' (initial cap, and no hyphen), as it is part of the family name: **Mohamed Al Fayed**, also **Mr Al Fayed** and the late **Dodi Al Fayed**.

**Al Jazeera**

Arabic television channel, based in Qatar. Cap ‘A’ and no hyphen.

**All right**

and **never** 'alright' (unless part of a title, as in 'It'll Be Alright on the Night').

**Allahu Akbar**

is our preferred spelling and the translation should be ‘**God is greatest’** rather than ‘God is great’.

**al-Maliki, Nouri**

(former Iraqi prime minister) ie not Nuri.

**al-Megrahi, Abdelbaset Ali**

(Libyan convicted over Lockerbie who died in 2012.) We previously used the full name given in legal documents -**Abdelbaset ali Mohmed al-Megrahi**. However, for consistency and simplicity, stick to the above. On second reference it is just**Megrahi**.

**al-Motassadek, Mounir**

(Moroccan student convicted in Germany for being an accessory to the 9/11 attacks) (ie lower case 'al' followed by a hyphen). On second reference, just **Motassadek**.

**al-Muhajiroun**

(Radical British group also known as **Islam4UK**, banned since January 2010) ie lower case 'al', followed by a hyphen and capital 'M'. Make it clear in news stories that this group and others like it are regarded by the majority of British Muslims as unrepresentative - ideally, through a quote to that effect from a leading mainstream Muslim group such as **the Muslim Council of Britain**. Preachers associated with these groups should not be described simply as 'Muslim clerics', but as **radical**, **fringe**or similar.

**al-Qaeda**

ie lower case 'al', hyphen, and upper case 'Q'.

**Alternative**

Strictly speaking, **alternative** should be used only when the choice is limited to **two** objects or courses of action. If there are more than two, we should refer to an **option** or **choice**.

**AM**

ie both caps, no gap. Stands for **Assembly Member** (plural: **AMs**). But members of the assembly in Belfast are **MLAs** (members of the legislative assembly).

**Ambassador**

'To' a country, or 'in' a city (eg The British ambassador**to France**or The German ambassador **in Paris**). Always lower case.

**America**

should **not** be used as a synonym for the United States on first reference unless it is clear from the context that is what is being referred to. For brevity, US is OK (eg: **The US president is to visit Belfast; Police throughout the US are on high alert**).

NB: Do not refer to 'North America' unless you specifically mean the continent of North America, which includes Canada, Mexico and Greenland.

**American spellings**

American spellings should not be used for job titles (eg 'US Defence Secretary Robert Jones', rather than 'Defense Secretary'). However, they are retained for the official names of organisations, buildings etc (eg US Department of Defense, Lincoln Center, World Trade Center, World Health Organization).

**Americanisms**

Take care not to copy and paste them from agency copy. We say:**meet** (not 'meet with'), **consult** (not 'consult with'), **talk to** (not 'talk with'), **protest against a decision** (not 'protest a decision'), **appeal against a verdict** (not 'appeal a verdict'). We say **car** rather than 'automobile', **town centre** rather than 'downtown', **shopping centre** rather than 'shopping mall', **dustbin** rather than 'trash can', **lorry driver** rather than 'trucker', **producer** rather than 'showrunner', **mortuary** rather than 'morgue', **power cut** rather than 'outage'. Do not use **ouster**. We tend **not**to convert nouns into verbs (avoid 'to hospitalise', 'to scapegoat', 'to rubbish', 'to debut'). Our sports teams do not 'post' a total (eg of runs) - they **score** it. News agencies might report that protesters have been throwing rocks - we would use **stones**. Beware words that have different meanings for US and UK audiences eg: 'slated', 'suspenders', 'pants' etc.

**America's Cup**

ie apostrophe **before** the 's'. Initial caps.

**Amid**

And **not** 'amidst'.

**Amok**

We say '**run amok'** - rather than 'run amuck'.

**Among**

And**not '**amongst'.

**Ampersands**

If an organisation uses one then so do we (eg **P&O**). We also use one in matchplay golf scores (eg **Faldo beat Woods, 3&2**), and in **R&B**as an abbreviation for rhythm and blues.

**Annex/annexe**

'annex' is the verb. The noun is 'annexe'.

**Antenna**

The plural is **antennae** for an insect's feelers, **antennas** for aerials.

**Anthrax**

is a bacterium, not a virus.

**Anticipate**

is not synonymous with 'expect'. It means to take action, because of something you expect to happen eg **'The goalkeeper anticipated the shot by coming off his line.'**

**Any more**

Is our preferred version, rather than**anymore**.

**Apostrophes**

indicate either possession (eg: **the children's nanny**, **the emperor's new clothes**, **journalists' pay**) or the omission of one or more letters (eg: **It's a lovely day today**; **Life's a bitch**; **Who's been sleeping in my bed?**)

There is **no** apostrophe in the possessive 'its' (eg: **Virtue is its own reward**).

Some common abbreviations do **not** require apostrophes (eg: **phone**, **plane**, **flu**).

Dates do not require apostrophes (eg: **1900s**) - **unless** the century is omitted (eg: **the England squad of '66**).

Neither are apostrophes generally needed for plurals (eg: **MPs**, **MBEs**), but they are for the pluralisation of letters of the alphabet (eg: **Our task now is to dot the i's and cross the t's**).

For names, use the possessive **'s** whenever possible - eg: **Burns's**, **Jones’s**, **Charles's**, **James's**, **Dickens's**, **Phillips's**. But be guided by how the last syllable of the name is pronounced - eg: **Jesus'**, **Bridges'**, **Moses'**, **Hodges'**, **Griffiths'**, **Walters’** - also **Wales'**.

There **should** be an apostrophe before the word 'time' in sentences such as **The game will be played in two weeks' time**or**They stop work in one hour's time**.

The bank (**Lloyds TSB**) has no apostrophe, but the insurance underwriter and the register of shipping (**Lloyd's**) does.

**Lord's** cricket ground has an apostrophe before the 's'.**Sadler's Wells**theatre in London has an apostrophe before the 's'.

The football ground in Newcastle is **St James' Park**and in Exeter it is**St James Park**. The open space in London is **St James's Park**(also**St James's Palace**).

**Queen's College**in Oxford has an apostrophe **before**the 's'. **Queens' College**in Cambridge has it **after**.

**Earls Court**hasno apostrophe for either the building or the area. (The confusing reality is that the building has never had an apostrophe - while the area is likewise written **without** one by the Ordnance Survey, but **with** one by both London Transport and the local council.)

The church in Langham Place, London - **All Souls'**- has an apostrophe. The college in Oxford is **All Souls**.

**Appraise/apprise**

You 'appraise' something when you put a value on it. You 'apprise' someone of something when you inform them about it.

**Arabic names**

Names beginning with al- such as Bashar al-Assad lose the prefix on second mention - ie Mr Assad.If it's a place name, no need for the al- at all.

Do not use an apostrophe in an Arabic name. Examples: Baath, Shia.

For the founder of [Islam](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/religion/reporting-islam), our style is the **Prophet Muhammad**. Second reference: **Muhammad** or **the Prophet**. For the spelling of individual Muslims named after him: there is no simple rule, because the spelling Muhammad/Mohamed/Mohammad) varies from country to country. But in the Arab world, where Arabic script rules, we should standardise the name as **Muhammad**.

**Bin or bin: Osama Bin Laden** has a capital 'B' because the Bin Laden is in this case a family name. Bin can also mean 'son of'. In such cases we should write **Abdullah bin Hussein** ie with lower-case 'b'.

**Abu:**means 'father of'. We **do not** follow the practice of some news agencies in using a hyphen - eg: 'Abu-Mazen'.

**Some common men's names:**

Ahmad

Ali

Abdullah

Ibrahim

Mahmoud

Yasser

Yousef

**Our preferred spelling of cities/towns often in the news:**

Amara

Baghdad - (**not** Bagdad)

Baquba

Basra

Dahuk

Diwaniya

East Jerusalem (**not** Arab East Jerusalem)

Falluja

Hilla

Irbil

Karbala

Khan Younis

Medina

Mosul

Nad Ali

Qalqilya

Rafah

Sharm el-Sheikh

Sulaymaniyah

Tehran (**not** Teheran)

Tulkarm

**Aran/Arran**

Aran sweaters are traditionally associated with the Aran Islands, off the west coast of Ireland. They have nothing to do with the Isle of Arran in the Firth of Clyde.

[**Archbishops/archbishops**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/religion/reporting-the-church-of-england)

Capitals are always used with the full title, here or abroad (eg **Archbishop of Canterbury**, **Archbishop of York, Archbishop of Cape Town**), whether or not it is accompanied by the name of the incumbent. If the place name is not used at second reference, you can write simply **the archbishop**.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is the **Primate of All England**

The Archbishop of York is the **Primate of England**

The Archbishop of Armagh is the **Primate of All Ireland**

The Archbishop of Dublin is the **Primate of Ireland**

The Archbishop of Westminster can be referred to as **the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales**.

**Area**

Adjectival phrases defining an area should include hyphens in both metric and imperial measures. Always mention both; the context will determine which comes first: eg **The French fishermen denied reports that they had been operating inside the X-sq-km (Y-sq-mile) zone**(note: there is no 's' on nouns used adjectivally). Elsewhere, there is no need for hyphens eg **The UK government is calling for a ban on fishing within a zone of X sq miles (Y sq km)**.

Abbreviations should be used throughout, even at first reference. Never write 'square kilometres', but always **sq km**. There is no acceptable abbreviation for 'miles', so write **sq miles**(and, adjectivally, **sq-mile**). Note that the abbreviation **km** should never have an 's'.

**Argentina**

and **not** 'The Argentine'. Its people are **Argentines** (**not** 'Argentinians'). The adjective is also **Argentine**.

[**Army/army**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/military/british-army-size-and-structure)

The correct title for the UK army is simply **the Army** (ie initial cap). But if there is a need to distinguish it from other armies it should be lower case - eg: **The government is asking the Army to help fight foot-and-mouth disease**, but**The British army is taking supplies to the earthquake zone**.

Lower case, also, if you are using it adjectivally - eg: **Rain has thwarted army efforts to deliver food**.

Note that **armed forces** is lower case.

Foreign armies generally take lower case, but **the US Army** is the correct title and so takes cap 'A'.

[**Ranks**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/military/miltary-ranks)

Most army ranks can and should be abbreviated even at first reference - see list below. Listed separately are those abbreviations to be used only at second reference - after the rank has been spelt out in full at first mention. A third category lists those ranks that we do not abbreviate, even at second reference. But ranks should be spelt out in full (lower case) when they are used without reference to a specific name - eg: **The major general attended the meeting**.

**Abbreviations which can be used at first reference:**

* General - **Gen**
* Lieutenant General - **Lt Gen**(later, just**Gen**)
* Major General - **Maj Gen**(later, just**Gen**)
* Brigadier - **Brig**
* Brigadier General - **Brig Gen**(later, just**Gen**)**-**this is not a rank in the British army
* Colonel - **Col**
* Lieutenant Colonel - **Lt Col**(later, just **Col**)
* Major - **Maj**
* Captain - **Capt**
* Lieutenant -**Lt**
* 2nd Lieutenant - **2nd Lt**
* Staff Sergeant -**Staff Sgt**
* Colour Sergeant - **Colour Sgt**
* Sergeant - **Sgt**(Serjeant -**Sjt**if a member of The Rifles)
* Corporal - **Cpl**
* Lance Corporal - **L/Cpl**
* Private - **Pte**
* Regimental Sergeant Major - **RSM**
* Warrant Officer - **WO**
* L/Cpl of Horse -**L/CoH**
* Field Marshal
* Bombardier

**Corps**

Both the US and UK armies are divided into **corps** - which should be capped up when you are giving a name - eg: **The Royal Corps of Signals**. Any preceding number should be expressed as a Roman numeral - eg: **III Corps**. A corps is led by a lieutenant general - written as**Lt Gen**at first referencewhen accompanied by the name. If the full title is**Lt Gen Sir John Smith**, then the correct form at second reference is**Gen Smith**.

**Divisions**

Army corps are divided into **divisions**. Capped up when you are giving a name - eg: **1st Armoured Division**; lower case if the reference is non-specific - eg: **Two divisions of troops will take control of the area**. A division is under the command of a major general (which you would spell out only if there is no name attached - eg: **A division is led by a** **major general**. As a rank, the title is written **Maj Gen**, even at first reference.

**Regiments/Brigades**

Divisions are commonly divided into **regiments or brigades**. Lower case if the reference is non-specific; capped up when you are giving a name - eg: **The Household Cavalry Regiment**;**The Parachute Regiment**; **7th Armoured Brigade**; **101st Logistics Brigade**. A preceding ordinal number is**not** expressed as a word.

**Battalions**

Regiments are divided into **battalions**. The third battalion of the Parachute Regiment is best written as **3 Para**- ie contrary to our usual rule, the cardinal number is expressed as a digit, whatever it is (the form '3rd Bn' should be avoided, given that we sometimes abbreviate 'billion' to 'bn'). The officer commanding a battalion is a lieutenant colonel: **Lt Col** when accompanied by a name (**Col** at second reference), but spelt out when no name is attached.

**Small units**

The correct terms with reference to **tanks and armour** are **regiment/ squadron/ troop**with reference to **the Infantry**, they are **battalion/ company/ platoon/ section**; and withreference of the**Artillery**, they are **regiment**/ **battery**/ **troop**/ **section**.

A **troop** is a group of soldiers, normally about 30. Do **not** refer to individuals as troops - to say: 'Five troops have been killed in Afghanistan' would be wrong. But you can use the term in a generic sense eg: **The UK has sent more troops to Helmand province**.

**Arrest/detain**

are **not** synonymous. The word 'arrest' is a legal term, where someone has formally been taken into custody - usually the first step towards being charged. 'Detain' can often mean little more than remove from the streets (and release some time later). Sometimes, it is more appropriate to say **held** or **questioned**.

**Around**

Do **not** use to mean 'approximately' - the best substitute is usually **about**.

Is not synonymous with 'round' - eg: **It may drive you round the bend if you work around the clock**.

**Art movements**

In general, these should be lower case except where it's a wider cultural movement, as in **Renaissance** or **Romanticism**; named after a person or place - **Bauhaus** and **pre-Raphaelite**; or there might be confusion with another usage, as in **Arts** and **Crafts**.

**Asbo**

ie follows our usual rule of upper and lower case for pronounced acronyms. It stands for Anti-social Behaviour Order.

**Ashkenazi**

(Jewish people of European descent) ie with upper case 'A'.

**Assassinate**

Use only for the killing of political and religious leaders. Lesser mortals are killed.

[**Assembly**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/devolution/what-is-devolution)

Political assemblies are lower case (**the Welsh assembly**, **the Stormont assembly**), except where the full title is given (eg: **the Northern Ireland Assembly**, **the National Assembly for Wales**). Assembly members in Wales are **AMs**. In Belfast, they are **MLAs**(members of the legislative assembly).

**Assisted suicide**

Be careful to ensure this is really what you mean - ie 'encouraging or assisting the suicide of another', as the revised Suicide Act of 1961 has it. This is **not** the same thing as killing someone who cannot do it for themselves - sometimes described as a **so-called mercy killing**. (This is an emotive phrase which should be used sparingly.)

**Asteroid**

is a large space rock (probably more than 100 metres across - smaller ones are called **meteoroids**). The light phenomenon when an asteroid (or meteoroid) enters the Earth's atmosphere is called a **meteor**. The lump of rock that hits the Earth's surface is called a **meteorite**.

**Asylum seeker**

ie no hyphen. Never refer to 'bogus asylum seekers' unless you are quoting someone.

**At-a-glance**

hyphenated when used to headline a summary of key points (eg: **Budget at-a-glance**), with initial upper case if you choose to introduce it with a colon (eg: **Queen's Speech: At-a-glance**). Hyphenated, too, if used adjectivally (eg: **An at-a-glance guide to the United Nations**). In an ordinary news story, drop the hyphens (eg: **He told the court he had taken in the murder scene at a glance**).

**Athletics**

The first reference to a time should spell it out in full, following our usual convention with numbers below 10 eg: **one hour two minutes 23.34 seconds**(ie no commas between the units). After that, switch to a more compact style (eg: **1:03:25.67**).

Our numbers convention is ignored in events where times below 10 seconds are regularly achieved, such as the 100m. In such cases: all numbers are written as digits, and the word 'seconds' need not be used throughout. Eg: **X took gold with a time of 9.93 seconds. In second place was Y, on 9.94. And the bronze medal went to Z, on 9.96**.

Note that portions of seconds are expressed as decimals, rather than being written out as fractions. But you **can**refer to 'hundredths' in the context of times of under a second - eg: **They were separated by three hundredths of a second**(and **not** '0.03 seconds').

**ATM**

means automated teller machine - mainly a US term. It is acceptable only in headlines or direct quotes. Otherwise, use **cash machine** (but **not** 'cash point' which is a trademark). **Hole in the wall** is also a trademark and should be used only in connection with Barclays machines.

**Attorney**

is most commonly a US term. Substitute **lawyer** - or if you want to be more specific in the UK, **barrister** or **solicitor**.

**Attorney General/attorney general**

ie (both here and in the US) no hyphen. Capped up if the name of the individual follows. Lower case without the name.

**Audience**

Strictly, one has 'an audience **of** the Queen', which most people will think is a typo. To avoid the problem, say eg: **The prime minister went to see the Queen.**

**Aung San Suu Kyi**

is leader of the ruling National League for Democracy in Myanmar. The name is always spelt out in full in her own language, as any abbreviation would be regarded as impolite. We should generally spell out her name in full, but can follow the common practice of using 'Suu Kyi' for headlines and 'Ms Suu Kyi' in text where this is required for space reasons.

**Australia and New Zealand**

If you want to use the term, our style is **down under**: ie two words, both lower case.

**Australian Labor Party**

ie we use its own spelling, without a 'u'.

**Awards**

**CBE**,**OBE**and**MBE** stand for Commander, Officer and Member of the Order of the British Empire. So people do not 'get' an **MBE** etc: they are **appointed**, or they can **become a CBE** etc. Medals such as the British Empire Medal and George Medal are **conferred**. A person can be **made** a peer, a baronet or a knight.

**Ayatollah**

(highest Shia religious authority) ie upper case 'A' if used with name, and retain as title on subsequent references - eg: the ayatollah.

**Ayman al-Zawahiri**

(Leader of al-Qaeda). He is **Zawahiri** (no 'Mr') at second reference and in headlines.

**Azerbaijan**

Former Soviet republic, now independent. The inhabitants are **Azerbaijanis** - some of whom, but not all, are **Azeris**.

**BA**

(for **British Airways**) ie both caps. It should be used only after a first reference where the title is given in full. The same abbreviation is used for **Bachelor of Arts**.

**Baa-Baas**

(rugby union) ie two words, both capped, hyphenated, no apostrophe. Acceptable abbreviation - but only after a first reference has spelled out **The Barbarians**.

**Baath**

(ruling party in Syria - and formerly in the late Saddam Hussein's Iraq) ie **without** an internal apostrophe.

**babies/toddlers**

A child up to 12 months can be described as a baby. A toddler is generally aged one or two.

[**Backbench**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/uk-politics/reporting-uk-politics)

ie one word (eg **backbench unrest**,**backbencher**). But **two** words for **back benches**.

**Bacteria**

is a plural - the singular is bacterium. They cause food poisoning, cholera, typhoid etc, and may be treated with antibiotics. Not to be confused with viruses, which are smaller organisms - not susceptible to antibiotics - which cause influenza, measles, mumps, chicken pox, Aids etc.

**Bad news**

is, like 'good news', a term **never** to be used unqualified, because it is subjective. A rise in interest rates is bad news for house-buyers, but good news for savers. Just say what has happened - and let the punters decide.

**BAE Systems**

And not 'BAe' (it is the former British Aerospace).

**Bail/bale**

Use **bail**for the temporary release of someone awaiting trial. To **bail out**is to help a company or person with financial problems (noun: **bailout**). Use **bale out** for removing water from a boat, or jumping out of a plane.

[**Balance of payments**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/business-and-economy/reporting-economy)

is not the same as the trade balance, which involves only visible imports and exports. The balance of payments includes so-called invisibles: earnings from the City, international insurance, tourism etc.

**Ban Ki-moon**

(former UN Secretary General) ie upper case 'B' and 'K', but lower case 'm' in **Ki-moon** hyphenated. **Mr Ban** at second reference. This style applies to all Korean names.

**Bank holiday**

ie lower case, unless a specific one (eg: **the Spring Bank Holiday**). Note that some bank holidays do not apply across the whole of the UK.

[**Bank of England**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/business-and-economy/reporting-economy)

Should be spelled out at first reference, but can be trimmed later to **BoE**. NB: interest rates are set by the Bank's **Monetary Policy Committee** (which can be abbreviated at second reference to **MPC**).

**Bankruptcy**

A UK company should never be described as 'going bankrupt' since, under UK law, this can only happen to individuals (who **file a petition for bankruptcy**). The technical situation for a company in financial crisis is that it faces the possibility of a Company Voluntary Arrangement (CVA), administration, receivership or winding-up. Use the proper technical description in the top four pars (eg: **Smith Scaffolding has gone into administration**). Elsewhere, it is acceptable to say simply that a company has collapsed or gone bust.

Outside the UK, the term bankruptcy can be valid. In the US, for example, companies can go bankrupt or enter bankruptcy protection. The best-known form of bankruptcy protection is called 'Chapter 11', which allows a company to continue to operate while all claims from debtors or the company are put on hold. If using the term, explain what Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection means.

**Bar, the**

(barristers) ie with capital 'B'.

**Barclays Bank**

ie no apostrophe.

**Basel**

(city in Switzerland) ie **not** 'Basle'. Our style conforms to the rules on banking supervision and the football team.

**BBC**

Say **the BBC** in references to the organisation that makes announcements, decisions and programmes (eg **The BBC is to devote more money to sports coverage**). For news-related items, say eg **BBC News understands that...** or **Our correspondent has learned...** For news online, say **the BBC News website**(ie website, lower case).

Do **not** start your first sentence with 'The BBC...' The aim should be to convey the news - not to wave the BBC flag. Always check BBC quotes from other sources with the BBC press office.

**BBC networks**

Stick with the official titles for BBC networks, even when this involves extra characters.

For the TV networks, say: **BBC One**,**BBC Two**,**BBC Three**,**BBC Four**,**CBeebies**,**CBBC, BBC News channel**,**BBC Parliament**.

Write **BBC Radio 1**,**BBC Radio 2**,**BBC Radio 3**,**BBC Radio 4**,**BBC Radio 4 Extra**,**BBC Radio 5 live** and **BBC Radio 5 live sports extra**.

The word 'Radio' does not feature in either **BBC 6 Music** or **1Xtra** - which is also without a 'BBC' label. Elsewhere: **BBC Asian Network**,**BBC World Service**.

Note that some BBC local radio stations do not have the word 'Radio' in their title (eg **BBC Essex**).

Non-BBC TV channels include **Sky One**,**ITV**,**ITV2**,**ITV3**,**ITV4**and**Channel 4**.

**Channel 5**, which for a time was known as Five, has reverted to its original name.

**BC**

(before Christ) ie unpunctuated. It goes after the year - eg: **100BC,**with no gap.

**Beg the question**

Often misused. The dictionary definition is 'to assume in an argument the truth of something which is part of what is to be proved'. Best avoided.

**Belarus**

formerly part of the Soviet Union as Byelorussia; now independent. Adjective, **Belarusian**.

**Benelux**

comprises **Belgium**, **the Netherlands** and **Luxembourg**.

**Best-seller, best-selling**ie with hyphens.

**Between**

is correctly used when only two parties are involved (eg: **talks between Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn**). If there are more than two parties, use 'among' (eg: **talks among cabinet ministers**).

**Beverley/Beverly Hills**

The town in Yorkshire is **Beverley** with an 'e' before the 'y'. There is no third 'e' in California's **Beverly Hills**.

**Biannual/biennial**

These are often confused: **biannual** means twice a year; **biennial** means every two years. (Plants that complete their lifecycle in two years are biennials.) **Best to avoid both**.

**Bible/bible**

The original gets an initial cap. Otherwise, lower case (eg: The footballer's bible).

**Bid**

May serve as substitute for 'attempt', but should primarily be used to mean 'financial bid', as in auctions, company takeovers and the football transfer market - as well as campaigns to stage the Olympics, and similar events.

**Big Society**

Our style is to cap up this government initiative - no quote marks.

**Bill/bill**

In a parliamentary context, use caps for the full title (eg: the **Health Bill**). Otherwise, lower case (eg: **Pressure is growing for a new education bill**).

**Billion**

Means **one thousand million**. Spell the word out, except in headlines, or when using it with currencies (eg: **£3bn**).

**Bin Laden**

Former al-Qaeda leader who died in 2011. Always with a capital 'B'. At first mention, **Osama Bin Laden**. Afterwards, **Bin Laden** (never Mr). He was **Saudi-born**, but was not 'a Saudi citizen', as he was stripped of his citizenship.

**Biro**

Do **not** use generically - it is a trademark. Say: **ballpoint pen**.

**Bishops**

Bishops (both Anglican and Roman Catholic) are **consecrated** (whereas priests are **ordained**, and deacons **made**). At first reference, say eg **The Bishop of St Albans, the Right Reverend John Smith** or, if he has a doctorate, **The Bishop of St Albans, Dr John Smith**. Afterwards, **Bishop Smith**or **Dr Smith**. If in doubt, check in Crockford's Clerical Dictionary for Anglicans; via the diocesan website; or the Catholic Media Office for Roman Catholics.

**Bits/bytes**

There are eight bits in a byte. Historically, memory (hard drives, file sizes etc) is measured in bytes - kilobytes (kB), megabytes (MB), gigabytes (GB), terabytes (TB). However, data rates/speeds or capacities of fibres and networks are quoted in bits (megabits per second, Mbps) eg: **Bloggsnet is offering broadband at 20Mbps and a contract comes with a free 16GB USB stick.**

**Black**

Use the term **black people** rather than 'blacks'.

But the colour of someone's skin should be mentioned only when it is relevant.

The term 'black' should not normally be used to include Asians. Refer to **black and Asian people** or **Asian, African and Caribbean people**. Avoid 'non-whites'.

The word 'coloured' is inappropriate in a racial context, except with reference to apartheid South Africa, where the term **Coloured** (ie initial cap) meant 'mixed race'. Take care, too, with the word 'immigrant', which is often wrongly used to describe people who were born in the UK.

Many people in Britain of African and Caribbean origin prefer to be called **black British**.

**black box**

Although they tend to be orange, flight recorders are widely known and described as 'black boxes'. But we should clarify what it is at first reference - **Divers are searching for the ‘black box’ flight recorder** - and use quotes in headlines. Be aware there are two recorders – a flight data recorder and a cockpit voice recorder – that may be together or in separate containers.

**Black, in the**

Avoid this phrase. It means 'in profit' for a UK audience, but exactly the opposite for some other English speakers.

**Blast**

Should not be used in sentences such as: 'The prime minister has blasted his own supporters.' Say: **criticised**or **condemned**.

**Blind**

Write about **blind people** - not 'the blind'.

**Blond/blonde**

Use **blond** of a man, and **blonde** of a woman.

**Boat Race, the**

ie initial caps.

**Bogus**

The phrase 'bogus asylum seeker' is judgemental and should not be used except in a quote eg **The government spokesman said the number of 'bogus' asylum seekers had doubled.**

**Bomb warning/hoax**

Should not normally be reported - unless there is a strong news angle (eg: significant disruption).

**Book titles**

Use initial caps, with short 'link' words in lower case: eg: **Far from the Madding Crowd**. No italics or quotation marks.

**Boots**

(the chemists) ie no apostrophe.

**Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Formerly part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina emerged in its present form after the end of the Bosnian war in 1995. Spell it with a hyphen (rather than the official title, which is 'Bosnia and Herzegovina') and with a '**z**' in **Herzegovina** rather than a 'c'.

Citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina should be referred to as Bosnians, unless their ethnicity or religion is of particular relevance.

The Dayton accords formalised the division of the country into two parts - the Bosnian Serb republic (Republika Srpska) and the Bosniak-Croat Federation. Most Bosniaks are Muslims.

When referring to these groups separately, they should be called Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims).

In stories specifically about Bosniaks, it may be useful to include this line of background: 'The Bosniak people, most of whom are Muslims, are descended from Bosnian Slavs who adopted Islam under Ottoman Turkish rule in the Middle Ages.'

It is **wrong** to call the Bosnian conflict a 'civil' war, because neighbouring countries were involved. Stick to '**war**' or '**conflict**'.

**Bottom line**

is a cliché. Do not use it unless you are quoting someone, or referring literally to the bottom line of a company balance sheet.

**Bourse**

is a French word, favoured by some agencies. Use the English:**stock market**or **stock exchange**.

**Brackets, square**

Use these, not round brackets, for interpolations within quotes: eg: **Reacting to the news, Mr Smith said: 'He [President Brown] must not back down.'**

**Brands Hatch**

ie it has no apostrophe.

**Britain**

(aka**Great Britain**) is made up of England, Scotland and Wales; **the United** **Kingdom** also includes Northern Ireland. **The British Isles** also include the Republic of Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. However, it is a term that can be frowned on in Ireland, so if using it ensure it is employed correctly.

**British** means 'belonging or relating to Great Britain'.

**British law**

There is no such thing. England and Wales have a separate legal system from Scotland. Northern Ireland's system is similar to England and Wales.

**BSE**

It stands for **bovine spongiform encephalopathy**. The alternative, **mad** **cow disease**, should be in quotation marks at first reference.

**BTec**

(a vocational qualification, available at various levels, from the equivalent of GCSEs to professional diplomas.) ie with both the 'B' and the 'T' capped up. Plural is **BTecs**.

**Budget/budget**

Use an initial cap for the Westminster extravaganza. Otherwise, lower case (**Mr Brown's Budget**; **Mr Brown's pre-Budget report**; **the Australian budget**).

**Bullet points**

If, for example, someone has three objections to a pay deal, then use bullet points to summarise them, and then explain in more detail. They are easier to read on screen than dense paragraphs of text.

If the items in a bullet point list are complete sentences in themselves, then each should start with a capital letter, and **in general** end with **no** punctuation: eg:

**There is more than one way to cook potatoes.**

* **You can roast them in the oven**
* **You can mash them with milk and butter**
* **You can fry them in a pan**

If the items are not complete sentences, they should start with a lower case letter, and again omit punctuation at the end: eg:

**If you want to cook potatoes, you can**

* **roast them in the oven**
* **mash them with milk and butter**
* **fry them in a pan**

Single-word lists of nouns should also start with a lower case letter: eg:

**Teachers think they are getting a raw deal in three areas:**

* **pay**
* **hours**
* **pensions**

The exception on punctuation is that we **do** include a question mark after each item if that is what logic would suggest: eg:

**Is the first thing you think about in the morning**

* **your headache?**
* **your shower?**
* **your breakfast?**

This is also true with complete sentence lists. Eg:

**There are three questions you should ask yourself each morning:**

* **Why am I here?**
* **Who is this person?**
* **Where are my clothes?**

**Bullseye**

ie no apostrophe.

**Bundestag**

ie initial cap. We should make clear at first reference it is the lower house of the German parliament. Elections for the Bundestag are held every four years.

**Burka**

is our favoured spelling for this form of Islamic veil, which covers the entire face and body.

**Burma**

The BBC is gradually moving towards calling the country Myanmar. We should use Myanmar rather than Burma in headlines and summaries. Inside the body of our stories, preferably on first mention, we should include the wording ‘Myanmar, also known as Burma’. Further references should be to Myanmar. We should talk about the main commercial city as ‘Yangon, also known as Rangoon’, and thereafter Yangon.

**Businessmen**

Use only if they really are all men. Otherwise, say **business people**, **a business audience**, **business executives** etc.

**By-election**

ie no 'e' - and with a hyphen.

**by-law**

ie no 'e' - and with a hyphen.

**Bylines**

Should not be used on general news stories compiled from a variety of sources (agencies, correspondents' despatches etc). A byline should be reserved for original journalism.

Picture bylines should be used sparingly: for well-known BBC correspondents writing a substantial piece for us, or occasionally for a diary or a first-person piece.

The tag in the CPS production system will enable you to provide:

a) a **first line** beginning **By** (capped) and then giving the person's name.

b) a **second line** giving further information

Examples:

**By Zoe McGuire
BBC News, Birmingham**

**By Jonathan Garrod
BBC News Magazine**

**By Paula Harris
BBC News**

Specialist non-correspondents should be called **reporter**, not 'staff' or 'writer' etc (initial cap, then lower case) eg:

**By Kevin Robertson
Political reporter, BBC News**

**By Christine Peters
Health reporter, BBC News**

Refer to specialist BBC correspondents and editors as follows:

**By Peter Bywater
Political editor, BBC News**

**By Jane McGuire
Business editor, BBC News**

**By Mark Morgan
Transport correspondent, BBC News**

We should refer to (non-specialist) overseas BBC correspondents as belonging to 'BBC News' and give their location. So examples would be:

**By Simon Hargreaves**

**BBC News, Beirut**

**By Peter James**

**BBC News, Washington**

**By Melanie Buford**

**BBC News, Brussels**

Pieces of original journalism by non-staff should normally follow a similar pattern: ie the first line of a byline should consist of the name only eg:

**By Clive James**

If relevant, a job description or a location can be added as a second line eg:

**By Nicola Horlick**

**Investment fund manager**

However, it will sometimes be preferable with high-profile outside contributors to give further information not as a second line but as a more detailed standfirst, in bold eg: **Nicola Horlick has run a number of successful investment funds and earned the nickname Superwoman for having a high-flying career and bringing up five children.** If the expert has a rather lower profile, stick with the one-line job description at the top, and add a longer note **at the end** of the story. This should be written in italics (**not**bold).

We do not use correspondents' bylines with on-demand video and audio pages. The convention is to go with **The BBC's** as a label; Sport, where appropriate, say **BBC Sport's**.

**Bypass**

ie no 'e' - and no hyphen.

**Cabinet**

(grouping of senior ministers) ie lower case.

**Cabinet Office**

ie initial caps. Its ministers report directly to the prime minister*.*

**Cac 40**

(the main stock exchange index in Paris) ie initial cap and a space before the number.

**Caesarean**

ie upper case (and not ‘Caesarian’).

**Calcutta**

As of early 2015, our style is to use **Kolkata** for the Indian city. It may be helpful for readers if we use this construction once high up in the story: **People in the Indian city of Kolkata (Calcutta)...**

The England-Scotland rugby trophy is the **Calcutta Cup**.

**Calm but tense**

is a cliche. Best avoided.

**Camorra**

Naples-based mafia, separate from Sicilian-based Cosa Nostra. When talking about the Camorra, or any other mafia outside Sicily, we use lower case ‘m’ on mafia.

**Capital cities**

Take care; not every capital city is the obvious one:

Australia - **Canberra**, not Sydney or Melbourne.

Brazil - **Brasilia**, not Rio de Janeiro.

Burma - **Nay Pyi Taw**, not Rangoon

Ivory Coast - **Yamoussoukro**, not Abidjan.

The Netherlands - **Amsterdam**, not The Hague (which is the seat of government).

Nigeria - **Abuja**, not Lagos.

South Africa - **Pretoria**, not Cape Town (where parliament sits).

Switzerland - **Bern**, not Geneva.

Tanzania - **Dodoma**, not Dar es Salaam.

Do **not** say eg: ‘The Pope has arrived in the Syrian capital of Damascus.’ Drop the ‘of’ - and substitute a comma.

**Capitalisation**

A few titles are always capped up, whether you name the person or not (eg **the Queen**, **the Pope**,**Archbishop of XX**). But our style generally is to minimise the use of capital letters.

Political job titles have initial caps only when the title is next to the name, in whatever order. Thus:

**The Foreign Secretary, Harold Thomas, said...**

**US President James Tucker**

**Mrs Gordon, who has been prime minister since 2015...**

Any post mentioned without reference to the post-holder should be in lower case - e.g.

**The prime minister will be out of the country for several days.**

The same rule applies for former holders of political office (eg **The former President, James Tucker, is to make a political comeback. The former president said he wanted to spend less time with his family**).

Similarly, **Leader of the Opposition** is capped up only if accompanied by the name. Other opposition portfolios are always lower case, with or without the name (eg **The shadow chancellor, Brian Banker, was furious. There was jeering when the shadow chancellor left**).

Also use lower case for all jobs outside politics, with or without a name (eg **the director general of the BBC, Michael Graves, has praised** **the England cricket captain**), **except** that police and military titles accompanied by the name are always capped up (eg **Sgt Wilson is to receive an award for bravery**). The **UN secretary general**is capped when with a name; the **director of public prosecutions** is always lower case.

Governments are not capped up (eg **The Italian government has resigned**).

Use initial cap **Parliament** with reference **only** to (a) Westminster in any context, and (b) the Scottish and European Parliaments where you are giving the full title. Otherwise, lower case (eg **Mrs Gordon will face questions in Parliament**;**There is to be an emergency session of the Scottish Parliament**;**They say they will halt proceedings of parliament in Strasbourg**).

Similarly, **assembly** is capped only with the full title (eg: **The National Assembly for Wales is to move to a new home**;**The problems facing farmers will be discussed by the Welsh assembly**).

In general, government schemes and initiatives are capped – Northern Powerhouse, Big Society, National Minimum Wage – while benefits are lower case, such as universal credit and personal independence payment.

For place names: use upper case for recognised regions, and for vaguer political/geographical areas (eg **the Middle East**, **Western Europe**). Otherwise, lower case (**south-west France**, **east Lancashire**). Also lower case for **south Wales**, **north Wales**, **mid-Wales** etc.

For Latin names of plants, animals etc, use italics and cap the first word only (eg ***Corvus corone***).

**Captions (for pictures)**

Picture captions in news stories should be no longer than two lines, or one line for large pictures. There is **no** full stop at the end of a caption, other than in picture galleries. A caption is usually unnecessary with a map or a generic graphic.

The wording of the caption should follow the geography of the picture, from left to right (eg if Smith is on the left and Jones on the right, the caption should not say ‘Jones and Smith’). Use full names whenever possible.

A caption should be more than a literal description of the picture; it should add value (eg: **George Smith and Terry Jones: Long-time friends**).

For direct quotes, use a **colon** and **double** quotation marks (eg: **George Smith: “I’m lucky to be alive”**). Any colon in a caption, whether or not introducing a quote, must be followed by a capital letter (eg: **George Smith: A lucky man**).

To focus on one individual among several, use **brackets** rather than commas (eg: **Terry Jones (centre)** **was among friends**).If space is very short, you can abbreviate such labels to their initial letter only, capped up, ie **(C) (L) or (R)**.

**Cardiac arrest/heart attack**

These are not synonymous. **Cardiac arrest** is when the heart suddenly stops beating. A **heart attack** is when the blood flow to the heart is interrupted (otherwise known as a **myocardial infarction**). A **heart attack** can cause **cardiac arrest**.

**Carjack/carjacking**

The practice of hijacking an occupied car by threatening and/or abducting the driver, ie one word, no hyphen.

[**Catholic/catholic**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/religion/reporting-the-roman-catholic-church)

[**There is a glossary of terms here**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-11294877)**.**

Do not automatically equate ‘Catholic’ with ‘Roman Catholic’. There are Catholics who are Anglicans or members of other denominations not in communion with the See of Rome.

Always ‘Catholic’, ie with initial cap, in the religious context.

Lower case in the sense of ‘catholic taste’, or similar.

**Catseye**

**is** acceptable in a generic sense, even though it is a trademark.

**CBI**

The original title (Confederation of British Industry) is obsolete, as the word ‘industry’ no longer reflects its membership. It calls itself simply **the CBI**. It may be described as **the employers’ organisation** or **business lobby group**.

**CBC/CBS**

The initials**CBC**(all caps, no gaps) stand for **the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation**. Not to be confused with US television network **CBS** (again, all caps, no gaps).

**CCTV**

(closed-circuit television) ie all caps

**C. difficile**

Our preference for *Clostridium difficile* - capital ‘C’ with a full stop and a space followed by lower case ‘d’. **C. diff** is fine at second reference or in headlines.

**CD-Rom**

ie hyphenated, with upper case ‘R’.

**Ceasefire**

(as a noun) ie one word.

**Censor/censure**

To **censor** something (book, film etc) means to examine it and suppress any part deemed unacceptable. To **censure** means to express severe disapproval of, or formally reprimand.

**Central Asia**

ie initial caps.

**Central Europe**

ie initial caps. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia are correctly referred to as being in Central Europe.

**Centre**

Correct usage is to**centre on** - and not ‘to centre around’.

Avoid the US spelling (‘center’) - unless it is part of an official title (eg **the World Trade Center**). Second references not actually repeating the title should use UK spelling, but it’s preferable to avoid using both spellings in the same story.

**Centre-back, centre-half, centre-forward**

ie all **with** hyphens.

**Century/century**

Use upper case (and digits) when you are labelling a century with a number (eg: **20th Century**). Otherwise, lower case (eg: **The treasure had lain undiscovered for centuries**).

If you omit the century from a four-digit date, replace it with an apostrophe (eg: **the class of ’66**).

**CFC**

ie all caps, no gaps (it stands for chlorofluorocarbon).

**Chair**

Do not describe someone as being the ‘chair’ of a meeting. Rewrite the sentence to say eg: **Mr Jones, in the chair** or **The meeting, chaired by Mrs Smith**. Alternatively, and where appropriate, use **chairman or chairwoman**.

**Challenger 2**

(The British army’s main battle tank) - and**not ‘Challenger II’**.

**Champions League**

(European football) ie initial caps - and **no**apostrophe.

**Channel Tunnel**

ie both words capped. At second reference, just **the tunnel**.But (even in headlines) **never** ‘Chunnel’.

**Charge**

should **not** be used as a synonym for ‘allege’ (as in, eg: ‘Princess Jane charged that she had been victimised by the media’).

**Charles, Prince**

At first reference, **the Prince of Wales**. Initial caps if referred to as **Prince Charles**,but lower case if he is just **the prince**.

**Cheap**

Do not say ‘The arrival of summer brings cheap prices for vegetables’. Prices cannot be ‘cheap’ - the right word here is **low**. You could, of course, say **The arrival of summer brings cheap vegetables**.

**Chechnya**

is an autonomous republic **within** Russia. Adjective, **Chechen**.

**Cheese**

Names of cheeses should be lower case unless they include a country: **The list includes camembert, Canadian cheddar, brie, wensleydale and Danish blue.**

**Chennai**

As of November 2011, our style is to use **Chennai**rather than Madras, but we should include the formulation **Chennai (Madras)** once high up in the body of the story.

**ChildLine**

ie we follow the charity’s own convention of including a rogue capital in the middle.

**Child pornography**

The terms **child pornography** or **child porn** used on their own do not necessarily convey the reality of such material, so we should try to use other language such as **'images that show child sex abuse'** or **'indecent images of children'** to make this clear. Where possible we should avoid the term **'child porn'**, though at times it may be the best way to convey meaning in a short headline. In any case, if either term is used in headlines or summaries, the text should spell out the nature of such material. See also **Paedophile**.

**Child Trust Fund**

is the government’s 2003 Budget scheme to provide cash for every newborn child. Do not call it a ‘Baby Bond’ - that phrase is a trademark.

**Chinese names**

The family name comes first - so **Hu Jintao** becomes **Mr Hu** at second reference.

**Chip-and-pin**

ie hyphenated as an adjective or noun. Note Pin (number) is capped up when on its own.

**Chogm**

(Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) ie lower case, because it is pronounced as a word. But best avoided*.*

**Christian**

ie initial cap.

Do not use ‘Christian name’ when you mean ‘first name’.

**Christie’s**

ie with an apostrophe before the ‘s’.

**Christmas**

Spell in full - do **not**use ‘Xmas’, even for headlines. And remember that not all Christians celebrate Christmas on 25 December. The Eastern Orthodox Churches mark the festival on 7 January.

**Church/church**

Lower case for the actual buildings; otherwise **Church**.

No human being should be referred to as ‘Head of the Church’. The Queen is the Supreme Governor of the Church of England. The Pope is the Supreme Pontiff, Chief Pastor or leader of the Roman Catholic Church; he should **not**be referred to as the ‘Holy Father’ (unless you are quoting somebody).

[**Church of England**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/religion/reporting-the-church-of-england)

is not the only Anglican body in the British Isles. There is also **the** **Church in Wales**, as well as **the** **Episcopal Church in Scotland**, and **the Church of Ireland.**

The governing body of the Church of England is the **general synod**.

**Church titles (Anglican)**

Archbishops are **the Most Reverend**, but we usually say eg: **the Archbishop of York** or **Dr South**. Later references can be either to **the archbishop** (lower case) or, again,to**Dr South**.

Bishops are**the Right Reverend**, or **the Rt Rev** if space is short eg: **The Right Reverend Nigel North is beginning his duties as Bishop of Manchester**. Afterwards, eg: **Bishop Norton** or **the bishop**.

Archdeacons are **the Venerable** - or **the Ven** if space is short. Later references: **the archdeacon** or, eg: **Archdeacon West**.

Vicars/rectors are eg**the Reverend Margaret Simmonds**- or**the Rev Margaret Simmonds**if space is short. After first mention, you can say just **Ms/Mrs Simmonds** (or **Dr Simmonds** if she has a doctorate).

Some Anglicans prefer ‘**Father**’ to ‘Mr’; the safe rule is to follow local practice. Under no circumstance should you say ‘Reverend Smith’, ‘the Reverend Smith’, ‘the Reverend Mr Smith’, or just ‘the Reverend’.

Deans/provosts are **the Very Reverend**or **the Very Rev**. At later reference eg: **Dean Johnston**.

Canons are eg **Canon Dennis Moore**. Later **Canon Moore** or **the canon**.

**Church Titles (RC Church)**

The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales is headed by the Archbishop of Westminster, initially referred to with full title and name eg: **The Archbishop of Westminster, Jeremy Montague.**Afterwards:**Archbishop Montague**or**the archbishop**.

Other archbishops are eg: **the Most Reverend John Jones**.

Bishops are**the Right Reverend**, which may be abbreviated to **the Rt Rev.**

Abbots are eg: **Abbot Fred Sales**. Later, **Abbot Sales**or **the abbot**.

Provosts are eg: **Provost John Smith**. Later: **Provost Smith** or **the provost**.

Canons are eg: **Canon Michael Harris**. Later: **Canon Harris**or **the canon**.

Priests are eg: **The Reverend Eric Cook**, or **Father Eric Cook**. At later reference, **Father Cook** or **Fr** **Cook**.

**CIS**

(Commonwealth of Independent States) ie all caps, no gaps. Provides a framework for military and foreign policy and economic co-operation between various states, including Russia and Ukraine.

**Citizens Advice**

ie initial caps and no apostrophe. Changed its name in 2015 from Citizens’ Advice Bureau.

**City/city**

Capped only when used to mean the London financial centre.

**Civil Aviation Authority**

ie initial caps - and all caps, no gaps if abbreviated to **CAA**.

Its role is to consider and, if necessary, implement any follow-up action arising from air crash investigations by the Department for Transport’s Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB).

**CJD**

ie all caps, no gaps (stands for Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease). Note that **variant CJD** should be written out in text, but **vCJD** is acceptable in a headline.

**Claim, to**

We should not use it with expressions of alleged fact (eg: The Russians claim 80 people were killed), because it suggests disbelief. **Say** is preferable.

But it **is**acceptable with expressions of opinion (eg: **Mr Smith claimed the government was out of control**).

**Claim responsibility**

(as for bombings) Avoid this expression. Just say eg: **The Real IRA says it planted Saturday’s bomb.**

**Clampdown/to clamp down**

ie no hyphen in the noun; separate words for the verb.

**Clash**

Beware of devaluing the word through overuse. And take care when using ‘clash’ as a verb. To say: ‘The protesters clashed with police’ implies the protesters were the instigators - which may not have been the case.

**Class A drugs**

ie with a cap ‘C’ and ‘A’, ‘B’ etc

**Clear-cut**

ie hyphenated.

**Cliches**

are to be avoided, as they say, ‘like the plague’. Try not to use: ‘got under way’; ‘a question mark hangs over’; ‘quiet but tense’; ‘rushed to hospital’; ‘daring escape’; ‘dawn raid’; ‘emotional appeal’; ‘top secret’; ‘psychologically important moment’; ‘moving the goalposts’; ‘level playing field’; ‘bottom line’; ‘only time will tell’ etc.

**Cloning**

Do not use phrases such as ‘embryo cloning’ or ‘baby cloning’. It is not the baby or the embryo that is being cloned - rather, it is the adult human or the genetic material from an adult that is cloned to produce a baby or embryo.

**coastguard**

Our preference is one word, but we should follow names of specific bodies, such as the US Coast Guard.

**Coca-Cola**

ie with a hyphen - and both words capped.

**Cold War**

ie initial caps.

**Collective Nouns**

denote groups (eg: group, crew etc). Our policy is that they should take singular verbs as much as possible. Consistency is important. Do not say eg: ‘The jury is considering its verdict. They will spend the night in a hotel.’ However, **couple** and **pair** can sound odd in the singular so it’s OK to use them as plurals. **Family** can be either - judge according to context.

Sports teams are plural (eg: **Manchester United have beaten Liverpool**), but clubs are singular (eg: **Manchester United has provided another bonus for its shareholders**).

**The police** are treated as plural (eg: **Police say they are looking for three men**), but individual forces are singular (eg **The Metropolitan Police says there is no need to panic**).

**Press**and **public**should be treated as singular, but rewording may be advisable (replacing eg: ‘The press arrived soon afterwards. It had lots of questions.’ with **Journalists arrived soon afterwards. They had lots of questions.**)

**Colombia/Columbia**

**Colombia** is a country in South America. It is spelt with **two** ‘o’s. **Columbia**is the capital of the US state of South Carolina - as well as a District (as in Washington DC), a river, a university (in New York City), a Hollywood studio and a record label. All of these are spelt with a ‘u’.

**Colons**

In **headlines, captions and subheads**, they are followed by an initial cap. Elsewhere, by lower case.

**Colosseum**

The **Colosseum** is in Rome. The theatres in London, Oldham and elsewhere are the**Coliseum**.

**Commas**

Used properly, commas can eliminate ambiguity and make blocks of text more digestible - especially important when you are converting the spoken word into copy.

But they can also create unnecessary clutter and may often be avoided, eg by not including a definite article with a title (**Foreign Secretary Erica Simmons protested...** rather than ‘The Foreign Secretary, Erica Simmons, protested...’).

Neither are they needed where you are using a ‘job description’ - whether it fits more than one person (eg: **Footballer David Jones has been taken to hospital**) or one specific individual (eg: **England football captain Roy Rover has...**).

**Commission, Royal**

ie initial caps - but only once the commission is a reality.

[**Commons**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/uk-politics/reporting-uk-politics)

Always retain the initial cap in **Commons**, or **House of Commons**. (Also in eg: **Mr Collins told the House that...**)

**Commons committees**

Keep them lower case, unless you are giving the full title. (eg: **The report from the Public Accounts Committee attacked the minister’s record**).

**Communist/communist**

Use lower case for the ideology (eg: **He was attracted to communism during his university years**), and its adherents (eg **Most of his fellow-students were communists**). Upper case for the name of the party (eg **He was determined to join the Communist Party**).

**Company names**

We should spell company names as they do themselves, but always use an initial cap. There are occasional exceptions, such as **eBay** and **iPhone** – see separate entries. Also, a name using all caps should be rendered in upper and lower case.

We treat most company names as though their punctuation were conventional (eg: ‘easyJet’ is **Easyjet**). But there are specific exceptions (eg: **PricewaterhouseCoopers**, **iMac**, **NatWest**,**YouTube**), and one general exception: that we **do** use a lower case ‘e’ at the start of a name, where it stands for ‘electronic’ (eg **eBay**). [**Full list here**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/journalism/news-style-guide/article/art20130702112133537)**- if in doubt, check with the Business team.**

**Compare to/compare with**

‘Compare **to**’ is a declaration of similarity (**He compared the building to a carbuncle**); it means ‘to liken’. Use ‘compare **with**’ in all other circumstances (**The price of petrol has doubled, compared with last year**).

**Compass points**

are **not** capped up (ie **north**, **south**, **east**, **west**). Compound nouns (eg: **south-west**) are usually hyphenated and lower case (eg: **He loved France - and the south-west above all**). But avoid ambiguity - say **northern England**rather than just ‘the North’, which would make no sense for someone in Scotland. Only when the geographical context is clear are terms such as **the South East**, **the North West** acceptable (ie separate words, capped up). Parts of Wales are always lower case (ie **north Wales**, **south Wales**).

Use lower case and hyphens for adjectives eg: **south-east wind**, **a north-westerly direction**, **north-east England**.

**Complement/compliment**

The verb ‘to **complement’** means to make complete or supply what is lacking. As a noun, it can mean the number required to complete to a company eg: the crew of a ship. Whether as a noun or verb, the word**compliment** means (to) praise. **Complimentary** means flattering, or given free.

**Comprise**

Means ‘to consist of’, ‘to be made up of’. So: **The editorial team comprises men and women**is right. ‘Women comprise half the editorial team’ is **wrong**.

**Concede**

Losers at elections should properly **concede victory**. The phrase ‘concede defeat’ is wrong. Avoid the problem by using the phrase **admit defeat**or simply**concede**(eg:**Joe Green conceded soon after the television announcement**).

**Congo**

Do not confuse the two Congos.

**Congo-Brazzaville** is the former French Congo. We do **not** generally use its full title, ‘the Republic of the Congo’, but it is sometimes acceptable to call it simply **Congo**(especially in headlines).

**The Democratic Republic of Congo**is the formerBelgian Congo. In headlines and at second reference, refer to it as **DR Congo**. Where appropriate, make clear in the text that DR Congo is **the former Zaire,**but do not label it ‘Congo-Kinshasa’ and do not refer to this country simply as ‘Congo’.

**Connection**

ie with ‘ct’ - and **not** ‘connexion’.

**Conservative/conservative**

Always with an initial cap in a political context. Both words get capped up in **Conservative Party**. For later references, **the Tories**is acceptable. It should be lower case when you mean ‘averse to change’ or ‘conventional’ (eg: **Mr Gladstone always wore conservative** **clothes**).

**Constitution**

(as in **the US constitution**) ie lower case.

**Consult**

Correct usage is eg: **The prime minister consulted his colleagues**. Do **not** adopt the American usage of ‘consult with’.

[**Consumer Prices Index/CPI**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/business-and-economy/reporting-economy)

measures the year-on-year change of consumer prices based on a basket of goods and services purchased by most households, but excludes the cost of mortgage interest rates. The CPI is the basis of the Bank of England’s official inflation target and is an internationally standardised measure which allows us to compare the UK’s inflation rate with that of other EU countries.

**Consumers’ Association**

Is a charity which now trades as **Which?** (with question mark)

**Contemporary**

means ‘originating at the same time’. Thus: **The theatre is to stage Ibsen’s plays in contemporary dress** would involve the actors wearing the fashions of 19th Century Norway - **not** modern dress.

**Continent/continent**

Lower case eg: **Aids spread across three continents** - unless you mean the European mainland as distinct from the United Kingdom eg: **Cars are usually cheaper on the Continent**.

**Continual/continuous**

These are **not** synonyms. **Continuous** means ‘without interruption’. **Continual** means ‘frequently happening’.

**Contractions**

Do **not**use contractions such as ‘don’t’, ‘isn’t’, ‘can’t’ in news stories (except in direct quotes). Spell it out: **do not**, **is not**, **cannot** etc.

**Cops**

Do not use as a synonym for police except in the most informal of contexts.

**Co-ordinate/co-ordination**

ie hyphenated.

**Co-operate/co-operation**

ie hyphenated.

**Correspondents and reporters**

The titles of correspondents and reporters should always be in lower case.

Specialist BBC correspondents and reporters should be referred to at first mention by their full title (eg **BBC royal correspondent James Higgins**,**BBC political editor Martha Squires**) and thereafter as **our correspondent**or **our** **reporter**. Overseas BBC correspondents and reporters should be referred to in copy as the BBC’s **(name)** in **(place)** at first mention, as should non-specialist domestic correspondents, and thereafter as **our correspondent**or **our** **reporter**.

(See separate entry for **Bylines**).

**cosmos**

ie lower case.

[**Council of Europe**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/eu/eu--institutions)

The **Council of Europe** is a non-EU institution, based in Strasbourg. It was set up in 1949 to promote European cultural values. Its activities are decided by a committee made up of foreign ministers from each of its 47 member states.

**Council of Ministers**

creates EU law through negotiation with the European Parliament - a process called ‘co-decision’. In most cases they act on proposals submitted by the European Commission. Consists of the ministers from each member state who have responsibility for the topic under discussion. Not to be confused with the **Council of Europe** or the **European Council**.

**councillor**

Always lower case. Refer to county, borough, town and parish councillors by their usual honorific ie Mr/Mrs/Ms, rather than **Coun**or **Cllr**.

**County Names**

should, whenever possible, be written out in full. If space is limited, it is acceptable in some cases to use short forms at first reference and throughout. Acceptable abbreviations are listed here:

Bedfordshire - **Beds**

Buckinghamshire - **Bucks**

Cambridgeshire - **Cambs**

Cheshire - none

Cornwall - none

County Armagh - **Co Armagh**

County Durham - **Durham**

Cumbria - none

Derbyshire - **Derbys**

Devon - none

Dorset - none

East Sussex - **E Sussex**

Essex - none

Gloucestershire - **Gloucs**

Hampshire - **Hants**

Hertfordshire - **Herts**

Kent - none

Lancashire - **Lancs**

Leicestershire - **Leics**

Lincolnshire - **Lincs**

Middlesex -**Middx**

Norfolk - none

Northamptonshire - **Northants**

Northumberland - none

North Yorkshire - **N Yorks**

Nottinghamshire - **Notts**

Oxfordshire - **Oxon**

Shropshire - **Salop**

Somerset - none

Staffordshire - **Staffs**

Suffolk – none

Surrey - none

Warwickshire - **Warks**

West Sussex - **W Sussex**

Wiltshire - **Wilts**

Worcestershire - **Worcs**

**Court/court**

Use initial cap if you are giving the court’s official title (eg: **the US Supreme Court**;**the European Court of Human Rights**; **Bow Street Magistrates’ Court**) - otherwise (and if in doubt) cap down (**the appeal court in Iceland**).

**Court cases**

In reporting the preliminaries to a court case, do **not** include adjectives that might be considered potentially prejudicial (eg ‘Man accused of vicious street attack’). And do not repeat tracts of potential evidence, since a defence lawyer might be planning to challenge it.

It is BBC policy **not** to refer to the accused by surname alone - until a guilty verdict is returned. This is true even of people, like sportsmen, who would normally be referred to by surname only.

Do **not** follow agency practice of lumping together the sentences handed down to a group of accused, as in ‘The three men were given prison sentences totalling 30 years’. This is so imprecise as to be meaningless.

**Court martial**

Note that the plural is **courts martial**.

**Credence/credibility**

These are **not**synonyms: **credence** means belief or trust; **credibility**is the quality of being believable.

**Crescendo**

means a gradual increase in loudness - rather than a ‘climax’ - so a piece of music cannot ‘reach a crescendo’.

**Cricket**

**Test match**, or**Test**- ie upper case ‘T’.

**Scores:** all numbers should be written as digits eg: **By close of play, England had made 265-8**,or**WG Grace took 4-9***.*

**Criteria**

is a plural. The singular is **criterion**.

**Criticise**

ie with an ‘s’ (and **not** ‘criticize’).

**Crossbencher**

ie one word, no hyphen. But two words in **cross benches**.

**Cross-heads**

(also known as sub-heads) They must be in **bold type**, since part of their job is to break up blocks of text. But they should also provide an incentive to read on. They should **not** repeat information already provided in copy. And they should **not** consist of a random word picked from the sentence immediately afterwards: the ideal cross-head should have its inspiration three or four sentences into the text that follows.

Never put a cross-head in the first four paragraphs of a story. Any quotation marks in a cross-head must be single.

**Crown**

Cap up when the reference relates to the UK monarchy eg: **Crown Estate**,**Crown Court**,**Crown dependency**. Generically, lower case eg: **She was the jewel in the crown**.

**cruise missile**

ie no hyphen - and lower case, because it refers to a type of weapon (low-flying, long-distance, computer-controlled winged missile), rather than a specific one.

**CSA**

ie all caps, no gaps. The **Child Support Agency**is responsible for ensuring that parents who live apart from their children contribute financially to their upkeep by paying child maintenance.

**Cup(s)**

Sports trophies take a capital letter: **FA Cup**, **World Cup**, **Calcutta Cup** etc.

**Currencies**

We say:**50p***;***£5***;***£60***;***£3m***;***£500m***;***£6bn***;***£20bn**;**£15tn**

In UK stories (about UK firms, the UK economy etc), use pounds only in the first four paragraphs, but provide a US dollar conversion of a key figure at the earliest opportunity.

In eurozone stories (or wherever the original reporting figure is euro), use euro followed in brackets by a pound conversion of a key figure - even in the first four paragraphs.

In World stories (ie. non pound, non eurozone), use US dollars, followed in brackets by a pound conversion of a key figure - again, even in the first four paragraphs. Alternatively, use the local currency and then convert to both US dollars and sterling (eg. **Japan’s Nayaka has announced the worst corporate result in history, losing 40 trillion yen ($340bn; £212bn)**.

Abbreviations: The names of all currencies are written out in full at first reference - with the exception of the pound sterling and the US dollar, which are always **£**and **$**. The euro is always the **euro**: we do not replace its name with a symbol. Otherwise, abbreviations to be used after first reference are: **SFr** (Swiss francs); **HK$** (Hong Kong dollars); **A$** (Australian dollars).

**Cyber** (Updated April 2017)

Relating to, characteristic of, or involved in the culture of computers, information technology, and virtual reality. All compound words should use a hyphen – **cyber-crime, cyber-space, cyber-security, cyber-bullying, cyber-attack**.

**Cyprus**

The northern part, occupied by Turkey, is not internationally recognised, so do **not** refer to ‘North Cyprus’ - the term the Turks have chosen. Instead, say **northern Cyprus**,describing it either as**Turkish-occupied** or **Turkish-controlled**. And we should speak of the**Green Line** - not ‘the so-called Green Line’.

**Dail**

is the lower house of the Irish Parliament. Do **not** use in headlines or summaries, but it should always be referred to by name at least once - with initial cap. A Member of the Irish Parliament should not be referred to as an ‘MP’, but as a member of parliament, parliamentary deputy, deputy or even TD - so long as it is clear from the context that this is the Irish abbreviation for member of the house (‘Teacht Dala’).

**Daily, the**

Do not cap up the word **‘the’** when referring to a newspaper, regardless of whether it appears as part of the masthead. Hence, we say: the Daily Mail, the Daily Telegraph.

Note that the word ‘London’ is not part of the title of the **Evening Standard.**

**Dakar/Dhaka**

Dakar is the capital of Senegal; not to be confused with the Bangladeshi capital, **Dhaka**.

**Dalai Lama**

ie with initial caps.

**Damage**

Phrases such as ‘damage worth millions’ are meaningless. Say **damage put at**, or **damage estimated at**, or similar.

**Daring**

Do **not** use in the context of a crime or military action, as it suggests admiration.

**dashcam**

one word – also **helmetcam** and similar constructions.

**Data**

Strictly a plural - but follow common usage and treat it as a singular, taking a singular verb (eg: **Data was collected across the country**).

**Dates**

Put the date before the month, without suffix (eg: **12 April**). There is no added comma for the year (eg: **12 April 2003**), but there should be one if the day of the week is included (eg: **Saturday, 12 April**).

Avoid the 12/04/2012 formulation, as this will be understood in the US as 4 December. And one exception to the general rule: in a US context, spell out **the Fourth of July**.

**Days**

Our readers live in various time zones, so avoid references to ‘yesterday’, ‘this morning’, ‘today’, ‘tonight’, ‘tomorrow’ etc. Instead, days should be referred to by name (eg: **Voting begins on Monday**). Do not follow the American custom of omitting the preposition (eg: ‘Voting begins Monday’).

When writing about events which have happened or are due to happen on the day a story appears, avoid putting the day of the week in the top four pars. If some indication of timescale is needed, use another form of words such as ‘within hours’, ‘shortly’ or ‘earlier’. If there is a potential for confusion, include the day lower down the story (although the date stamp should mean this is unnecessary in most cases).

**Dax**

(Frankfurt’s main stock market index) ie initial cap only.

**D-Day**

(6 June 1944) ie hyphenated - with two caps.

**Dead on arrival**

is a term to be avoided. It’s ambulance service jargon, being the term used in duty logs, where it often appears as ‘DOA’. The implication that the individual died en route to hospital is often false.

**death row**

ie lower case.

**Decades**

Use digits, without apostrophes (eg: **1960s**or**the 60s**;**Henry Hyde is now in his mid-40s**). The exception is where an adjective is attached - in which case, the decade is written with an apostrophe (eg **the Swinging ‘60s**).

**Decimate**

is a word liable to create misunderstanding. Strictly, it means ‘to destroy one-tenth of something’ - but it’s commonly used to mean ‘destroy a large part of’. Best avoided.

**Defence**

is our usual spelling, even with job titles which in their original form use US spelling (eg: **the US Defence Secretary John Wayne** - and **not** ‘Defense Secretary’). Follow the American spelling of the**department**if using its full name (eg: **the US Department of Defense**), but use UK spelling for an abbreviated form eg: **the US defence department**. This is often preferable, in order to avoid spelling the same word in two ways in the same story.

**Delhi**

Do not refer to it as ‘New Delhi’, which is only one part of the Indian capital.

**Democratic Party**

is the correct name for the US political party, **not** the ‘Democrat Party’. But party members may be called ‘Democrats’.

**Department for Business, Innovation and Skills**

(responsible for business and enterprise support, higher and further education, promoting scientific research).

**Department for Communities and Local Government**

(responsible for planning, housing, working with councils, community relations).

**Department for Education**

(responsible for education and children’s services). No initial caps if referred to as ‘the education department’).

**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

may be shortened to **Defra** (ie initial cap only). No caps for **the environment department**.

Headed by the **environment, food and rural affairs secretary**who may, according to context, be referred to as **environment secretary**, **food secretary**, or **rural affairs secretary** (titles capped up if accompanied by name).

**Department for Exiting the European Union**

is the correct title of the department, but we can refer to the Brexit secretary or Brexit minister.

**Department of Health**

may be abbreviated at second reference to the **DoH**or**the health department**(ie with no caps).

Department for International Development may be abbreviated at second reference to **DfID**or **the international development department**(ie with no caps).

**Department for Work and Pensions**

Headed by the secretary of state for work and pensions, who, according to context, may be referred to as **the work secretary** or **the pensions secretary** (capped up if accompanied by name). Department may be abbreviated at second reference to **DWP** (ie all caps). No caps for **the work department** or **the pensions department**.

**Dependant/dependent**

The noun is **dependant**(eg: **Mr Smith told the court he had 14 dependants**). The adjective is **dependent**(eg**: Mr Smith told the court he was heavily dependent on drugs**).

**Deprecate/depreciate**

Deprecate means ‘to express disapproval of’. Do not confuse with depreciate, which means ‘to diminish in value’.

**Derry**

The city and county are **Londonderry**. The city should be given the full name at first reference, but **Derry** can be used later. The local council is **Derry City Council**.

**Deterrent**

To talk about a ‘nuclear deterrent’ implies acceptance of the doctrine of deterrence, which not all do. Referring to a ‘nuclear weapons programme’ might be a suitable alternative.

**Diamond Jubilee**

As in the Queen’s. Capped up.

**Diana**

Her full title was **Diana**,**Princess of Wales**. But she may be referred to as **Princess Diana** (or, at second reference, **the princess**).

**Dictator**

is a term generally to be avoided (except in a historic context) because it is too subjective. The word **leader** will usually suffice.

**Different**

Say **different from**(rather than ‘different to’ or ‘different than’).

**Direct quotes**

Pick only the best lines for direct quotation; anything else should be converted into indirect speech. Eliminate superfluous conversational devices (eg: ‘to be honest with you’, ‘what I want to say is’). Make sure the meaning is clear - if not, leave it out.

Avoid exposing a speaker to ridicule by bringing his/her grammatical/linguistic incompetence to a wider audience. A combination of indirect speech and omission should solve the problem.

Punctuation: with complete sentences, the closing quotation marks go after the full stop. With a single word or phrase, the quotation marks go before the full stop. Where part of a quote has been omitted, use triple dots with a space **after** the last dot (eg: **The quality of mercy is not strained… it is twice blest**.)

**director general**

(of the BBC) ie two words, no hyphen, no caps.

**Disabilities/illnesses**

We should be careful about the language we use when referring to people with disabilities. The phrase ‘the disabled’, for example, is widely perceived as implying uselessness. They are people and should be referred to as such, eg: **people with disabilities**or **disabled people**. The same applies for **mentally disabled people**. Do not usewords such as ‘cripple’ or ‘the handicapped’.

Say **deaf people**, not ‘the deaf’ - and **not** ‘deaf and dumb’. Also, avoid describing people as ‘mute’. ‘Unable to speak’ is a suitable alternative.

Do**not** refer to someone being ‘wheelchair-bound’ or ‘confined to a wheelchair’, since wheelchairs provide mobility - not confinement. Instead, write about a person who **uses a wheelchair** or who **is** **in a wheelchair** or a **wheelchair user**.

**Spastic**is a term that is **not**acceptable. Speak of **people with cerebral palsy**.

**Bipolar disorder** is the accepted term for manic depression, although this is acceptable in terms of clarification.

In general, it is best to avoid defining people by their condition or illness - a **schizophrenic**, for instance. Say instead that the person **‘has schizophrenia’** etc.

We do not speak of ‘epileptics’ or ‘epilepsy sufferers’. Instead, say **people with epilepsy**. The use of the term ‘fit’ for an epileptic incident is increasingly seen as outdated and can be offensive. The preferred word is **seizure**, though **attack** can also be acceptable. However, if a speaker uses **fit** in a direct quote that's OK.

Avoid using the word **‘leper’** when describing someone with leprosy. It carries very negative connotations, suggesting an outcast or pariah. This association dates from the time when people affected by leprosy were segregated from their families and communities because of fear of infection. There will inevitably be occasions when someone says he/she was ‘treated like a leper’. This is acceptable provided it is in direct quotes.

In reporting stories about **albinism,** we should recognise that it might not be a familiar term to everyone. **People with albinism** or **albino people** would be our preference, with **'albinos'** only to be used in headlines.

**Disc/disk**

CDs and DVDs are **discs**, and someone may suffer a**slipped disc**; but for the computer storage devices we use a **disk** (eg **hard disk**, **floppy disk**).

**Discharge**

People are not ‘released’ from hospital - they are **discharged** (or **sent home**, **allowed home** etc).

**Disclose**

Use with care. It implies that what is being said is true.

**Discreet/discrete**

Not to be confused: **discreet** means ‘careful’ or ‘tactful’; **discrete** means ‘distinct and separate’.

**Disinterested**

means ‘impartial’ (eg: a tennis umpire is a **disinterested onlooker**). Do not confuse with ‘uninterested’.

**Disney**

The original theme park in California is **Disneyland**. There is also **Walt Disney World**in Florida. The European one is now **Disneyland Paris**(no comma), although the company that owns it retains the name, **Euro Disney**.

**Dispatches**

Is our preferred spelling, as opposed to despatches. In Parliament, ministers lean on the **dispatch box** ie without caps.

**Dissociate**

ie **not** ‘disassociate’.

**Distances**

In most cases, use both imperial and metric measures. UK and US stories should usually put **miles** first, followed immediately by a conversion to **km** inside brackets. Similarly, **yds**/ **ft**/ **in** should be followed by a metric conversion (eg: **The US president has travelled more than 2,000 miles (3,200km)**; **Officials in Norwich have defended the introduction of a double yellow line measuring just 45in (1.14m).**But don’t be too literal in the conversion of an approximate figure, as in**‘The lifeboat picked up the man about 200m (656ft) from the shore.’**

In non-UK/US stories, metric should usually come first - with a bracketed conversion to imperial (eg: **Police in France say the floods reached a peak of 5.3m (17ft 8in)**;**At least five fugitives from English justice are living along a 10km (6.2 mile) stretch of the Spanish coast**.) Sometimes, logic will dictate that metric should come first (eg: **Train speeds on the British side of the Channel Tunnel compare badly with French top speeds of 300km/h (186.4mph)**.

The words ‘metre’, ‘kilometre’ etc are not written out in full, even at first reference; use the abbreviations **m**, **km**, etc - with no space and no ‘s’ in the plural.

**DA notice**

Defence Advisory Notice (formerly D notice) - an official request to withhold a news item for reasons of national security.

**Doctor**

Use the title Dr (always abbreviated) for doctors of medicine, scientific doctors and church ministers who hold doctorates - but **only**when it is relevant. So it would be Mr Liam Fox. But do **not** use Dr for politicians who have a doctorate in politics, history. Surgeons should be referred to as Mr/Mrs/Ms.

**Dogs**

In general, lower case unless the name refers to a country eg: **German shepherd, great Dane, Afghan hound, rottweiler, labrador, Portuguese water dog, pekinese, Irish wolfhound, poodle, spaniel, dachshund.**

**Dominica/Dominican Republic**

are different places. **Dominica**is a Caribbean island; **the Dominican Republic** shares the Caribbean island of Hispaniola with Haiti.

**dotcom**

ie no caps, all one word.

**Dow Jones**

(index of the share prices of the 30 leading US companies) ie initial caps. Full title: Dow Jones Industrial Average.

**Downing Street**

is an acceptable synonym for a government spokesman (eg: **Downing Street says**...). You can also use **No 10**.

**Down’s syndrome**

is the appropriate term (not ‘mongolism’). Cap ‘D’, lower case ‘s’.

**down under**

colloquialism referring to Australia & New Zealand) ie lower case.

**Draconian**

means ‘excessively harsh’ only with reference to laws. Do **not**use in any other context.

**Drink-driving**

The legal alcohol limit for drivers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is: 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood; 35 micrograms of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath; 107 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of urine.

In Scotland, the limits are 50 milligrams, 22 micrograms and 67 milligrams.

The limit in most other European nations is lower.

**Drugs**

When referring to seizures of illegal drugs,say **drugs with a street value of…**(and **not**‘drugs worth…’)

**Duchess of York**

Say **the Duchess of York** at first reference; then **the duchess** (lower case). Do not call her ‘Fergie’.

**Due to**

means ‘caused by’, and should be used in conjunction with a noun, not a verb: eg **His frustration was due to their inefficiency**(and **not** ‘He was frustrated due to their inefficiency’).

**Duke of Edinburgh/York**

Capped up at first reference, with or without the name. At later reference, **Prince Philip/Andrew**, or alternatively the **duke** or the **prince**, both capped down.

**Duma**

(the lower house of parliament in Russia) ie always capped up.

**Dutch names**

In genuinely Dutch names, it is **Van** with an initial cap if only the surname is given (eg **The painting was by Van Gogh**). But it is lower case if you use the whole name (eg **The museum is dedicated to Vincent van Gogh**). This may vary with anglicised or US derivatives, where an individual might have chosen to retain the capitalised **Van** in all circumstances.

**Earth/earth**

Use upper case for the planet (eg **The spaceship will circle the Earth for weeks**). Otherwise, lower case (eg **Madonna said it had taken her weeks to come down to earth after the wedding**).

**Earthquakes**

We should describe earthquakes in terms of magnitude, which is the measure used by the US Geological Survey (eg **The island was hit by a magnitude seven earthquake**). Magnitude measurements can usually be found on the [USGS website](http://www.usgs.gov/).

We should no longer refer to the Richter scale.

**East Asia**

ie initial cap for each word. Avoid references to the Far East.

**EastEnders**

ie the second capital is retained.

**Eastern Europe**

ie initial cap for each word. Note that we should**not** use the terms ‘Eastern Europe’ and ‘Eastern European’ when referring to the former Soviet bloc. (Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary are in Central Europe.) ‘Eastern Europe’ should refer only to countries that sit geographically there eg: Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia.

**EasyJet**

ie a cap ‘E’ and ‘J’. Style is to follow a company’s preference but with an initial cap if one is not used.

**eBay**

ie lower case ‘e’, and upper case ‘B’, **except** at the start of sentences, where it should be written ‘EBay’; but headlines **can** begin ‘eBay’.

**e-cigarette**

(electronic cigarette) lower case with hyphen.

**E. coli**

ie capital ‘E’, with a full stop and a space followed by lower case ‘c’. Common variety is O157 (ie with a letter ‘O’, rather than a zero). Note that it is caused by bacteria, not a virus.

**e-commerce**

(electronic commerce) ie lower case, hyphenated.

**Ecuadorean**

Is our preference, rather than Ecuadorian.

**ecstasy**

Whether the pill or the state of joy, lower case ‘e’.

**Edinburgh, Duke of**

Is capped up at first reference, whether or not it is followed immediately by **Prince Philip**. In any later references, the duke and the prince are both capped down.

**Effect (verb)**

Not synonymous with ‘affect’. ‘To affect’ means ‘to have an influence on’ (eg: **Wine does not affect me**). ‘To effect’ means to cause, accomplish’ (eg: **A month at the clinic effected my recovery**).

**Effectively/in effect**

Correctly used, ‘effectively’ means ‘efficiently’ or ‘successfully’ - as in **Despite his inexperience, he** **rules the country effectively**. But the word is frequently misused (and misunderstood) to mean ‘in effect’ and so should, in general, be avoided.

‘In effect’ means ‘to all intents and purposes’, as in**Smith holds no official office, but in effect he rules the country**.

If you mean ‘in effect’, then say so. If you mean ‘effectively’, then say ‘successfully’ or perhaps ‘to good effect’.

**Eg**

ie no full stop.

**Eire**

Do **not** use either Eire or Southern Ireland. Say **Ireland**, **the Republic of Ireland** or **the Irish Republic**. Its people (and the adjective) are **Irish** - some people living in Northern Ireland may also describe themselves as Irish or Northern Irish.

**Either**

The verb is singular if both alternatives are singular (**Either Smith or Jones is to stand for Parliament**).If even one of them is plural, then the verb is plural(**Either Smith or his political colleagues have to make a decision**)*.*

**ElBaradei, Mohamed**

(Egyptian opposition figure and former director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency) ie one word, capital ‘E’ at the start, plus an internal capital ‘B’. Second reference: **Mr ElBaradei**.

**Elections**

Once a UK general election is called, MPs cease to be MPs - but ministers remain ministers. People standing for Parliament are **parliamentary candidates** or just **candidates**- either way, lower case.

**Electricity**

Quantities of electricity are frequently measured either as power - how much energy is consumed in a given time (kilowatts, megawatts etc), or energy itself eg: kilowatt-hours - the amount of energy required to run a kilowatt-consuming device for an hour.

These are **not** interchangeable. When writing about how much a given plant/turbine/hydro dam is producing, use watts eg: **The turbine produces 800 kW, enough to power 70 homes.**

When talking about energy costs or annual consumption, use kilowatt-hours eg: **In its first three days of operation, the turbine produced 800 kWh, enough to power an average household for a month. EDF said it would subsidise the energy cost by as much as 3p per kWh.**

Note that measurements above kilowatt - megawatt, gigawatt, terawatt etc - take caps when abbreviated:**MW/MWh; GW/GWh; TW/TWh**.

**11-plus**

ie hyphenated - with the number written in digits and the word ‘plus’ spelt out.

**Ellipsis**

Where part of a quote is omitted, put three dots immediately after the last word used, followed by a space (eg Prices have not merely risen... they have soared). It is

important NOT to start with a space, because this could mean a new line beginning with the dots. If the quote is a complete sentence, there is no need for an ellipsis.

**email**

ie lower case, with **NO** hyphen.

**embassy**

lower case - ie The British embassy in Washington.

**Enormity**

Use ‘enormity’ only in its traditional sense of ‘wickedness’ (eg **the enormity of Harold Shipman’s crimes soon became apparent**). Do **not** use ‘enormity’ to mean ‘hugeness’.

**Escapee**

A legitimate alternative for ‘escaper’.

**Espresso**

For both the machine and the coffee it makes, **espresso** is the correct term. ‘Expresso’ is **wrong**for both.

**e-tailers**

(electronic-commerce retailers) ie lower case with hyphen.

**Eta**

In line with our usual rule, cap up only the first letter because we pronounce it as a word. First reference should always spell out **the Basque separatist group**,**Eta** or **the Basque separatist movement**,**Eta**.

**Eton**

It is **Eton College** - and **not**Eton School.

**euro**

The currency adopted by 19 EU member states ie **lower case**and never abbreviated. We do **not** use the symbol for a euro. The plural is **euros**. [Latest information here](http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/money/euro/).

**Euro MP**

ie no hyphen, with three caps. An acceptable abbreviation is **MEP** ie all caps (plural **MEPs**).

[**European Central Bank**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/eu/eu--institutions)

The **European Central Bank** controls monetary policy in the 19 EU member states that make up the **eurozone**. Its headquarters are in Frankfurt, Germany. It may be shortened on second reference to **ECB**.

**European Commission**

Do NOT abbreviate to ‘EC’. This is the civil service of the European Union, headed by commissioners from the member states. It can propose new laws - but actually enacting legislation is the job of the **European Parliament** and the **Council of Ministers**.

**European Council**

The European Council is the (usually) twice-yearly summit meeting of EU member states’ heads of government, to determine overall policy direction. Not to be confused with the **Council of Ministers** or the **Council of Europe**.

The current European Council president is Herman Van Rompuy. He may for headline purposes be referred to as ‘EU president’, but the full title should be in the summary and top four pars. As far as his name is concerned, it is Mr Van Rompuy on second reference.

**European Court of Human Rights**

This is NOT an EU institution. It was established as a permanent entity in 1998 under the auspices of the **Council of Europe**andsits in Strasbourg. Its task is to ensure the observance of the principles set out in the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Judgements are binding on its 47 member states.

**European Court of Justice**

This is based in Luxembourg. Its function is to apply and interpret EU law. Initially, an Advocate General presents a legal opinion on a case. The full court then deliberates and delivers its judgement. Not to be confused with the **International Court of Justice**.

**European Parliament**

ie Initial caps for the full title. Do NOT abbreviate to ‘EU Parliament’. It is lower case if you are dropping the ‘European’ label - eg **Six MEPs walked out of parliament in disgust**.

The European Parliament sits in Brussels and Strasbourg, and is administered from Luxembourg. Under the Lisbon Treaty, it became a co-legislator with the **Council of Ministers** in most policy areas. The parliament also has the final say on the European Commission’s annual budget, the appointment of Commissioners and applications to join the EU.

[**European Union (EU)**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/eu/a-brief-history-of-the-european-union)

Created by the Maastricht treaty of 1993. The original EEC (European Economic Community) was founded in 1957 with six member states. The EU now incorporates 28 countries, with five others (Iceland, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Turkey) recognised as candidates for membership. [Latest information here](http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/).

**Europhile**

ie initial cap.

**Eurosceptic**

ie initial cap.

**eurozone**

Currently incorporates 19 EU member states where the euro is a valid currency. It should be in **lower case**, one word.

**Evacuate**

The rule used to be that only places or buildings were evacuated, not people. This is at odds with common usage, which now allows people to be ‘evacuated’, as well as buildings. But avoid the intransitive use, eg: ‘People are preparing to evacuate from Lebanon...’

**Exceeding the speed limit**

Just say **speeding**.

**Execute**

Only after a legal process. Gunmen do not ‘execute’ people, though they often claim to; they **kill** or **murder**.

[**Executive/executive**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/devolution/what-is-devolution)

For Scottish Executive/Northern Ireland Executive: cap up the full title (eg **The Northern Ireland Executive has voiced concern**); otherwise, cap down (eg **The executive in Edinburgh is to hold emergency talks**).

**Expat**

Short for expatriate, ie no hyphen.

**FA Cup**

ie upper case ‘C’.

**Fair trade, Fairtrade**

Two words when referring to the concept of trading with developing nations on an equal basis. However the Fairtrade Foundation, which promotes the system, is one word, as is the Fairtrade label and individual brands launched by supermarkets.

**Falklands War**

ie both words are capped up. The Falkland Islands are known in Argentina as the **Malvinas**.

**Falun Gong**

The Falun Gong religious group should NOT be referred to as a cult, as it insists it is not - although the Chinese authorities say it is. We can call it a **spiritual movement**.

**Farc**

Only the first letter is capped up because we pronounce it as a word. Stands for the**Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia**. Spell out that it is NOT part of the army by using a label such as **Colombia’s main leftist rebel group** or **Colombia’s Marxist guerrillas**.

**Far East**

Is NOT our style for the regions known as East Asia or South East Asia, except in reference to the Russian Far East. Takes initial caps.

**Father’s Day**

ie initial caps with an apostrophe before the ‘s’. NB: it is not on the same date everywhere. **Father’s Day** in UK/USA is the third Sunday in June. In Australia, it is the first Sunday in September.

**Fatwa**

means an authoritative ruling on a point of Islamic law - a religious edict but **not** necessarily a death sentence.

**Fazed/phased**

Someone who is disorientated or disconcerted can be described as **fazed**, although only in direct quotes, as it is a colloquialism. Do not confuse with **phased**, which means ‘introduced in stages’, eg: **The new curriculum was phased in over three years**.

**Feckless**

means ‘aimless, helpless, clueless’. It does not mean ‘irresponsible’ or ‘reckless’.

**Federal Reserve**

(Central Bank of the USA) ie initial caps. After first reference, can be shortened to **the Fed** (no full stop). The **Federal Reserve Open Market Committee**is the body that decides on US interest rates - can be abbreviated at second reference to **FOMC** (ie all caps, no gaps).

[**Fewer/less**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/how-to/how-to-report/reporting-big-numbers)

Use ‘fewer’ when you can count something, as in **The committee wants to have fewer meetings next year**. If you cannot count it, use ‘less’, as in **Voters are calling for less bureaucracy**. The same rule applies for percentages: hence, you would be correct to say **Less than 30% of the hospital survived the fire** and **Fewer than 30% of the patients were rescued**.

Do **not** use ‘no less than’ with numbers - say eg: **He attacked her on no fewer than 12 occasions.**

However, **ages**,**heights and weights** take ‘less’ eg: **Tom Thumb was less than 3ft (91cm) tall; Police say the man is less than 30 years old**;**She weighs less than seven stone (44.5kg)**.

**Filipino**

(ie one ‘p’) means a native or national of the **Philippines** (two ‘p’s); feminine **Filipina**. The adjective is **Philippine**.

**Film-maker**

ie with a hyphen (to avoid double ‘m’).

**Film titles**

We do not use italics or quotation marks; caps as appropriate: (**Grease, Four Weddings and a Funeral, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs**).

**Fine-tooth comb**

ie with a hyphen after ‘fine’. It is the teeth that are fine, not the comb.

**Firemen**

Unless we know they were all male, we should say **firefighters**(one word) or **fire crews**(two words).

**First Division**

(as in Scottish football) ie capped up (similarly, Second Division etc). The English equivalent is League One and League Two.

**First half, first-half**

There is NO hyphen in the noun (eg: Rooney was injured during the first half). There IS a hyphen in the adjective (eg Arsenal scored three first-half goals).

**First-past-the-post**

ie with three hyphens, when used adjectivally (eg the first-past-the-post system). Otherwise, no hyphens (eg Red Rum was first past the post).

**Flaunt/flout**

**Flaunt** means ‘to display ostentatiously’. Do not confuse with **flout**, which means ‘to disobey’.

**Fleet Street**

is no longer a useful synonym for the print media.

**Flotation**

(on the stock market) ie **not** ‘floatation’. This is known to US investors as an ‘initial public offering’, or **IPO**.

**Flounder/founder**

The verb**flounder** means ‘to struggle’ or ‘be in a state of confusion’. Do not confuse with **founder**, which means ‘to fill with water and sink’ and, metaphorically, ‘to fail’.

**Flu**

and **not** 'flu' .

**Flypast**

is our preference, although the Oxford English Dictionary uses a hyphen. Similarly **marchpast**.

**Focus/focused/focusing**

ie the ‘s’ remains single.

**Foetus**

is the correct spelling, not the US variant ‘fetus’.

**Foot-and-mouth disease**

ie hyphens on both sides of ‘and’. Do **not**use ‘FMD’ or ‘F&M’, even in headlines.

**Football**

but never ‘soccer’ unless as part of an official title (eg Soccer Australia).

**Football seasons**

When writing about any sporting season, or tax or financial years etc, our preferred style is **2010-11**.

**Forced**

is appropriate only where someone uses force to make someone else do something. Avoid unthinking agency usage eg: ‘Police were forced to open fire’. It is usually not true. Simply tell the readers what happened: **‘Police opened fire**...**’**

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

can be shortened at second reference to **FCO**(all caps, no gaps). You can also refer to the **Foreign Office** (second reference: **FO**).

**Foreign names**(see also [Arabic](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/arabic) names)

Do **not** use foreign titles (Monsieur, Herr) - say Mr, Mrs, Ms or Miss as appropriate.

In the case of **Spanish** American and European Spanish names, the last of the three names is usually the mother’s name, which should not be used on its own. So Manuel Echeverria Valdez becomes Mr Echeverria, not Mr Valdez. This does not apply to Brazilian/Portuguese names.

**In genuinely**German**names**, von**is in lower case when the whole name is given eg:**Herbert von Karajan**. It disappears when only the surname is given eg:**Karajan died in 1989**. There may be variations with anglicised or US derivatives**,**where the individual might have chosen to retain the**von**with the surname.**

The **Dutch** **van** and the **Italian di** are lower case if the whole name is used. They are capped if only the surname is used eg: **Angelo di Loreto says he might retire**, but **It is not the first time Di Loreto has said so**.

When **French** surnames start with Le or La, an initial cap is used, whether or not the forename is included eg: **Jean-Marie Le Pen**, and also **Mr Le Pen**.

The family name in China comes first, so Hu Jintao becomes Mr Hu at second reference.

**If in doubt over any foreign name**,**check with World Service**.

**Foreign words**

should be kept to a minimum. Hence: replace ‘£10 per capita’ with **£10 a head**; replace ‘twice per annum’ with **twice a year**.

Say **French Legion of Honour** rather than ‘Legion D’Honneur’.

**Forgo**

is our preferred spelling, rather than forego, to mean ‘abstain from’.

**Former/latter**

This construction (as in ‘The judge told Smith and Jones they could expect no mercy. The former was given a 10-year sentence, the latter 15 years.’) is somewhat archaic and should be avoided in our output.

**Formula 1/F1**

(in motor racing) ie contrary to our usual style, the number is written as a digit. F1 may be used in headlines or at second reference.

**Fortuitous**

Properly used, it means ‘by chance, rather than design’. It does NOT mean ‘fortunate’ or ‘well-timed’.

**4x4**

(four-wheel drive vehicle, designed to go off-road). Contrary to our usual convention with single-figure numbers, we use digits rather than words. We do **not** include a space. Often used as an alternative to industry jargon **SUV** (sports utility vehicle), but not necessarily the same thing.

**Fourth of July**

(the American holiday) ie written out in full - **not** ‘4 July’.

**Fox-hunt, fox-hunting**

ie hyphenated (Say ‘**hunting with dogs’** - and **not** ‘hunting with hounds’).

**Fractions**

Our style is to use words (eg **three-quarters**) separated by hyphens or, where appropriate, to substitute a decimal (**0.75**).

**Frankfurt**

is the German city and financial centre which is home of the [**European Central Bank**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/eu/eu-money). (Its full name is Frankfurt am Main, but should be referred to simply as **Frankfurt**.) There is another Frankfurt in eastern Germany, on the Polish border. This is **Frankfurt an der Oder**, which should be spelt out in full or abbreviated to**Frankfurt/Oder**.

**Free**

is an adjective (**He left the court a free man**) or an adverb (**The spectators were admitted free**). It is **wrong** to speak of receiving something ‘for free’. You receive it either **free** or **for nothing**.

**Freedom of Information**

Capped when referring to the Act or to a **Freedom of Information request**, but lower case if talking generally about the issue of **freedom of information**.

**Free-kick**

ie with a hyphen.

**‘Friendly fire’**

should be inside quotation marks in headlines **and** at first reference in text. In line with our usual rules, these quotation marks should be single in headlines, and double in text (although the text quotation marks would be single if first use was within a direct quote eg **The general said: “Deaths caused by ‘friendly fire’ are sad - but inevitable”**). Later references do **not** need any quotation marks. An alternative in text (though not in headlines) is **so-called friendly fire** - which does not require apostrophes.

**Front bench**

(in Parliament) ie as a noun, two words, with **no** hyphen. But one word only in**frontbencher** and also in the adjective frontbench (as in **frontbench spokesman**).

**Front line**/**front-line**

The noun is two words, both lower case (eg **More troops are being sent to the front line**); the adjective is lower case, but hyphenated (eg **Fresh supplies are getting through to front-line positions**).

**Front-runner**

ie with a hyphen.

**FTSE**

The Financial Times Stock Exchange index (so called because it is a joint venture between the FT and the SE) ie **all caps, no hyphen**. Avoid the trade term ‘the Footsie’. NB: the benchmark index is the **FTSE 100** (ie a space before the number), which can be defined as **listing the leading 100 firms traded on the London Stock Exchange**. There is also a **FTSE 250**, **FTSE 350** etc.

**Full-back**

ie with a hyphen.

**Full-time**

ie with a hyphen, whether used as a noun (eg Both managers rushed on to the pitch at full-time) or an adjective (They are the first league team to dispense with the services of a full-time manager).

**Fulsome**

Traditionally, does not mean ‘generous’ or ‘full’, but, ‘sickly sweet’ or ‘over the top’. So avoid use of the term ‘fulsome praise’.

**Fundraiser, fundraising**

ie no hyphens.

**Gaddafi, Col Muammar**

**(Libyan leader from 1969 - 2011) ie spelt with a ‘G’ rather than a ‘Q’, and a double ‘d’ with a single ‘f’. Full name: Muammar Muhammad al-Gaddafi.**

**Gambia, The**

ie definite article must be included - do not call it ‘Gambia’.

**Gangmaster**

ie no hyphen.

**Garda**

In stories about the Republic of Ireland, do not use the word ‘garda/gardai’ - translate into English: **police** or **police officer**. The full name of the force is the **Garda Siochana**.

**Gay marriage**

If using this term, make sure it applies to gay and lesbian people. If bisexual people are involved, same-sex marriage may be more appropriate.

**Geldof, Bob**

is **not** entitled to be called ‘Sir Bob’. He is an Irish citizen, and his knighthood is honorary.

**Gender/sex**

Using appropriate language is an important part of how we portray people in our stories. Sexuality, race or disability should not be mentioned unless they are relevant to the subject matter. But when we do focus on one aspect of a person's character, we should ensure we do not define them by it.

Use **gay** as an adjective, rather than a noun (eg: **two gay men** - but **not** 'two gays'). It can apply to members of both sexes, but current preferred practice is to refer to **'gay men and lesbians'**.  For wider references, talk about **LGBT** people or the **LGBT community** (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender).

**Homosexual** means people of **either** sex who are attracted to people of their own gender, but take care how you use it. While it can be fine in historical or judicial references, it can be considered offensive in other contexts because of past associations with illegal behaviour and mental illness.

**Transgender**, or trans, is a good umbrella term. A person born male would be described as a transgender woman and vice versa. Use the appropriate pronoun - "she" or "he". If reporting on someone who is making their transition public, it may be appropriate to refer to their previous identity. However, in other contexts, we would generally refer to a trans person by their current identity only.

**Transsexual** refers to someone who has changed, or wishes to change, their body through medical intervention. Do not say 'transsexuals', in the same way we would not talk about 'gays' or 'blacks'.

Take care with the term **'sex change'**, unless referring specifically to the surgical element of a transition. It should not be used as a general description for a transgender person.

If in any doubt, ask the person involved how they would like to be described.

**general election**

ie lower case.

**General Synod (updated April 2017)**

Style is to use initial caps. It may also be referred to as the**Church’s parliament**. It is made up of three houses: bishops, clergy and laity. It can make decisions on doctrine and worship without reference to Parliament at Westminster.

**Genetically modified food**

ie no hyphen - at second reference, **GM food**.

**Geography**

Be explicit. Do not at first reference say eg: ‘the North East’ if you mean **north-east England** - it could as well mean north-east Scotland. Also, do not talk about events happening ‘in Scotland’ or ‘in Wales’ - we wouldn’t, after all, normally say ‘in England’. Locate by town/city/county as appropriate. The rule of thumb is that if a place has a league football team no county is required. So it would be just **Norwich**, but **Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire**.

**Geological periods**

When referring to geological periods such as Early Jurassic or Late Cretaceous **cap up** both the period and the epoch.

**Georgia**

Be clear which Georgia is being referred to: the independent nation in the Caucasus (capital: **Tbilisi**) or the US state (capital: **Atlanta**).

**GlaxoSmithKline**

(created by a merger between Glaxo and SmithKline Beecham) ie with two internal rogue capitals. May be rendered simply as **Glaxo** in headlines, and also at second reference in text.

**God/god**

Initial cap for the **God** of Christianity (or any other monotheistic faith). Otherwise, lower case (eg: **Fans treat Roy of the Rovers as a god**).

**Golf**(Link to sport which isn’t on the site yet)

The four most important championships are known as the majors (lower case). These are: **the Masters, the Open, the US Open and the USPGA**.

The Open takes place in Britain, but is **not** ‘the British Open’.

The **Ryder Cup** is a biennial competition between teams from the US and Europe.

Scores in matchplay are in digits, with an ampersand(eg:Jekyll beat Hyde, 4&3).

**Good news**

Like ‘bad news’ - **not** to be used as a blanket term. For example, a cut in interest rates must not be characterised as ‘good news on interest rates’ - since, while mortgage holders will be pleased, savers will not. So the term is acceptable only with a qualification (eg **There is good news for house buyers**). The safest approach is simply to say what has happened - and let the reader decide whether it constitutes good news or bad.

**government**

ie lower case, whether for **the government** (in the UK) or for a foreign government eg: **The Italian government**). The abbreviation ‘govt’ is never acceptable, even in a headline.

**Governor/governor**

With an initial cap for the governor of a state/region if accompanied by the name (eg: **California Governor Ted Bodybuilder will address the conference**). Lower case without the name (eg: **California’s governor will arrive on Tuesday**). Same rule for former governors (eg: **The former Governor of New York, Mario Cuomo, is a well-known liberal. The former governor is a steadfast opponent of the death penalty**). Except in direct quotes, avoid ‘gubernatorial’, which is little used outside the US.

**Graft**

May be used to mean ‘hard work’ - but **not** (as in the US) to ‘profit gained by dishonest means’.

**Grand Prix**

ie upper case - both for specific races (eg: **the French Grand Prix**) and in a general sense (eg: **Gordon said it had always been his ambition to win a Grand Prix**). The plural is **Grands Prix**.

**Grand Slam**

(in tennis, golf etc) ie initial caps.

**Great Britain**

is made up of England, Scotland and Wales; **the United** **Kingdom** also includes Northern Ireland.

**Greater London Authority**

ie initial caps. Spell out in full at first mention - but **GLA** is acceptable in headlines, and in text at second reference as an alternative to **the authority**. It is made up of the mayor plus the **London Assembly**(initial caps; second reference**the assembly**), which has 25 elected **members**.

**green belt**

is our preferred style, rather than greenbelt.

**Green Line**

(in Cyprus) ie initial caps. It should not be preceded by the phrase ‘the so-called’.

**Green Paper**

(a preliminary report of government proposals designed to stimulate discussion) ie upper case, two words. Do not use this term at first reference.

**Grey/gray**

Use the English spelling ie **grey** except when referring to the **gray whale**(the spelling accepted by the conservation community).

**G7/G8/G10**

ie upper case ‘G’ with **no** gap.

**Guerrillas**

ie with a double ‘r’ and double ‘l’. Use for groups or organisations carrying out a campaign of irregular warfare.

**Guides**

In the UK, they should not be referred to as ‘girl guides’. The organisation is called **Girlguiding UK**; members are known as **Guides, Brownies and Rainbows**. Outside the UK, some countries still have girl guides or girl scouts.

**Guildhall**

(in the City of London) ie does **not** have a definite article. (eg: **The chancellor was addressing a dinner at Guildhall**).

**Guinea/Guinea-Bissau**

The republic of **Guinea** is in West Africa; it was formerly French Guinea and its capital is **Conakry**. Not to be confused with the adjoining republic **Guinea-Bissau**, formerly Portuguese Guinea, whose capital is **Bissau**.

**Gulf**

Our style is **the Gulf** - and not ‘the Arabian Gulf’ or ‘the Persian Gulf’.

**Guns**

Civilian firearms in the UK are for the most part licensed for sporting purposes. Calling them ‘weapons’ suggests we have already made a judgement on the intent of the user. ‘Firearms’ or ‘guns’ may be a better description.

Semi-automatic rifles are not banned - semi-automatic centrefire rifles are, but semi-automatic .22 rimfires are not. (A semi-automatic firearm fires one round each time the trigger is pulled.)

Ammunition is measured in both imperial and metric - .22 calibre is common across a broad range of firearms, but a 5.5mm bullet would be about the same size. If you find yourself writing about 22mm or similar ammunition, double-check - that's more suited to a cannon.

Armed police in the UK are not carrying machine-guns - they use semi-automatic firearms.

Avoid the term ‘assault weapon’ as it has become politicised in the US. If you mean a military-style assault rifle then say so.

Apart from a few specialist exceptions, pistols are prohibited in the UK so we should not be using images of handguns in reporting about legally held firearms in the UK.

Do not make the mistake of assuming that the NRA (UK) is a branch of the NRA (US) - they are not related.

**Gunshot**

Do not refer to ‘gunshot wounds’ - they are **bullet wounds**. If a shotgun is used, they are **shotgun wounds**.

**Gurkha**

ie upper case and not ‘Ghurka’ or ‘Gurhka’.

**Guy Fawkes Day/Night**

ie no apostrophe.

**Gypsy/gypsy**

For ethnic Gypsies in the UK, we use **Gypsy/Gypsies** (capped up), as that is how their distinct racial group was recognised in a key High Court ruling. But the term **Roma** must always be included in stories about the Romany people of Eastern and Central Europe and the Middle East.

**Gypsies**,**Romany Gypsies**and**Irish Travellers**are legally recognised terms for distinct ethnic groups, but should be used only if we know we are referring to those groups.

We can use **travellers** (capped down) as a generic, but should avoid references to ‘new age’ travellers, who are an entirely different phenomenon.

Do **not**use ‘gipsy’, which is anachronistic and regarded by many as a deliberate mis-spelling to deny them their identity.

**Hague, The**

ie both words capped. It is the seat of government in the Netherlands - but not the capital (which is Amsterdam). It is also where bodies such as the International Criminal Court are based - but avoid phrases such as ‘He will appear at The Hague next month’.

**Hajj**

(the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca) ie initial cap and double ‘j’.

**halal**

Lower case. Means permissible under Islamic law - usually refers to dietary rules relating to food consumption.

**Half-time**

ie **with** a hyphen, whether used as a noun (eg: **Smith was substituted at half-time**) or an adjective (eg: **He was notorious for his half-time outbursts**).

**Handicapped**

Do not use the term ‘mentally handicapped’, which is widely regarded as offensive. The phrase **People with learning disabilities** is an acceptable alternative. Refer to **people with physical handicaps** or **people with physical disabilities**- but do **not** describe them as ‘the disabled’ or ‘the handicapped’.

**Hangar/hanger**

A hangar is where aircraft are kept. A hanger is for putting clothes on.

**Hanged/hung**

Criminals are **hanged**, pictures are **hung**.

**Haniya, Ismail**

(senior Hamas leader) ie not Haniyeh.

**Haram al-Sharif**

(ie lower case ‘al’ followed by a hyphen, and **not**‘the al-Haram al-Sharif’). This is how Muslims refer to the area in Jerusalem that translates from Hebrew as **the Temple Mount**. The Arabic translates as **the Noble Sanctuary**.

**Haredi**

(Ultra-Orthodox branch of Judaism) ie upper case ‘H’.

**Haringey/Harringay**

The name of the London borough is **Haringey** (one ‘r’, ending ‘-ey’). One of its wards is **Harringay** (double ‘r’, ends ‘-ay’).

**Harlem/Haarlem**

The district in New York City is **Harlem** with a single ‘a’; **Haarlem** is a Dutch city.

**Harrods**

ie no apostrophe.

**Harvard University**

is the correct term. It is **not** ‘the University of Harvard’.

**Hat-trick**

ie hyphenated.

**Headlines**

Index-level headlines must be 30-36 characters long, including gaps - usually five to seven words. Story-level headlines can be up to 55 characters (a little longer as long as key words are within the 55) and should aim to include key terms to attract search engine referrals.

Avoid the US convention of using a comma in place of the word ‘and’ (eg: ‘Crowe, Roberts in Oscar triumph’).

If the attribution is clear, there is no need for quotation marks (eg: **I’ve had enough, says Smith**). Any quotation marks in a headline must be single.

Headlines might appear without an accompanying summary, so keep them simple. A cryptic headline, out of context, may be meaningless.

**Head teachers**

The generic **head teacher** is written as two words (eg: **the National Association of Head Teachers**) or **head** for short (eg: **the Secondary Heads Association**).

But the single-word **headmaster** and **headmistress**should be used if that is what they call themselves (eg: **the Headmasters’ and Headmistresses’ Conference**).

Some school heads have other titles, such as **principal** (especially in the college sector), **high master**, **master** or **warden**.

**Heads of state**

are not necessarily the same as heads of government. The US president is both. But it is wrong to speak of a meeting of ‘Western heads of state’ if Britain is represented by the prime minister. The PM is the head of government; the **Queen** is the head of state.

**Healthcare**

ie one word.

**Heart attack/cardiac arrest**

These are not synonymous. **Cardiac arrest** is when the heart suddenly stops beating. A **heart attack** is when the blood flow to the heart is interrupted (otherwise known as a **myocardial infarction**). A **heart attack** can cause **cardiac arrest**.

**Her Majesty’s Opposition**

ie initial caps for the full title. But capitalisation is dropped if you refer only to **the opposition**. The **leader of the opposition** is capped up only if accompanied by a name.

**Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh**

ie one ‘t’ and with a hyphen.

**Hezbollah**

and not ‘Hizbollah’.

**High Street**

ie initial caps in such phrases as **the High Street banks**.

**Hinckley/Hinkley**

Note the ‘c’ in **Hinckley, in Leicestershire**. There is no ‘c’ in **Hinkley Point, Somerset**.

**Historic/historical**

There is a distinction: **historic**means ‘memorable’, whereas **historical**means ‘belonging to history’. As an adjective, both take the indefinite article **‘a’**.

**high-tech (updated April 2017)**

ie lower case, and hyphenated; high- not hi-. Also **low-tech**

**Historic/historical**

There is a distinction: **historic**means ‘memorable’ whereas **historical**means ‘belonging to history’. As an adjective, both take the indefinite article **‘a’**.

In terms of historical child abuse, there is a view the word suggests incidents are in the past and therefore forgotten. Sometimes just saying when offences happened can be a useful alternative.

**HIV**

stands for **Human Immunodeficiency Virus**. It is tautological to speak of the ‘HIV virus’, and avoid ‘HIV victims’ or ‘HIV sufferers’ - say **people with HIV** or **people living with HIV**. The same goes for Aids.

**Holidaymaker**

ie one word, no hyphen.

**Holland**

is only a part of the Netherlands. So we should say eg: **The presidency of the European Union has been taken over by the Netherlands**.

**Holocaust/holocaust**

Initial cap when referring to the persecution of Jews during World War Two. Otherwise, lower case.

**Homeopathy**

is our favoured spelling for the alternative therapy. However, we should use other spellings when part of organisations such as **Royal London Homoeopathic Hospital**.

**Homogeneous/homogenous**

Do not confuse **homogeneous**, which means ‘of the same kind’, with **homogenous**, meaning ‘similar because of common descent’.

**Homophones**

Easily mixed up, so try to commit to memory:

**Affect/effect -**the verb ‘to affect’ means ‘to have an influence on’; ‘to effect’ means ‘to cause, accomplish’. In most cases **affect** will be the verb, **effect** the noun.

**Bail/bale -**use **bail**for the temporary release of someone awaiting trial. To **bail out**is to help a company or person with financial problems (noun: **bailout**). Use **bale out** for removing water from a boat, or jumping out of a plane.

**Complement/compliment -**to **complement** means to make complete or supply what is lacking. Whether as a noun or verb, **compliment** means (to) praise.

**Defuse/diffuse -**first is to make safe an explosive; second is something that’s widespread.

**Discreet/discrete -**first means ‘careful’ or ‘tactful’; second means ‘distinct and separate’.

**Fazed/phased -**someone who is disorientated or disconcerted can be described as **fazed**, whereas**phased**means ‘introduced in stages’.

**Formerly/formally** **-** first means previously; second according to convention.

**Gate/gait** **-** first is an entry; second is a manner of walking.

**Hangar/hanger -**a hangar is where aircraft are kept. A hanger is for putting clothes on.

**Hyperthermia/Hypothermia -**first is where the body temperature is greatly **above** normal. Hypothermia is where the body temperature is markedly **below** normal.

**Illicit/elicit -**first means illegal; second is to extract something, usually information.

**Licence/license -**The noun is licence with a ‘c’ (eg: **driving licence**), the verb has an ‘s’ (eg: **licensed to kill**).

**Practice/practise -**thenoun has a ‘c’, the verb has an ‘s’.**He’s a practising lawyer running his own practice.**

**Principal/principle -**firstmeans ‘first in order of importance’ or a school head; second means ‘a rule or belief governing one’s personal behaviour’.

**Rein/reign** **-** first is used on horses; second is what monarchs do. So you would **rein in spending** or **take over the reins**.

**Honorifics**

**Mr**,**Mrs** etc should be used, except for convicted criminals - and also journalists, sports people, authors, actors, artists, musicians and entertainers **in their professional capacity**(eg: **Throughout the interview, Paxman refused to be sidetracked.**But:**The burglars entered Mr Paxman’s house**). Court reports, in the UK and abroad, should give defendants an honorific unless and until they are convicted.

In choosing between **Miss**, **Mrs** and **Ms**, try to find out what the person herself uses, and stick to that. Avoid foreign honorifics (eg: Herr, Madame or Signora).

There is **no** ban on using honorifics with the dead: it’s a matter of judging what is appropriate eg: A man murdered in front of his family does not immediately become ‘Smith’; he remains **Mr Smith**. It would be difficult to defend a court report where the victim was ‘Smith’ and the alleged killer ‘Mr Jones’.

**Honour killings**

We should attribute this phrase, either by use of quotes - ‘honour killings’ - or saying so-called honour killings.

**Honours**

People are **appointed**CBE, OBE and MBE (they stand for Commander, Officer and Member of the Order of the British Empire), or they **become a CBE** etc. Peerages, baronetcies and knighthoods are **conferred**. Alternatively, you could speak of a person being **made** a peer, baronet or knight - and you can also write of someone **receiving** or **being awarded** a peerage or a knighthood (it would also be correct to speak of ‘receiving a baronetcy’; but it is an ugly phrase, best avoided).

Ranks of Order of the British Empire are:

**GBE** (Knight or Dame Grand Cross)

**KBE** (Knight Commander)

**DBE** (Dame Commander)

**CBE** (Commander)

**OBE** (Officer)

**MBE** (Member).

**Hopefully**

Means ‘full of hope’, but it is often wrongly used to mean ‘it is to be hoped’. Best avoided.

**Hosepipe**

ie single word.

**Hospital jargon**

is often fairly meaningless (eg: the description ‘comfortable’ is unlikely to be true of someone who has just fallen out of a window). Try to persuade the hospital to use meaningful English and, if this proves impossible, distance yourself from the language used by saying, eg: **The hospital says he is in a comfortable condition** or **Doctors describe his condition as comfortable**.

Patients are **discharged** from hospital - not ‘released’.

**Hotspot**

Our style is one word when talking about a place of significant activity or danger, although firefighters might dampen down **hot spots**. **Blackspot**is also one word in terms of a place with a particular problem, but the plant disease is**black spot**.

[**House of Commons/the Commons/the House**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/uk-politics/reporting-uk-politics)

ie initial caps when you use the full title, and also when you abbreviate it to either **the Commons** or **the House**. However, any reference to **the lower house**should be in lower case.

**House of Lords/the Lords/the House**

As with the Commons: initial caps for the full title, and also when you abbreviate it to either **the Lords** or **the House**. But lower case for **the upper house**.

**Hoverboard**

although they don’t hover, it’s an acceptable term for these two-wheeled forms of transport. Self-balancing scooter also acceptable**.**

**However**

should be followed by a comma when it means ‘but’ (eg: **However, his luck did not last**). There should be no comma when it means ‘no matter how’ (eg: **However hard he pushed, the door stayed closed**).

**Hunting with dogs**

And **not**‘hunting with hounds’.

**Hurricanes**

In describing the strength of hurricanes, the word **category** should be lower case and followed by the number spelt out (unless it is 10 or higher) eg: **The storm weakened to a category one hurricane**.

**Hyperthermia/Hypothermia**

**Hyperthermia** is the condition where the body temperature is greatly **above** normal. Not to be confused with **hypothermia**, where the body temperature is markedly **below** normal.

**Hyphens**

are often essential, if the text is to make immediate sense. The headlines **Mother-to-be assaulted**and **Mother to be assaulted**are telling very different stories-just as an **easy seal pack** and an **easy-seal pack** conjure up very different images and **She never gives tips to black-cab drivers** is a world apart from **She never gives tips to black cab drivers**.

There are no universal rules on hyphens in many cases, but in general do not overuse. They are required for compound adjectives, as in: **‘If I come with you in first class, will you buy me a first-class ticket?’**But they are not used when part of the adjective is an adverb ending in -ly: ‘badly researched report’, ‘severely wounded man’, ‘newly cleaned car’.

We would say **Jim Smith is a father of two** but it’s **father-of-two Jim Smith**. Likewise **Jim Smith is 25 years old** but **25-year-old Jim Smith**.

Phrasal verbs are constructions such as **build up, turn out, drive in, take over.**Some need hyphens when they are used as nouns. Those ending in -in, -to, -on or -up use a hyphen (check-up, break-in, turn-on). Nouns ending in -off have a hyphen (**pay-off**,**turn-off**,**drop-off**) but those ending in -out do not (**payout**,**turnout**,**dropout**,**bailout**). Nouns where the second part is four or more letters are one word: **takeover**,**clampdown**,**giveaway**,**setback**,**lookahead**,**runaround**. Rare exceptions are where two vowels need to be separated by a hyphen, as in **go-ahead**,though this isn't always necessary.

In general, use a hyphen to separate repeated letters in a compound word: **re-emergence**,**co-operative**, **film-maker**,**night-time**. But there are some exceptions, including **overrun**, **override**, **overrule**, **underrate**, **withhold**. As usual, consult the Oxford English Dictionary if in doubt.

Examples of words and phrases which do and don’t need hyphens:

**airbase**

**aircrew**

**airdrop**

**air force**

**airlift**

**air raid**

**air strike**

**A-level**- also AS-level, O-level

**anti-retroviral**

**asylum seeker**

**Ban Ki-moon**

**best-seller, best-selling**

**bushfire**

**by-election**

**by-law**

**crash-land**

**clear-cut**

**codebreaker**

**crowdfunding**

**crowdsourcing**

**expat**

**filmgoer**(also**theatregoer**,**partygoer**etc)

**film-maker**

**fine-tooth comb**

**flypast**

**fox-hunting**

**full-time**

**fundraising**

**half-time**

**handheld**

**hat-trick**

**heatwave**

**holidaymaker**

**homegrown**

**homemade**

**infrared**

**knifepoint**

**lamp-post**

**landmine**

**machine-gun**(but sub-machine gun)

**multicultural**

**multimillionaire**

**off-peak**

**orangutan**

**peacekeepers, peacekeeping**

**plane-spotter, train-spotter**(but **no** hyphen in the book/film **Trainspotting**)

**prisoner of war**

**post-mortem examination**

**quarter-final**

**ram-raid**

**reopen**

**retweet**

**right-wing, left-wing -**hyphenated if used adjectivally; no hyphen if used as a noun.

**rollercoaster**

**Rolls-Royce**

**sat-nav**

**schoolchildren**

**seabed**

**second half, second-half** **-** no hyphen in the noun, but there is a hyphen in the adjective.

**short-term, long term -**as an adjective it takes a hyphen but no need for one for the noun.

**smartphone**

**South East Asia**

**substation**

**sunbed**

**suncream**

**Sven-Goran Eriksson**

**tear gas, tear-gas -** the noun is two separate words; the verb is hyphenated.

**think tank**

**touchline**

**three-quarters**(and other fractions)

**under age -** a child may be under age but is an under-age child.

**waterboarding**

**wildfire**

**Xbox**

**X-ray**

**Zanu-PF**

**ie**

should be written without punctuation.

[**IED**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/military/reporting-the-military)

Or **improvised explosive device**. This is military jargon and we should say **bomb** or, where appropriate, **roadside bomb**. But avoid ‘**makeshift**’ or ‘**home-made**’ bomb, as it is usually tautologous. However, if someone refers in a quote to an IED then we should explain what they are.

**iMac, iPhone, iPad, iPod, iTunes**

ie lower case ‘i’, followed by capital, except at the start of a sentence, where it should be IMac, IPhone etc.

**IMF**

(International Monetary Fund) ie all caps, no punctuation. Acceptable in headlines, but spell it out at first text reference.

**Impeachment**

In the US, impeachment involves the House of Representatives charging a high officer (eg the president) with grave offences. The Senate sits in judgement. Note that Richard Nixon was not impeached - his presidency ended when he resigned; Bill Clinton was impeached for perjury and obstruction of justice, but was acquitted by the Senate.

**Imply/infer**

These are **not** interchangeable. You **imply** something to someone else. You **infer**something from what someone else says.

**Impostor**

ie ending ‘or’ rather than ‘er’.

**Index**

The plural for stock markets etc is **indexes**. Use ‘indices’ only in a mathematical/scientific context.

**Indian foreign minister**

India’s foreign minister is officially called **the external affairs minister.**(Theforeign secretary in Delhi is a civil servant.)

**Indian subcontinent**

is a phrase to be **avoided** - it offends both Pakistan and Bangladesh. According to context, call it the **Asian subcontinent** or just the **subcontinent**.

**Indict**

The word **charge** is preferable, although indict is an alternative in US court cases.

**Infinitives**

The infinitive form of a verb (eg: ‘to go’) is usually best without a word in the middle (eg: ‘to boldly go’). But there is **no** ban on split infinitives. Use them when they are the best way of saying what is to be said.

**Inflammable/flammable**

Strangely, they mean exactly the same - but our preference is for **inflammable**. For the negative, use **non-flammable**.

[**Inflation**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/business-and-economy/reporting-economy)

Inflation is a measurement to describe the rate at which prices in an economy are rising. If prices are falling, it’s called deflation.

In the UK there are two measures for inflation. The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) measures the year-on-year change of consumer prices based on a basket of goods and services purchased by most households, but excludes the cost of mortgage interest rates. The CPI is the basis of the Bank of England’s official inflation target and is an internationally standardised measure which allows us to compare the UK’s inflation rate with that of other EU countries.

The Retail Prices Index, or RPI, is based on the same basket of goods and services, plus mortgages.

We should normally mention both rates, because the CPI is usually a key driver for the Bank of England’s interest rate decision, while the RPI is the benchmark for inflation adjustments of state benefits and many wage negotiations.

Inflation is a rate - so has to be attached to a period of time (eg: **The annual inflation rate rose sharply last month**). And remember that even if the inflation rate falls prices are still going up (unless the rate is negative) - just at a slower rate.

**Inflection**

is our preferred spelling (and not ‘inflexion’).

**Infrared**

ie one word, no hyphen.

**Innocent**

All people killed or injured while not committing a crime are innocent. Do not talk about ‘innocent victims’ since this implies other victims are somehow guilty.

**Inns of Court**

All take initial caps: **Gray’s Inn**, **the Inner Temple**, **Lincoln’s Inn** and **Middle Temple**. (The Inns of Court are the four legal societies having the exclusive right of admitting people to the English Bar.)

**Inquests**

A coroner **records** a verdict - whereas a jury **returns** one.

**Inquiry**

Use ‘inquiry’ rather than ‘enquiry’ in all senses. But where it is a proper name - **National Rail Enquiries** - use the organisation’s spelling.

**International Court of Justice**

One of the principal bodies of the United Nations - often referred to as the World Court. Its objective is the peaceful settlement of disputes between states. It sits in The Hague.

**International Space Station/ISS**

Lower case if used generically (eg: **There will be dozens of international space stations by the end of the century**). But initial caps for the one built in orbit as part of a 16-nation project, since that is its official title (eg: **Scientists say the International Space Station is months behind schedule**).

**internet**

ie lower case.

**Inuit**

is the correct name for native people inhabiting the Arctic region from Greenland to Eastern Siberia. Do **not** use ‘Eskimo’, which is widely regarded as offensive. A member of the Inuit people is an **Inuk**.

**IRA**

(The Irish Republican Army). The **Provisional IRA** was so called to differentiate it from the Official IRA, which is now defunct. It is acceptable to use the term **the Provisionals**, but **not** ‘the Provos’ or the Army’s expression, ‘PIRA’. The **Real IRA** and the **Continuity IRA** can be described as **dissident groups that oppose the IRA ceasefire**.

**Ireland**

Using **Ireland** is acceptable but it may be helpful to make clear early on we are talking about the country rather than the island. **Republic of Ireland** or **the Irish Republic** are also fine. However, when writing stories that cover both parts (eg: **The** **numbers of songbirds are declining throughout Ireland**), we should try to make clear that we are talking about the island as a whole.

There are, however, a number of all-Ireland organisations - religious, voluntary and sporting (eg: the international rugby team takes players from both sides of the border, and is therefore properly called **Ireland**).

There is also the occasional anomaly eg: in the Republic of Ireland, the office of the presidency is described as the president of Ireland - better to say **The Irish president**.

**Irish**

Citizens of the Republic of Ireland may be described as 'Irish'. People in Northern Ireland may describe themselves as Irish, British or Northern Irish. We should respect their preferences where known. Ulster can be used in a direct quote or as part of the title of an organisation.

**Irony**

is a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of that expressed by the words used; usually taking the form of sarcasm or ridicule. It does not mean ‘coincidentally’ or ‘amusingly’ - and is, in general, best avoided.

**Isa**

(individual savings account) ie initial cap only.

**Islam**

The mainstream groups are **Sunni Muslims**and**Shia Muslims**(who should **not** be described as ‘Shiite’).

Our style for the founder of the faith is **the Prophet Muhammad**(at second reference, **Muhammad** or **the Prophet**).

The Sunnis have no institutional clergy, although each mosque has an **imam**(often addressed by the honorific **Sheikh**) who teaches, leads prayers etc. The highest religious authority in a Sunni Muslim country is the **mufti**, who issues fatwas, or religious edicts. Shia Muslims **do** have a clergy, whose members are known generically as **mullahs**. The highest Shia religious authority is an **ayatollah**.

The term **Islamist**has come to refer to those who derive a political course from Islam, so, where appropriate, we can talk in terms of eg: ‘Islamist militants’, ‘extreme Islamists’ or ‘radical Islamist groups’. But specific descriptions are generally better than broad labels.

The Islamic concept of unbelief, of being outside Islam, is **kufr**. An unbeliever is a **kafir** - the plural is **kuffar**. However, in a direct quote ‘kafirs’ is acceptable.

**Islamic State**

The name should be qualified eg ‘Islamic State group’ or ‘so-called Islamic State’, or ‘self-styled Islamic State’, or ‘Islamic State fighter, militants, extremists’ etc. Use IS in the rest of the piece. IS can also be used in headlines.

[**Israeli Arabs**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/israel-and-the-palestinians/israel-and-the-palestinians)

and not ‘Arab Israelis’.

**Israeli Labour Party**

ie do **not** use the American-style ‘Labor’.

**Its/it’s**

Do **not** use an apostrophe to indicate possession (eg: **The decision shocked the government and its supporters**). But **do** use an apostrophe to indicate the omission of a letter or letters (eg: **It’s a lovely day**, **It’s been a disappointing match**), but this will arise only when quoting someone, since it is our style **not** to use contractions.

**Jail**

not ‘gaol’.

**Jane’s**

(yearbooks on planes, ships etc) ie capital letter, apostrophe ‘s’.

**Jargon**

should be weeded out - especially when, for example, creating a text version of an interview. The aim is to be absolutely unambiguous, and immediately comprehensible. If the meaning is not clear, leave it out. Indirect speech can be a valuable tool, as can phrases such as **what he called**, **as he put it** etc.

Beware, in particular, of hospital jargon (eg: ‘in a comfortable condition’) and police jargon (eg: ‘helping with inquiries’), and steer clear of management jargon (eg: ‘ongoing’, ‘interface’, ‘downsizing’ etc).

**Jemaah Islamiah**

(Islamic militant group suspected of being behind the Bali bomb attacks) ie no ‘y’ in **Islamiah**. May be abbreviated at second reference to **JI**. It is believed to want a pan-Islamic state covering Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and the southern Philippines island of Mindanao. Its main leader is the Muslim cleric **Abu Bakar Ba’asyir**; second reference **Mr Ba’asyir**.

**Jeweller/jewellery**

Do **not** adopt the US spelling (‘jeweler/jewelry’).

**Jihad**

(Arabic word meaning holy war or struggle - it does **not** always entail violence) ie lower case.

**Jobcentre/job centre**

Capped up in references to the organisation - but without the rogue internal cap that ‘JobCentre’ itself uses. Thus, we should say eg: **A man who wants to be a professional wrestler has won a grant from Jobcentre**. Otherwise, separate words - both lower case eg: **Fifty new job centres are to be opened across north-east England**.

**jobseeker’s allowance**

ie lower case with an apostrophe before the ‘s’.

**Job titles**

Politics aside, we use lower case for all job titles. So it is **the chairman of Microsoft, Bill Gates, the first director general of the BBC, Lord Reith,**and **the England captain, Brian Smith**etc.

**Johns Hopkins University**

(private university in Baltimore, endowed by financier Johns Hopkins in late 19th Century) ie with an ‘s’ at the end of both names - and no apostrophes.

**Journalese**

should in general be avoided, but is sometimes permissible in headlines. Words which fall into this category include: **axe**(of jobs, team members), **dump**(as verb), **medic**/**op** (for ‘operation’), **probe**, **quiz** (as verb) and **rap**.

Some other examples of the genre are also acceptable in text, if used sparingly. These include **bid** (to mean ‘attempt’),**blast** or **slam** (to mean criticise), **bug**(in a medical sense), **mum**,**dad** and **kid**,**cabbie**, **gag**(as a verb), **smash** (synonym for ‘crash’), **vow**, **swoop**,**top**(as in **top policeman**). **Teen** or **teens** is acceptable in headlines only. But do **not** use ‘slate’ to mean ‘criticise’ - it has a different meaning for an American reader.

Some words are best avoided altogether, unless they occur in a direct quote. These include **bonk**,**cops**,**fags**,**ongoing** and **upcoming**.

**Judgement**

is our favoured spelling - and **not** ‘judgment’.

**Judges**

Titles vary, according to the court.

A Law Lord would be, eg: **Lord Greening**.

An Appeal Court Judge, **Lord Justice Greening**.

A High Court Judge, **Mr Justice Greening**.

A Circuit Judge, **Judge Greening**.

When two judges have the same surname, the forename of the **junior** is given: eg **Lord Justice Greening** and **Lord Justice Simon Greening**.

**Junctions (motorway)**

Lower case ‘j’ and numbers below 10 written out - eg: **junction five**,**junction 11**.

**Junior**

In distinguishing between family members with the same names, our favoured form for the younger is **Jr**, and we use**Sr**for the older party.

**Jury**

is singular. It delivers a verdict or returns a verdict. Its members are jurors (plural).

**Kashmir**

References to the two parts of Kashmir should preferably be in the form of **Indian-administered Kashmir** and **Pakistan-administered Kashmir**. An acceptable alternative is Indian-controlled or Pakistan-controlled. Indian Kashmir or Pakistan Kashmir is less good and is resented in Kashmir. Do not on any account use the words ‘held’ or ‘occupied’.

The de facto border is known as the **Line of Control**- may be abbreviated at second reference to **LoC**.

Adjective **Kashmiri** (but the wool is, of course, **cashmere**).

**Kathmandu**

(capital of Nepal) ie with an ‘h’ after the ‘t’.

**Kick-off/kick off**

As a noun, needs a hyphen (eg: **The kick-off was delayed**). The verb is two separate words (eg: **The match will kick off an hour late**).

**Kiev**

is our preference for the capital of Ukraine and not Kyiv or other variations.

**Kings/kings**

We use Roman numerals with names (eg: **Henry VIII**, **Charles II**). Only our own monarch retains the initial cap in all circumstances (eg: **The King is planning an official visit to Australia**). Other monarchs are capitalised only when the name is used (eg: **King Albert of Belgium**- but**the king**).

**King’s College, Cambridge**

ie apostrophe before the ‘s’.

**King’s Cross, London**

Again, the apostrophe before the ‘s’.

**Knesset**

(the Israeli parliament; sits in Jerusalem) ie initial cap.

**Knot**

In the context of shipping, this is a unit of speed equivalent to 1.85km per hour. It is nonsensical to write about ‘knots per hour’.

**Koran**

is our spelling of the Islamic sacred book - **not** Quran or Qur’an.

**Kosovo**

is a territory whose status is in dispute. It unilaterally declared independence from Serbia in February 2008, but its secession is rejected by Serbia. More than 100 nations have recognised Kosovo as independent, but the UN and many other nations are withholding recognition. We should therefore not refer to it either as an independent country or as a province of Serbia, but explain its disputed status.

Its people are **Kosovans**. The adjective is **Kosovan**(**not** ‘Kosovar’).

Refer to Albanians from Kosovo as **Kosovo Albanians**.

**Kufr**

(Islamic concept of unbelief, of being outside Islam.) An unbeliever is a **kafir**. The plural is **kuffar**,but**kafirs** is acceptable in a direct quote.

**Ku Klux Klan**

ie initial caps, no hyphens. May be abbreviated to **KKK** at second reference.

**Labour Party**

ie initial caps - but lower case for references to the party.

Singular in all cases - **Labour is ahead in the polls**; **The Labour Party is planning a relaunch.**

In some countries (eg: Australia) it is **the Labor Party** - but it is **the Israeli Labour Party**,**the Labour Party** in New Zealand and **the Socialist Labour Party** in Canada.

**laid off**

Workers are laid off when there is not enough work and they don’t come in, often unpaid. It’s not the same as being sacked or made redundant.

**Lake District**

The only lake in the Lake District with ‘Lake’ in its title is **Bassenthwaite Lake**. ‘Mere’, as in **Windermere**, means ‘lake’ - so strictly speaking, it is superfluous to write ‘Lake Windermere’. However, Windermere is also the name of a town so, for clarity’s sake, include the label to avoid confusion - and omit it only if there is no scope for ambiguity (eg: **Hoteliers in the Lake District have renewed their complaints about speedboats on Windermere**).

**Lamp-post**

ie hyphenated.

**Landmine**

ie one word.

**Land Rover**

ie separate words (likewise, **Range Rover**).

**Land’s End, Cornwall**

ie with an apostrophe before the ‘s’.

**Lashkar Gah**

is a place in Helmand province in southern Afghanistan ie two words.

**Last/past**

The word ‘last’ is correct if you mean ‘final’ (eg: **the last three weeks of the Gulf War**). For time just gone, you should refer to eg: **the past three weeks**.

**Latin-American names**

In Spanish American and European Spanish names, the last of the three names is usually the mother’s name, which should not be used on its own. So **Manuel Echeverria Valdez** becomes **Mr Echeverria**, and **not** ‘Mr Valdez’. This does not apply to Brazilian/Portuguese names.

**Latin names**

ie for animals, birds etc. Use italics - and cap the first word only (eg: *Corvus corone*).

**Law Lords**

ie initial caps.

**Lawsuit**

is an American term - to be avoided. Use, as appropriate, **legal case**, **prosecuted**, **sued** etc.

**lbw**

ie lower case, no punctuation.

**Legionnaires’ disease**

ie capped up and with an apostrophe **after** the ‘s’. But: **legionella bacterium**.

**Left-wing, left wing**

(Should be hyphenated if used adjectivally; no hyphen if used as a noun). This term can be useful when defining a political party or group in terms of where it stands in relation to others on the political spectrum. However, it should not be used loosely or where the party can more clearly be defined by reference to a specific policy eg: **The Green Party, which wants greater protection for the environment…**

**Less/fewer**

Use ‘less’ when referring to a quantity rather than a number (eg: **The committee is calling for less bureaucracy**). Use ‘fewer’ when referring to something you can count (eg: **The committee wants to have fewer meetings next year**). The same logic applies with percentages and fractions (eg: **Less than 30% of the hospital survived the fire and fewer than 30% of the patients were rescued; Fewer than a third of the stores have reopened**).

Do **not** use ‘no less than’ with numbers - say eg: **He attacked her on no fewer than 12 occasions.**

However, **ages, heights and weights** take ‘less’ eg: **Tom Thumb was less than 3ft (91cm) tall; Police say the man is less than 30 years old; She weighs less than seven stone (44.5kg)**.

**Level playing field**

is a cliche and should be avoided - unless, of course, it is part of a direct quote.

**Liberal Party**

It still exists - and fights local elections. But there are no longer any Liberal MPs at Westminster. And the ‘Liberal’ tag can never be synonymous with ‘Liberal Democrat’.

**Liberal Democrats**

Use the full title at first reference. Later, it should be cut to **the Lib Dems** (but **never** to ‘the Liberals’).

**Liberation**

Do not describe towns/territory as being ‘liberated’ except in a direct quote - it is a partial word that implies approval.

**Licence/license**

The noun is **licence** with a ‘c’ (eg: **driving licence**). The verb is to **license**with an ‘s’ (eg: **licensed to kill**).

**Life sentence**

The mandatory sentence for murder is life, so saying in a headline **Man jailed for life over toddler murder** doesn’t really tell the reader a great deal. What is more relevant is the tariff - or minimum period they must serve - imposed by the judge. So it is often more helpful to focus on this: **Man who murdered mother jailed for 30 years**, or **Five years for man who killed vicar**. But we must distinguish between the sentence and the tariff, and not say **Triple killer sentenced to 15 years**. When nosing on the tariff, we also need to make clear in the top four pars that it is a life sentence.

**Light year**

ie separate words. It is a measure not of time but of distance (ie the approximate distance travelled by light in one year).

**likely**

Please avoid the mainly American construction **‘He will likely be charged with the offences next week.’**

**Listed buildings**

In England and Wales, the grades are **I**, **II\*** and **II**. We would say **The church is a Grade II listed building**. In Northern Ireland, the system is **Grade A**, **Grade B\***, **Grade B1** and **Grade B2**. In Scotland, it is **Category A**, **Category B** and **Category C**.

**living wage**

there are various schemes. To signify the government’s version we should cap it as National Living Wage. Also National Minimum Wage takes caps.

**Lloyds/Lloyd’s**

without an apostrophe for the bank (**Lloyds**) - but with one for the insurance underwriter and the register of shipping (**Lloyd’s**).

**Lloyd Webber/Lloyd-Webber**

The family name has no hyphen (eg: **Julian Lloyd Webber**). But Andrew Lloyd Webber became **Lord Lloyd-Webber** (ie with a hyphen) to take his seat in the Lords.

**Loathe/loath**

The verb ‘to loathe’ means ‘to hate’. ‘Loath’ means ‘unwilling’ (eg: **He was loath to leave the comfort of his bed**).

**Londonderry**

The city and county are **Londonderry**. The city should be given the full name at first mention, but may be referred to as **Derry**at second reference. The local council is **Derry City Council**.

**Long-term, long term**

as an adjective, it takes a hyphen (eg: **He needs long-term care**). But the noun is written as two separate words (eg: **He will need care in the long term**).

**Looks like**

Use this phrase only to mean ‘resembles’ (eg: **She looks like her mother**). Do **not** use it in the American sense of ‘looks likely’ (eg: ‘It looks like there will be an election’). In this context, say: **It looks as if…** or **It looks likely that…**

**Lords, House of**

As with the Commons - initial caps for the full title, and also when you abbreviate it either to **the Lords** (eg: **The bill was defeated in the Lords**) or **the House** (eg: **The lord chancellor told the House of the government’s plans**). But use lower case for **the upper house**.

**Lord’s**

Lord’s cricket ground has an apostrophe before the ‘s’.

**loyalist**

(in Northern Ireland) ie lower case (except in the names of organisations).

should **not**be used as synonymous with **unionist**. While both want union with Great Britain, the label ‘loyalist’ usually implies support for a degree of extremism in pursuit of that aim. The emphasis should be on political affiliation, not religious.

**Maasai**

ie with three ‘a’s is our preferred spelling for the nomadic people, rather than Masai.

**Macau**

is our preferred style for the special administrative region of China, rather than Macao.

**Macedonia**

There are two - one is a former Yugoslav republic (capital: Skopje); the other is a region of northern Greece. Call the country simply **Macedonia** on first reference - in headlines and intros. ‘Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ is only used in official parlance at the UN, EU and the Eurovision Song Contest, mainly to placate Greek objections. Macedonians find that formulation insulting. However, it may be used lower down in the story if required for context, eg if the story talks about the name dispute and/or relations with Greece. References to the region of Macedonia should make clear it is part of Greece.

**Mach**

Short for Mach number: the ratio of the speed of a body to the speed of sound in the surrounding atmosphere (Mach 1 = speed of sound). It is named after Ernst Mach, Austrian physicist, and should have an initial cap.

**Machine-gun**

ie with a hyphen. But **sub-machine gun**.

**Madagascar**

ie every vowel is an ‘a’. The adjective is **Madagascan**,although locals say it’s not a word they ever use. The language and people are **Malagasy**.

**Mad cow disease**

Use inside **double** quotation marks at first mention in text; **single** marks if the first mention is inside a direct quote, or in a headline or sub-head. Either way, no quote marks subsequently.

**Madras**

Since 2011, our style has been to use **Chennai**rather than Madras, but we should include the formulation **Chennai (Madras)** once high up in the body of the story.

**Madrassa**

is our preferred version of the spelling for these Islamic schools or colleges.

**Mafia**

Capped up for the Sicilian branch, otherwise lower case (eg: **The Camorra, the Naples-based mafia...**).

**Magdalen/Magdalene**

It is **Magdalen College, Oxford** - but **Magdalene College, Cambridge**.

**Magistrates’ court**

ie with an apostrophe after the ‘s’. It should be capped up if part of a title (eg: Brent Magistrates’ Court).

**Mainland**

is perfectly acceptable in its place (eg: **An island off the west coast of Scotland has cancelled its ferry service to the mainland).** But do **not** use it in the context of Irish stories. (eg: ‘The Belfast ferry company has resumed services to the mainland’).

**Majorca**

and **not** ‘Mallorca’.

**Mall**

The phrase ‘shopping mall’ is an Americanism; substitute **shopping centre** or **shopping precinct**.

**Mankind**

is open to objections of sexism - safer to write **the human race**, **people** etc.

**Manned/manning/manpower**

In a mixed workforce, it’s more accurate to use **staffed**, **staffing**,**staffing level** etc. By the same token, avoid ‘man in the street’.

**Mao Zedong**

And **not** ‘Mao Tse-tung’ or any other variant.

**Marine**

In the UK, marines are part of the navy. They are **not**soldiers - so don’t call them that. Lower case unless you are referring to the **Royal Marines**. We cap up **US Marines**, as it is a discrete branch of the armed forces. But individually they are also marines.

**Marks and Spencer**

ie in the full name, the ‘and’ is spelled out. But it is reduced to an ampersand in the abbreviated form (**M&S** - no gaps, no points).

**Marseille**

ie no ‘s’ at the end.

**Mass**

A priest officiating at Mass is celebrating Mass, and not ‘offering’ or ‘giving’ it (Mass being an act, not an object). When there are a number of priests involved, they are concelebrants. When the [Pope](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/religion/reporting-the-roman-catholic-church) is one of that number, he is the chief celebrant or principal celebrant. Some Anglican churches hold services that they refer to as ‘Mass’.

**master’s degree**

lower case, but Master of Arts or similar capped.

**Matchplay/ Match Play**

(in golf) is usually one word, but it is **two**words in the names of some tournaments (eg: the **World Match Play Championship**).

**Mayor/mayor**

For the mayor of a town/city, use a capital letter if accompanied by the name (eg: **London Mayor Joe Bloggs will address the conference**); lower case without the name (eg: **London's mayor will arrive on Tuesday**). Same rule for former mayors (eg: **The former Mayor of New York, Rudi Giuliani, is best known for his leadership in the days following 9/11. The former mayor supported ‘zero-tolerance’ policies on crime**.)

**McDonald’s**

(the burger people) ie no ‘a’ in ‘Mc’ and an apostrophe before the ‘s’. But: **Big Mac**.

**m-commerce**

(mobile e-commerce) ie lower case - with a hyphen.

**ME**

(myalgic encephalomyelitis) ie caps, no gap. Call it chronic fatigue or chronic fatigue syndrome - but never ‘yuppie flu’.

**Media**

is a plural, so say eg: **The media are in angry mood.** Note however that **the press** is singular eg: **The press hates the government**.

**Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency**

(Government body responsible for ensuring safety of medicines and medical devices) ie **Products** has initial cap - although the short form, acceptable at second reference, is **MHRA**.

**Medieval**

is our preferred spelling (rather than ‘mediaeval’). **Middle Ages** has initial caps.

**Megrahi**

(Libyan convicted over Lockerbie - died in May 2012) The preferred spelling of his full name is **Abdelbaset Ali al-Megrahi**.After first reference, and in keeping with our style on Arab personal names, call him **Megrahi**.Thisshould also be used where appropriate in headlines.

**Meningitis**

There are two types: **viral meningitis** and **bacterial meningitis.**Theyboth infect the fluid of the spinal cord and brain. Vaccines are designed to give protection against the bacterial variety, not the viral. The micro-organisms which can cause bacterial meningitis can also pass into the bloodstream and cause **meningococcal septicaemia**.

[**MEP**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/eu/eu-how-it-works)

(Member of the European Parliament) ie all caps, no points, no gaps. Alternatively, Euro-MP.

**Merseyside**

no longer exists as a county, but is still of value in identifying the region. Say **on Merseyside** (and not ‘in Merseyside’).

**Meshaal, Khaled**

(exiled Hamas leader) ie **not** ‘Khalid’ or ‘Mishal’.

**Meteor/meteorite/meteoroid**

**A meteoroid** is a space rock, probably less than 100 metres across (the bigger space rocks are called asteroids).

A **meteor**refers to the light phenomenon in the sky (a shooting star) when a space rock enters the Earth’s atmosphere and burns up.

A**meteorite** is the lump of rock that has survived entry and is left on the Earth’s surface. It does not become a meteorite until it is on the ground. Thus, meteorites do not ‘fall to earth’; nor do they hit anything.

**Middle East**

ie initial caps. **In headlines only**, it may be abbreviated to Mid-East (with a hyphen).

**Middlesbrough**

is the correct spelling (and **not** ‘Middlesborough’). The local football team can be abbreviated at second reference to Boro (no apostrophe).

**Middlesex**

no longer exists as a county (although there are still Middlesex organisations eg. Middlesex County Cricket Club, Middlesex Tennis etc). Usually best replaced by a London geographical reference (Harrow in north-west London; Harefield Hospital, west of London etc).

**mid-terms**

is our style for the US elections, lower case and hyphenated.

[**MI5**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/military/intelligence-and-security-services)

is the Security Service. It does not employ agents.

[**MI6**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/military/intelligence-and-security-services)

is the Secret Intelligence Service. It does employ agents.

**Military ranks**

(with abbreviations):

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Royal Navy** | **Army** | **Royal Air Force** |
| **Officers** | **Officers** | **Officers** |
| Admiral of the Fleet | Field Marshal | Marshal of the Royal Air Force |
| Admiral (4 star)(Adm) | General ( 4 star)(Gen) | Air Chief Marshal (4 star)(ACM) |
| Vice Admiral (3 star)(Vice Adm) | Lieutenant General (3 star)(Lt Gen) | Air Marshal (3 star)(AM) |
| Rear Admiral (2 star)(Rear Adm) | Major General (2 star)(Maj Gen) | Air Vice Marshal (2 star)(AVM) |
| Commodore (1 star)(Cmdr) | Brigadier (1 star)(Brig) | Air Commodore (1 star)(Air Cmdr) |
| Captain(Capt) | Colonel(Col) | Group Captain(Gp Capt) |
| Commander(Cdr) | Lieutenant Colonel(Lt Col) | Wing Commander(Wing Cdr) |
| Lieutenant Commander(Lt Cdr) | Major(Maj) | Squadron Leader(Sqn Ldr) |
| Lieutenant(Lt) | Captain(Capt) | Flight Lieutenant(Flt Lt) |
| Sub Lieutenant(Sub Lt) | Lieutenant(Lt) | Flying Officer |
| Midshipman | 2 nd  Lieutenant(2nd Lt) | Pilot Officer |
| **Other Ranks** | **Other Ranks** | **Other Ranks** |
| Warrant Officer(WO) | Warrant Officer class 1(WO1) | Warrant Officer/Master Aircrew |
| \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Warrant Officer class 2 | Flight Sergeant (Flt Sgt) |
| Chief Petty Officer(CPO) | Staff/Colour Sergeant(Staff/Colour Sgt) | Chief Technician(Ch Tech) |
| Petty Officer(PO) | Sergeant(Sgt) | Sergeant(Sgt) |
| \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* | Corporal/Bombardier(Cpl) | Corporal(Cpl) |
| Leading hand | Lance Corporal(L/Cpl) | Senior Aircraftman/woman(SAC) |
| Able Seaman | Private/Trooper/Sapper(Pte) | Leading Aircraftman/woman(LAC) |

**Miracles**

are best left to God - so do **not** write about ‘miraculous’ escapes or, even worse, ‘miracle escapes’. An adjective such as **remarkable**is preferable,although in practice it is usually best to let the facts speak for themselves.

**Missing**

The phrase ‘go missing’ suggests a deliberate act - better to say that someone **is missing**or **has not been seen** since...

**Mitigate**

means ‘to make less severe’. Do not make the mistake of saying ‘mitigate against’, when you actually mean **militate against** (ie ‘to be a powerful factor in preventing’).

[**MLA**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/devolution/what-is-devolution)

(Member of the Legislative Assembly) is the abbreviation to use for a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly; plural: **MLAs**.

**Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland**

The full title is too much of a mouthful - even though he is the senior dignitary of an established Church, on a par with the Archbishop of Canterbury. Better to write **The most senior figure in the Church of Scotland...** with at second reference eg: **James McTaggart, the Moderator of the General Assembly...**

**Moon/moon**

Upper case for the one circling the Earth - otherwise lower case (eg: **By the light of the Moon, he focused his telescope on Jupiter’s moons**).

**Moonies**

An acceptable shorthand in headlines for the Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon, but we should make clear in copy that it is a term used by critics that many church members find offensive.

**More than**

is the correct term to use with numbers (eg: **More than 100 helicopters are flying in supplies**). Use **over** when you are writing about quantities (eg: **Each one is carrying over five tonnes of aid**).

**Mortars**

You can fire mortar-bombs (or mortar-rounds) but **not** shells. The piece of equipment doing the firing is the **mortar**,so it is wrong to refer to ‘a mortar landing on...’ but correct to speak of a target being **mortared**.

**MoT**

The vehicle test should be spelled with a lower case ‘o’.

**Motassadek, Mounir al-**

(Moroccan convicted in Germany in connection with the 9/11 attacks)

His full name is **Mounir al-Motassadek** (ie lower case ‘al’ - followed by a hyphen). After that, he is**Motassadek**.

**Mother’s Day**

ie both words capped up - with an apostrophe **before** the ‘s’. In the UK, it is on the fourth Sunday in Lent. In the US, Canada and Australia, it falls on the second Sunday in May.

**Mousavi, Mir Hossein**

(reformist Iranian politician) ie **not** ‘Mirhoseyn Musavi’.

**MP**

(Member of Parliament) ie both caps, no points, no gap. Plural: **MPs**. It should be lower case ‘member’ in sentences such as **She is one of seven new members from Lancashire**.

**mph**

ie lower case, no gaps.

**MSP**

(Member of the Scottish Parliament) ie all caps, no points, no gaps. Plural **MSPs**.

[**Muhammad**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/religion/reporting-islam)

For the founder of Islam, our style is **the Prophet Muhammad**;at second reference **Muhammad** or **the Prophet**. For the spelling of individual Muslims named after him, there is no simple rule because the spelling (Muhammad/Mohamed/Mohammad) varies from country to country. But in the Arab world, where Arabic script rules, we should use **Muhammad**.

**mujahideen**

ie lower case - and not ‘-hidin’, ‘-hedeen’ etc.

**Multicultural**

ie one word - **not** hyphenated.

**Multimillionaire**

ie one word - no hyphen.

**Multimillion-pound**

ie one hyphen when preceding a noun.

**mum/dad**

lower case if referring to them as parents, as in **‘My mum and dad have been brilliant.’** Capped if you could replace ‘mum’ or ‘dad’ with a name: **‘It’s about time Mum and Dad came to visit.’**

**Mumbai**

As **Mumbai** is now well known as the name for the former **Bombay**, it is fine to use in all contexts without the previous formulation **Mumbai (Bombay)**. The stock exchange in the city **remains** the **Bombay Stock Exchange**.

**Muslim**

and not ‘Moslem’ - always capped.

**Muslim parliament**

(in the UK) Always say **so-called**or **self-styled**or something similar at first mention.

**MySpace**

ie with a capital ‘s’.

**Mystery**

is fine as a noun (eg: **Police say the killing is a mystery**) - and can sometimes be properly used in an adjectival sense (eg: **mystery tour**, **mystery play**, **mystery guest**). But avoid the tabloid usage (eg: ‘Police probe mystery murder’). The correct adjective is **mysterious**.

**Nad Ali**

Is our preferred spelling for the district in Afghanistan’s Helmand province - not Nad-e Ali or other variants.

**Nagorno-Karabakh**

ie hyphenated. A region of Azerbaijan - and the subject of dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Capital, **Stepanakert**.

**Nasdaq**

ie initial cap only (the US stock market for hi-tech companies. It is purely an electronic market, unlike the New York Stock Exchange).

**Nasrallah, Sheikh Hassan**

(leader of the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah). Sheikh Nasrallah on second reference.

**National**

The title is often misleading (eg: the National Rivers Authority does not cover Scotland).

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

is the full title - but it is possible to save space by using a label (eg: **The teachers’ union, the NASUWT**...) If it’s unavoidable, **NASUWT** is acceptable in a headline - but a better plan would be to rejig the headline. At second reference, it might be enough to refer simply to **the union**.

**national curriculum**

(ie lower case) the curriculum for state schools in **England**. (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each has its own.)

**national executive committee (Labour Party’s)**

ie lower case (eg: **Labour’s national executive committee has ruled that the MP should be expelled from the party**). At second reference, can be **the NEC** or **the committee**. Similarly, other political committees are also lower case (eg: **The Liberal Democrats faced uproar in the conference hall, after the party’s federal policy committee announced it would back a coalition with Labour**and **The Tory Party’s ethics committee confirmed it would investigate the affair**).

**National Hunt**

(ie with initial caps) is horse racing over jumps (either fences or hurdles), as opposed to flat racing.

**National Insurance**

ie with initial caps.

**National Lottery**

ie with initial caps - but lower case if you refer to it as **the lottery**. The main draw is called **Lotto**.

**National parties**

The Scottish National Party and Plaid Cymru sometimes dispute that they are nationalist - but they are certainly national. It is reasonable to refer to **Scottish/Welsh nationalists**,but **not** to the ‘Scottish nationalist party’.

**National Theatre**

The full title of the London venue is **the** **Royal National Theatre**.

**National Union of Teachers**

may be abbreviated to **NUT** ie all caps, no gaps.

**National Vocational Qualification**

is a qualification related to a particular industry or sector, taken at work, college or as part of an apprenticeship.**NVQ at second reference**.

**NatWest**

ie one word, with the internal capital retained.

**Naught/nought**

**naught** means ‘nothing’ (eg: **All his efforts came to naught**), whereas **nought** means the figure ‘0’.

**navy**

ie lower case, even if you are referring to our own. But you do need initial caps if you name a particular one eg: **the Royal Navy**or**the US Navy**.

**Nazi death camps**

When reporting on World War Two, be careful to put any reference to 'Polish death camps' in context. Camps such as Auschwitz and Sobibor were in German- or Nazi-occupied Poland.

**Neither**

usually takes a singular verb (eg: **Neither Mr Brown nor Mrs Green was at the meeting**). The exception is where at least one of the alternatives in the sentence is a plural - in which case the verb is also pluralised (eg: **Neither Mr Brown nor the opponents of the measure are going to pursue the issue**).

**Nepal**

Citizens of Nepal and the language they speak are both **Nepali**. The adjective is **Nepalese**.

**Netanyahu, Benjamin**

(Israeli prime minister) ie not Binyamin.

**Netherlands, the**

is the correct name for the country. It should, therefore, be used in any formal context. But **Holland** is synonymous in common usage - even though it in fact covers just two of the Netherlands’ 12 provinces (North Holland and South Holland). Let the context decide: **The Netherlands has taken over the presidency of the EU** but also **England will play Holland in Amsterdam next week**.

Amsterdam is the Dutch capital, but The Hague is the seat of government.

**new year**

ie lower case. But initial caps for either **New Year’s Day** or **New Year’s Eve.**

**Newcastle**-**under**-**Lyme**

(Staffs) ie with hyphens.

**Newcastle upon Tyne**

(Tyne and Wear) ie no hyphens - and**upon**rather than ‘on’.

**News agencies**

Use the full description **if space allows**, ie ‘the AFP news agency/the Associated Press news agency reports’. But short-forms such as ‘AFP says’ or ‘he told AFP’ are acceptable.

**News conference**

And **not** ‘press conference’, which is too narrow a term and might exclude some categories of journalist.

**News, good/bad**

Never use ‘good news’ or ‘bad news’ as blanket terms. For example, a cut in interest rates must not be characterised as ‘good news on interest rates’ - since, while mortgage holders will be pleased, savers certainly will not be. So the term is acceptable only with a qualification (eg: **There is good news for house buyers**). The safest approach is simply to say what has happened - and let the reader decide whether it constitutes good news or bad.

**Newspaper titles**

Use lower case for the definite article at the start of a newspaper title, whether or not it is part of the masthead. Hence,**the Sun**,**the Daily Telegraph**,**the Times**. In newspaper reviews **only**, the title (but not the definite article) is in bold at first mention.

Note that the word ‘London’ is not part of the title of the **Evening Standard**.

**News of the World**

The abbreviation for the defunct News of the World is **NoW**.

**NHS**

ie all caps, no gaps. If you do spell it out, it takes initial caps (**National Health Service**), but lower case if you shorten it to **the health service**.

**NICE**

(National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) ie contrary to the usual rule, all caps - even though it is pronounced as a word.

**9/11 (11 September)**

is so well-known as shorthand for the attacks on 11 September 2001 that we can use it in headlines and copy, although, depending on the context, it may also be appropriate to include a specific reference to the date of the attacks. Separate the digits with a slash,**not**a hyphen.

**Nobel Prize**

All initial caps in **Nobel Peace Prize** - but the specifics of other prizes are not capped up (eg: **Nobel Prize for chemistry**).

**None**

takes a singular verb (eg: **None of our aircraft is missing**).

**No-one**

ie with a hyphen.

**Nordic**

The Nordic countries are Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland.

**North America**

should be used only to mean the continent of North America - which includes Canada and Greenland.

**northern hemisphere**

ie lower case.

[**Northern Ireland**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/devolution/what-is-devolution)

**Irishman/Irishwoman** are terms that are acceptable for people from the Republic and people from Northern Ireland if we know that is their preferred designation.

Ulster or Ulsterman/Ulsterwoman can be used in a direct quote or as part of the title of an organisation.

**Northern Ireland Assembly**

ie initial caps for the full title - but lower case **assembly**at second reference**.**

**Northern Ireland Executive/executive**

is a mandatory coalition made up of the first minister and the deputy first minister (who are co-equals) and 11 other ministers. Capped up for the full title (eg: **The Northern Ireland Executive declared its opposition**); otherwise lower case (eg: **The executive was headed by Brian Barnes**).

**Northern Ireland terminology**

Some broad guidelines - check with Belfast if in doubt.

**nationalist/republican**(lower case, except in the names of organisations) Broadly, people in Northern Ireland who want to see a united Ireland tend to call themselves nationalists, while those supporting the right to use violence to achieve it call themselves republicans. Focus on political rather than religious affiliation.

**unionist/loyalist** (again, lower case, except in the names of organisations) should not be used as synonyms. Both want union with Great Britain. The label ‘loyalist’ usually implies support for a degree of extremism in pursuit of that aim. As above, the emphasis should be on political affiliation, not religious.

**paramilitaries -**do not give spurious respectability to bombers and gunmen, of whatever affiliation, by duplicating their own military-style terminology (‘Brigades’ etc).

**Irishman**/**Irishwoman**are terms that are acceptable only for people from the Republic. Do not use ‘Ulster’ or ‘Ulsterman’ unless it is in a direct quote or as part of an organisation’s name.

**north pole**

ie lower case.

**No 10**

(Downing Street) ie initial cap, and **not** ‘Number Ten’.

**Npower**

is our style for the company that sponsors Test cricket (rather than ‘npower’, which is how the company refers to itself).

**Nuclear missiles**

There are three types of nuclear missile:

Short-range: below 500km

Medium-range: 500 to 5,000km (intermediate missiles)

Long-range: in excess of 5,000km (strategic or intercontinental missiles).

**Number one**

is the way to write it if you mean **The Beatles had 27 number one hits** or **Harry Harris is Australia’s number one tennis player** - and **not** ‘no 1’, ‘No 1’ or ‘no one’.

[**Numbers**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/how-to/how-to-report/reporting-big-numbers)

For the most part, we use words for single-figure numbers, digits for anything above nine (ie**eight, nine, 10, 11**) - except with abbreviated units of measurement (eg: **3kg**) and with percentages (eg: **4%**).

However, in headlines we can use numerals for numbers below 10, as in **‘Boy, 8, hurt in rollercoaster crash’** or **‘Pound falls to 5-year low’.**

But **never** start a sentence or headline with digits (eg: **Fifty MPs have been expelled**;**Four per cent of the patients have died**).

The same rule works for ordinal numbers: (eighth, ninth, 10th, 11th).

Millions and billions are spelled out, except where they are used with currencies or in headlines (**five million people**, **10 billion grains of sand**, **£5m**). And remember that billion is widely accepted as meaning ‘one thousand million’ (**not** ‘one million million’).

Fractions are written as words or, where appropriate, as a decimal (eg: **three-quarters** or **0.75**).

With heights, weights etc, follow our usual convention with numbers where the following unit is **not**an abbreviation eg: **They walked two miles (3.22km)**;**The troops are 20 miles (32km) from Baghdad**;**The child weighed less than two stone (12.7kg) at the time of his death**.

But **all** numbers are expressed as digits if the accompanying units are abbreviated eg: **Mr Atlas said he had once weighed 6st 9lb (42.18kg). Anderlecht have signed a striker who is 6ft 8in (2.03m).**

Football, rugby etc use digits for scores eg: **Arsenal 2-3 Leeds**.

**Cricket** uses digits for all numbers, both in stories and in summaries eg: **Anderson took 3-42**.

**Tennis** scores use digits for all numbers, **without** commas between sets eg: **Smith beat Jones 6-4 6-7 (2-7) 7-6 (7-4)**. Note that tiebreak scores are inside brackets and separated by dashes.

Winning margins in matchplay golf are written in digits with an ampersand eg: **Morris beat Rose 4&3**.

**Golf** holes are referred to as the 3rd, 4th etc (not ‘the third’, ‘the fourth’ etc).

In **Athletics** events such as the 100m, where times below 10 seconds are regularly achieved, all numbers should be written as digits - and the word ‘seconds’ need not be used throughout eg: **X took gold with a time of 9.93 seconds. In second place was Y, on 9.94. And the bronze medal went to Z, on 9.96.**

Elsewhere, the first reference to a time in athletics should spell it out in full, following the usual convention with numbers below 10 eg: one hour two minutes 23.34 seconds (with no commas between units). After that, switch to a more compact style eg: **1:03:25.67**.

Insert commas into numbers of four digits and above eg: **The race attracted a crowd of 65,000** - but not necessarily in athletics events eg: **A smaller crowd watched the final of the men’s 1500m** - where the figure is pronounced ‘fifteen hundred’).

The ‘One’ in Formula One is written as a digit eg: **Formula 1** or **F1**.

**O2**

(ie with cap ‘O’ - **not** zero) is our style for the name of the company formerly known to its customers as BT Cellnet. We do **not** follow the company's own style, which is ‘O2’.

**Obtuse**

means **blunt**, **insensitive**,**or dull-witted**. It does not mean ‘obscure’ or ‘opaque’.

**OECD**

ie all caps. It stands for **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development**- but you can eliminate the need to spell it out by substituting a label eg: **The OECD, the club of industrialised nations**… or similar.

**Office for National Statistics**

Don’t make the mistake of calling it the Office **of** National Statistics.

**Off-peak**

ie with a hyphen.

**OK**

ie capped up - and **not** ‘okay’ or ‘ok’.

**O-levels**

ie with a hyphen.

**Ongoing**

is typical management jargon - best avoided. Try **continuing** or **developing** or **in progress**, as appropriate.

**online**

The general term is always lower case - except when it is part of the official title of an organisation.

**Only**

Put it as closely as possible to the word(s) it refers to - or risk getting the sense wrong eg: **He drinks champagne only at Christmas** means he does not drink it at other times of the year. **He only drinks champagne at Christmas** means he does not do anything else in the festive season. **He drinks only champagne at Christmas** means he does not drink anything else.

**On to**

should be two words in all cases eg: **He drove his car on to the beach** or **We left next morning and went on to Leeds.**

**Opinion polls**

The long-standing BBC rules are set out in full in the [**Editorial Guidelines**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/page/guidelines-politics-practices-opinion/).

Opinion polls must always be reported as providing pointers rather than hard evidence. They **suggest** or **indicate**; they do not ‘show’, ‘prove’ or ‘confirm’. Always give the background to a poll: who commissioned it, who carried it out, size of sample, and the fieldwork dates (as appropriate, mentioning any events since which might have had a significant effect on public opinion: eg: **The poll was carried out last Monday, before the party announced its programme of cuts**.

In the interests of fairness, we should report all the national polls of political support carried out by the big six organisations (Gallup, ICM, Harris, Ipsos-Mori, NOP and Audience Selection): do **not** ignore one because it seems less interesting than the rest. And do **not**unquestioningly rely on the interpretation placed on the results by the commissioning organisation.

A poll story should not be the first item in any section or on the front page; nor should it be in the top three stories on an index except where the poll story has itself prompted a story deserving of prominence.

**Orangutan**

ie without a hyphen.

**Ordinance/ordnance**

Do not confuse**ordinance**, which means ‘an authoritative order’, with **ordnance**, whichmeans ‘heavy guns, military supplies’. **Ordnance Survey** is the mapping agency of Great Britain.

**Orkney/the Orkney Islands**

are both acceptable, **Orkney** being the name given to the **group** of islands off the north coast of Scotland. It is **wrong** to refer to ‘the Orkneys’. The inhabitants are **Orcadians**.

**outback**

ie lower case.

**Outward Bound**

is a registered trademark - and must **not** be used in a generic sense. There is a [court order](http://legal.gateway.bbc.co.uk/reporting_restrictions/outward_boundreminder.html) about this (internal link). Use **adventure training** or similar. The term can, of course, be used in connection with **Outward Bound International** centres - of which there are five in the UK: at Aberdovey in Snowdonia; Eskdale, Howtown and Ullswater in the Lake District; and Loch Eil in the Scottish Highlands. There is also a non-residential centre in Glasgow.

**Owing to**

is adverbial (ie it qualifies a verb) and means ‘because of’ eg: **Play was stopped owing to rain**. It should not be confused with **due to**, which is adjectival and means ‘caused by’ (eg: **There was one stoppage due to fog, and another due to rain**).

**Paedophile**

Technically a clinical term for someone with a sexual attraction to children, but the meaning has widened to take in various forms of child sex abuse and associated images.

However, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 draws a distinction between children under 13 and those aged 13-16. For instance, it is deemed that any child under 13 will not have given consent to any sexual activity. But where someone is accused or convicted of a sexual relationship with a child aged 13-16 we should weigh up the information available before describing them as a paedophile.

The word is often inappropriate as an adjective - rather than talking about ‘paedophile pictures’, refer to **images of child sex abuse**.

Finally, people are put on the **sex offenders register**- lower case and no apostrophe.

**Paparazzi**

is a plural. The singular is **paparazzo**- but it would read better to say **one of the paparazzi...**

**Paramilitaries**

Whether police or forces, they should **not** be described as ‘troops’.

**Paratrooper**

Note that **paratrooper** is singular. The plural is **paratroops** (and **not** ‘paratroopers’).

**Parliament/parliament**

The initial cap is always retained when referring to Westminster. Otherwise, it is used only in an official title eg:**The Scottish Parliament was the scene of a fierce debate.**But:**The parliament in Edinburgh is to be recalled for an emergency session**. And: **The Dutch parliament sits in The Hague.**The adjective**parliamentary**should always be lower case, unless it is part of a proper name.

**Parliamentary Commissioners/Ombudsmen**

As with ministerial job titles, capped up when used in conjunction with the name of the office-holder. Otherwise, lower case. So: **Philip Jones was appointed Parliamentary Commissioner to succeed Elizabeth Smith**and **The constituents complained to the parliamentary ombudsman that they had been inadequately represented by their MP**.

**Pashto/Pashtun**

The **Pashtun** live in north-west Pakistan and south-east Afghanistan. The language they speak is **Pashto**.

**Patriot**

(missile) ie initial cap. Compare **cruise missile**, which is lower case because it refers to a type of weapon (low-flying, long-distance, computer-controlled winged missile), rather than a specific one.

**PC**

Use **PC** (ie both letters capped up) as an abbreviation for **police constable**, **personal computer**or **politically correct**.

**Peacekeepers, peacekeeping**

ie one word, no hyphen.

**Pearl Harbor**

is spelt the American way (ie without a ‘u’).

**Pensioner**

Use it when the story is actually about pensioners (eg: **Pensioners are to lose their winter fuel allowance**) - but **not** where it is incidental, as in **South African police have released British pensioner Martin Smith.** Avoid ‘OAP’ which means nothing to anyone outside the UK.

**Pentagon**

The Pentagon is **not**, strictly, in Washington DC. Like the Reagan National Airport, it is in Arlington County, Virginia.

**People’s/peoples’**

Do not confuse the two. When talking about the public, we would say **Government aims to measure people’s happiness** or **She was the people’s princess**. When talking about more than one ethnic group, the apostrophe goes after the ‘s’: **They were attending the Indigenous Peoples’ Global Summit.**

**Per**

It is acceptable to write about mph - but the Latin ‘per’ should be avoided as much as possible. Do not say ‘£200 per capita’ or even ‘£200 per head’. Stick to English and say **£200 a head** or **£200 each**.

[**Percentages**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/how-to/how-to-report/reporting-averages-percentages-and-data)

Our usual style is to use digits - even with numbers we would normally write out as words (eg: **8%**), buta percentage should be expressed in words if it comes at the beginning of a sentence (eg: **Ten per cent of the budget will be devoted to the war effort**).

There is no such thing as a percent, so don’t say ‘half a per cent’ - it should be **a half per cent**or**half of one per cent**.

And there is a distinction between percentages and percentage points. If an exam pass rate goes up from 80% to 100%, this is a **rise of 20 percentage points**- and**not**‘a rise of 20%’ - because 20% of 80 is 16. Be aware that official sources often get this wrong.

**Performing Right Society**

ie there is **no** ‘s’ at the end of ‘Right’.

**Philippines**

(with a double ‘p’) is the name of the islands - but **Filipino** (single ‘p’) for male national; **Filipina** for female. The adjective is **Philippine**.

**Picture captions**

Picture captions can be one or two lines long - ideally one. Never three, except occasionally in picture galleries.

The wording should follow the geography of a picture, from left to right (eg: if Smith is on the left and Jones on the right, the caption should not say ‘Jones and Smith’).

A caption should not be a literal description of the picture - that is the function of an alt tag. It’s important to give the reader enough information to understand what they are looking at independently of the alt tag, while also adding value (eg: **Smith and Jones: Lifelong friends**).

In News, where space allows, use both first and second names of anyone pictured. Sport can follow the sporting convention of surnames only (eg:**Robson says he’s putting in for a transfer**).

For direct quotes, use a colon and **double** quotation marks (eg: **Sheila Vine: “Nothing will stop me”**). Any colon in a caption, whether or not introducing a quote, must be followed by a capital letter (eg: **Lisa Simpson: Genius at work**).

If you need to focus on one individual among several, use brackets and **not** commas - so a picture of a group of children might be captioned eg: **Bart Simpson (centre) was never his teacher’s pet.**If space is short, abbreviate such labels to their initial capital letter only ie **(C) (L) or (R)**. But don’t be too literal if it’s obvious who is who, as in: **Boy George (L) chatted to the Queen at Buckingham Palace.**

There is **no** full stop at the end of a caption, **except in picture galleries**. And a caption is often not necessary at all for a map or a generic graphic.

**Pin number**

ie initial cap only, no hyphen. This term is acceptable, although tautological (since ‘Pin’ stands for ‘personal identification number’). But **Pin code** is a perfectly good alternative.

**Places**

Be consistent in giving locations. No-one in London would ever refer to ‘Mansfield in England’ - they would say **Mansfield in Nottinghamshire**. So do not write ‘Kirkcaldy in Scotland’ - it should be **Kirkcaldy in Fife**; similarly**not**‘Tenby in Wales’, but**Tenby in Pembrokeshire**. However, where a city or town shares a name with a unitary authority eg: **Newport** or **Bridgend**, it can be acceptable to say **in south Wales**.

**Plane-spotter**

ie with a hyphen.

**PlayStation**

ie the capital in the middle is retained.

**plc**

lower case - stands for public limited company. But avoid unless the company’s status is relevant to the story.

**Plurals**

Some words remain the same even as plurals, such as **aircraft**, **cannon**, **sheep** and **fish** (although you would use **fishes** when referring to different kinds of fish, eg **He studied freshwater fishes of the UK**).

Be careful with some words that are plural but often mistakenly used as singular: **criteria** (criterion), **bacteria** (bacterium), **phenomena** (phenomenon). **Data** is strictly a plural, but we follow common usage and treat it as singular, as we do with **agenda**.

Our preference for words ending in -ium, such as **stadium**, is **stadiums**. For **index**, our favoured plural form (as in stock markets) is **indexes**. The plural is **indices** only in a mathematical/scientific context.

Watch names when using the plural. If you were writing about a family called Phelps, you would say: The **Phelpses** were going for a day at the seaside.

For words **ending in ‘o’**, there are no hard and fast rules, though the principle is that most words just add an ‘s’ but there are exceptions. However, there are a few general patterns. If a word is a short version of a longer word, just add an ‘s’: **memos**, **photos**, **demos**. The same applies to words that clearly have their roots in another language, such as **stilettos**, **calypsos**, **chinos**, **bistros**, **casinos**. And where a word ends with two vowels, just add an ‘s’, as in **videos** and **cameos**.

The best way of checking is to take the first version offered by the Oxford English Dictionary, so we would use: **avocados**, **banjos**, **flamingos**, **ghettos**, **manifestos**, **mementos**. Those taking an ‘e’ include: **buffaloes**, **cargoes**, **dominoes**, **echoes**, **embargoes**, **haloes**, **heroes**, **mangoes**, **mottoes**, **potatoes**, **tomatoes**, **torpedoes**, **vetoes**, **volcanoes**, **tornadoes** and **mosquitoes** (though **Tornados** and **Mosquitos** when talking about the planes).

**PM**

can be used to  mean ‘Prime Minister’ in headlines, but should be written out in stories.

**poet laureate**

ie lower case

**Police ranks**

**Chief Constable**should **not** be abbreviated in any circumstances. Revert to ‘Mr’, ‘Mrs’ etc at second reference.

**Assistant Chief Constable** should also be written out in full at first reference - but can then be shortened to **ACC**.In the Met and City of London police, use **Commissioner**,**Assistant Commissioner**etc at first reference then ‘Mr Smith’, ‘Sir John’ etc.

Other police ranks should be used in abbreviated form, even at first reference:

Commander - **Cdr**

Chief Superintendent - **Ch Supt**

Superintendent - **Supt**

Chief Inspector - **Ch Insp**

Inspector - **Insp**

Sergeant - **Sgt**

Police Constable - **PC**

For Detective ranks, put **Det** in front of the above ranks, except for Detective Constable -**Det Con.**

There is no longer a rank of WPC, so women police constables should also be **PC**(and women detective constables **Det Con**).

Write out ranks in full when not accompanied by a name (eg: **It took eight police constables to restrain him**).

**Police and crime commissioners**

These elected roles in England and Wales follow the same convention as political titles - capped with the name, lower case on their own. If we’ve established the abbreviation earlier, we may say **‘Liverpool’s PCC Jim Smith has called for...’**. Afterwards Mr/Mrs/Ms as appropriate.

**Political parties**

The word ‘party’ is capped up when giving the title (eg: **the Labour Party**) - but is lower case if the full name is dropped (eg: **The vote represented a new low in the party’s fortunes**).

Party names are also capped up if used adjectivally (eg: **Portugal’s Social Democrat prime minister**) provided the proper party name is used (in full or short-form) - as opposed to a label that summarises a political stance. So, **French Socialists** would mean paid-up party members, whereas **French socialists** would mean people in France of a socialist persuasion. But to avoid ambiguity it would be preferable in the first case to say **members of the French Socialist Party**.

**Political titles**

Political job titles - including all members of a government - have initial caps only when the title is used next to the individual, in whatever order eg:

**UK Prime Minister Glenda Goodwin** (and **not** ‘British Prime Minister Glenda Goodwin’)

**Foreign Secretary David Jones**

**Harry Smith, the Home Secretary**

**Mr Curran, who has been prime minister since 2020.**

Any post mentioned without reference to the post-holder should be in lower case e.g: **The prime minister will be out of the country for several days.**

The same rule applies for former holders of political office (eg: **The former President, Jimmy Carter, is to make a political comeback. The former president said he wanted to spend less time with his family**).

Similarly, **Leader of the Opposition** is capped up only if accompanied by the name. Otherwise, opposition portfolios are always lower case, with or without the name (eg: **The shadow chancellor, Thomas Hurn, was furious. There was jeering when the shadow chancellor left**).

**Pope**

Always use an initial cap for **the Pope**, whether or not his name is attached. But use lower case in any reference to **the pontiff**-also when referring to popes in general, or using the terms **papal** or **papacy**. Do **not** refer to the Pope as ‘the Holy Father’ - a term which might offend some non-Catholics.

**Post-mortem examination**

ie with a hyphen. It should not be shortened to ‘post-mortem’ in text (although this **is** acceptable in headlines - but **not** ‘PM’ or ‘pm’).

**Practicable/practical**

These are not synonyms: **practicable** means ‘capable of being carried out’; **practical**means ‘useful in practice’.

**Practice/practise**

Use with care. The noun is **practice**; the verb is **practise**- eg: **The players hold a practice every Monday. They practise for two hours**.

**Premier**

Do **not** use ‘premier’ as a synonym for ‘prime minister’. It should be used only where it is the proper title eg: China, Australian states, Canadian provinces, German states, and some West Indian islands.

**Premier League**

(The top football league in England) ie initial caps. In Scotland, it is the Premier League or SPL.

**Premises**

This is jargon - much used by the police (eg: ‘A suspect has been located in premises adjacent to the town hall’). Ask the police to be more specific.

**President/president**

takes a capital if accompanied by the name (eg:**President Porter is to visit the Middle East**). Lower case without the name (eg:**The president will arrive on Tuesday**). The same rule applies for former presidents (eg: **The former President, Bill Clinton, is starting a new career. The former president said he was very excited**). But always use lower case for the president of an institution (eg: **The president of the Bank of America, Ivor Fortune, has resigned**).

**PricewaterhouseCoopers**

ie one word - and the internal capital ‘C’ is retained. The short form **PwC** is acceptable in headlines - and in text at second reference.

**Prime Minister’s Questions**

ie initial caps.

**Prince/Princess**

In general, they have an initial cap if used with the name; lower case in references to **the prince**or**the princess**.

**Princess Royal**

**Cap up** at first mention - even though this is likely to be without a name. At second reference, she is either **Princess Anne** or **the** **princess**.

**Principal/principle**

**Principal** means ‘first in order of importance’. A school head is sometimes known as **the principal**; the leading role in a pantomime is often the **principal boy**. The word **principle** means ‘a rule or belief governing one’s personal behaviour’ (eg: **It is against his principles to kill animals**).

**Prisoner of war**

ie no hyphens. Abbreviated form is with lower case ‘o’ ie **PoW**.

**private member's bill**

ie lower case. Apostrophe before the ‘s’ where only one MP is involved (eg: **A private member's bill often falls at the first hurdle**). Otherwise, apostrophe after the ‘s’ (eg: **The ballot for private members' bills will be held on Monday**).

**Probe**

Try to avoid using this in the tabloid sense of ‘investigation’. It **can** be used in a headline if no alternative will fit - but where possible say **inquiry**, **investigation**, or similar.

**Professor**

In common with our style on Dr, we should abbreviate to **Prof** on first and subsequent references. But, when used as a generic rather than a title, full out and lower case: **He was appointed as a professor of psychology last year.**

**Profits**

We generally report pre-tax profits that include any one-off gains or losses (‘exceptional’). But sometimes we like to give the pre-tax profit before ‘exceptional’ are added /subtracted in order to give a clearer picture of the underlying strength of the company.

The US agencies tend to refer to ‘earnings’, so it is important to check whether or not these include tax and/or ‘exceptional’. Sometimes they mention ‘earnings per share’, which may be useful when making a comparison with the predictions of Wall Street analysts - but generally it is best to focus on the overall profit figure.

**Program/programme**

The spelling without the final ‘-me’ should be used **only** when using the noun/exact phrase ‘**computer program/computer programs**’. Otherwise, always use **programme**as noun or verbeg:**He said he wanted to programme his new computer.**

**Prostitution**

When writing about prostitutes, male or female, it's important to acknowledge that they are first and foremost individuals. To label someone simply as a prostitute tends to be derogatory and demeaning - so a news story concerning an attack might say at first reference eg: **A woman has been assaulted in the King's Cross area**-with a subsequent reference:**She was** **working as a prostitute**. In headlines, try to avoid the label ‘prostitute’.

**Protest**

People may **protest against**, **protest at**or**protest over a ruling** - but never (as in the US) ‘protest a ruling’.

**Protestants**

ie with an initial cap.

**Protester**

is our favoured spelling - and **not** ‘protestor’.

**PSNCR**

(Public Sector Net Cash Requirement) - ie all caps. The gap between government income and spending, or, in other words, the amount of money the government has to borrow. It shows whether the government is running a budget deficit or surplus.

**PTSD**

Spell out at first if possible - **post-traumatic stress disorder** (lower case and hyphenated) - then PTSD afterwards.

**Pyrrhic victory**

(means a victory that comes at heavy cost to the victor) ie **Pyrrhic** has an initial cap.

**Qantas**

(Australian national airline) ie **without** a ‘u’.

**QE2**

(ie no gap - and a digit) is acceptable even at first reference for the liner **Queen Elizabeth 2**. Note it is not named after the current monarch, but is the second ship named Queen Elizabeth, therefore it is ‘2’ rather than ‘II’.

**Qom**

(Pilgrimage centre in Iran) ie **without** a ‘u’. Do not call it a ‘holy city’, but it can be described as **a seat of Islamic learning**.

**quango**

ie all lower case (it stands for **quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation**).

**quarter-final**

ie hyphenated.

**Queens/queens**

Use Roman numerals with names (eg: **Elizabeth II**).Only our own monarch retains the initial cap in all circumstances (eg: **The Queen has arrived in Australia**). Other monarchs are capitalised only when the name is used (eg:**Queen Noor**- but **the queen**).

**Queen’s College/Queens’ College**

The one in Oxford has an apostrophe **before**the ‘s’ (**Queen’s**). The one in Cambridge has it **after**(**Queens’**).

**Queen’s Speech**

ie both words capped up for the Westminster occasion (as opposed to the Queen’s speech at the opening of the Windsor branch of Tesco).

**Queen’s University**

(in Belfast) ie with the apostrophe before the ‘s’.

**Quiz**

as a verb, it should be avoided in text - use **question**, or similar. It is acceptable in a headline if nothing else fits.

**Quotation marks should be single:**

in**headlines** and **cross-heads** (eg: **UK ‘to leave EU’**); in**promos**and for **quotes within quotes** (eg: **Tom Bone said: “They say ‘The Labour Party is finished’ before every election.”**) and inside **quote boxes** (eg:**They’ll never call us ‘lucky Arsenal’ again - Arsene Wenger.**)

In headlines where the attribution is clear, do not include unnecessary quote marks (eg **Britain won’t hold referendum, says PM** rather than Britain ‘won’t hold referendum’, says PM).

**should be double:**

outside the categories listed above - on the ticker, in **regular text**,**summaries and picture captions**. Also, at first use of phrases such as “mad cow disease” or “road rage”. (But quotation marks will be single if the phrase comes inside a direct quotation (eg: **The minister said: “The spread of ‘mad cow disease’ had ruined thousands of lives.”**) Either way, no punctuation is required after the first reference.

**No quotation marks** are required for film, TV or song titles. Use initial caps to indicate that it is a title (eg: **Madonna's early chart-toppers include Into the Groove and La Isla Bonita**).

When referring to a nickname or similar, it’s either lower case and quotes or caps and no quotes, eg **Mrs Thatcher was known as the Iron Lady.**

**Quotations**

A direct quotation, or a series of direct quotes, can capture the essence of a story - but select only the best lines. Put the rest into indirect speech, or leave it out altogether.

Ensure the quotation is comprehensible and makes sense. Do not expose a speaker to ridicule by bringing his/her grammatical/linguistic incompetence to a wider audience. Again, a combination of indirect speech and omission should solve the problem.

Never anticipate a direct quote by using its main point in the cue-line (eg: The minister promised free beer for all. He told the party conference: ‘There will be free beer for all.’)

With complete sentences, the closing quotation marks go **after** the full stop (eg: **Mr Franklin said: ‘This is a farce.’**). When quoting a single word or phrase, the quotation marks go **before** the full stop (eg: **Mr Franklin called the episode ‘a farce’.**).

Where you want to indicate that a sentence is unfinished, or that part of a quote has been omitted, use triple dots (eg: **He says the way forward is clear… there is no alternative**). The space should be **after**, not before the dots in order to avoid a new line beginning with dots.

When using snippets of a quote, make sure they are worth quoting. **Mr Jones said he was ‘gobsmacked’ by the award** is fine. But **Mr Jones said he was ‘surprised’ and ‘never thought’ he would win**is best left as indirect speech.

**Race**

Use the term **black people** rather than ‘blacks’ and **white people** rather than ‘whites’. But the colour of someone’s skin should be mentioned only when it is relevant. The term ‘black’ should not normally be used to include Asians. Refer to **black and Asian people** or **Asian, African and Caribbean people**. Avoid ‘non-whites’. The word ‘coloured’ is inappropriate in a racial context, except with reference to apartheid South Africa, where the term **Coloured** (ie initial cap) meant ‘mixed race’. Take care, too, with the word ‘immigrant’, which is often wrongly used to describe people who were born in the UK.

Many people in Britain of African and Caribbean origin prefer to be called **black British**.

**rack and ruin**

is our favoured spelling, rather than ‘wrack and ruin’. Similarly, we prefer nerve-racking.

**Radiologists/radiographers**

Not to be confused: **radiologists** are consultants with specialist qualifications; **radiographers** are medical technicians operating X-ray equipment; they should not be described as ‘medics’.

**Ram**

(computer term, short for ‘random-access memory’) ie initial cap, no punctuation.

**Ram-raid**

ie with hyphen.

**Rangers**

is the official name of the Scottish football team - and **not** ‘Glasgow Rangers’ or ‘The Rangers’. If referring to financial matters at the club, seek guidance from BBC Scotland on terminology.

**Rangoon**

is still the name we use for **Burma**’s largest city, although its official name since 1989 has been ‘Yangon’. Any unavoidable references to Yangon (eg in a direct quote) should be explained by a phrase such as **the official name for Rangoon**. But we do accept - and use - the name of the capital, **Nay Pyi Taw.**

**Reader’s Digest**

ie with an apostrophe **before** the ‘s’.

**Receiver**

A receiver is not the same as a liquidator. A **receiver** is put in to keep a company going if possible. A **liquidator**comes in when there is no chance of a company surviving in order to sell off the assets.

**Red Planet**

(Mars) ie both words capped.

**Referendums**

is our favoured plural of **referendum** (rather than ‘referenda’). We can refer to the campaigns and votes as Yes and No ie capped up and without quote marks (eg: **The Yes campaign is under way**and**Spaniards voted Yes to the EU constitution**).

**Reflection**

ie with ‘ct’ and **not** an ‘x’.

**Refute**

Use only to mean ‘disprove’. Do **not** say ‘Mr Harris refuted the allegation’ unless you know unassailable proof was produced. Use **deny**, **dismiss**, **reject** etc.

**Register office**

ie **not** ‘registry’.

**Remand**

from magistrates’ court may be **in custody** or **on bail**. We should say which.

**Reopen**

ie without a hyphen.

**Reported speech**

The tense in which someone speaks often has to be changed in indirect (or reported) speech to avoid ambiguity. What determines this is the tense used in **introducing** the indirect speech.

For example, imagine Harold Higgins says: ‘I am resigning’ (ie he uses the present tense). If you introduce this with either the present tense (‘He says’) or the perfect tense (‘He has said’), then you should retain the present tense within the quotation: ie the text can say either **Harold Higgins says he is resigning** or **Harold Higgins has said he is resigning**.

If you opt for the past tense (‘He said’), then you have to ‘knock back’ by one tense from that used in the original eg: **Mr Higgins said he was resigning**. By the same rule, if Mr Higgins’ next words are ‘I saw the Queen on Tuesday’, then you can write either **Mr Higgins says/has said he saw the Queen on Tuesday**or **Mr Higgins said he had seen the Queen on Tuesday**.

With remarks looking to future events, the word ‘will’ survives into reported speech only if the introduction uses the present or perfect tense. Thus: if Mr Higgins continues: ‘I will leave No 10 on Saturday’ - then this can become either **Mr Higgins says he will leave No 10 on Saturday** or **Mr Higgins has said he will leave No 10 on Saturday**. But if you use the past tense as an introduction then ‘will’ becomes ‘would’ - eg: **Mr Higgins said he would leave No 10 on Saturday**.

**Responsibility**

You can sidestep the whole debate over the suitability of such phrases as ‘Hamas says it was responsible’ by substituting eg: **Hamas** **says it planted the bomb**.

**Retail Prices Index/RPI**

ie initial caps. The RPI is based on the same basket of goods and services as the Consumer Prices Index, plus mortgages. We should normally mention both rates, because the CPI is usually a key driver for the Bank of England’s interest rate decision, while the RPI is the benchmark for inflation adjustments of state benefits and many wage negotiations.

**Reuters**

(the news agency) ie **no** apostrophe.

**Revenue & Customs**

The full title is HM Revenue & Customs. Leave off the HM when written out in full, but keep **HMRC** as the abbreviation.

**Reverend**

The title Reverend has an initial capital. It requires the definite article and the Christian name eg: **the Reverend John Smith**. Under**no** circumstances should you say ‘Reverend Smith’, ‘the Reverend Smith’ or ‘the Reverend Mr Smith’. At second reference, just say **Mr Smith**(**Dr Smith** if he has a doctorate) or, if he is a Roman Catholic, **Father Smith**.Some Anglicans also prefer Father to Mr; the only safe rule is to follow local practice.

**rhythm and blues**

ie lower case when written out in full - but caps when abbreviated to **R&B**.

**Rivers**

Cap up when part of the name eg: the **River Thames**,but lower case in eg: ‘the Mississippi river’. The same applies for eg: the **Severn Estuary**.

**Right-wing, right wing**

(Hyphenated if used adjectivally; no hyphen if used as a noun.) This term can be useful when defining a political party or group in terms of where it stands in relation to others on the political spectrum. However, it should not be used loosely or where the party can more clearly be defined by reference to a specific policy (eg: **UKIP, which wants the UK to pull out of the European Union**...)

**Roadmap**

(a broad plan for a Middle East peace settlement) ie one word, no quote marks. At first reference, use a phrase such as the **Middle East peace plan known as the roadmap** or the **so-called roadmap**. After that, just **roadmap**.

**Road rage**

should be inside **double** inverted commas at first mention in text (**“road rage”**) - or inside single quotes if the first mention is in headlines/sub-heads. Either way, no punctuation required afterwards.

**Robbery**

is not synonymous with ‘theft’. Robbery involves the use or threat of violence.

**rock’n’roll**

ie with **TWO** apostrophes*.*

**Rolls-Royce**

ie two words, both capitalised, separated by a hyphen. Two companies share the name: **Rolls-Royce**, which is primarily an engine-maker, and **Rolls-Royce Motor Cars**,owned by BMW.

**Rom**

(computing - stands for ‘read-only memory’) ie initial cap. Also **CD-Rom** ie capped up - and hyphenated.

**Roma**

The term **Roma** must be included in **all** stories about the Romany people of Eastern and Central Europe and the Middle East - but in headlines only where there is no possibility of ambiguity with the Italian football team of the same name. The first mention in text should be to **Roma (Gypsies)**, or **Roma**,or**Gypsies**, after which you should stick to **the Roma**, capped up.

For ethnic Gypsies in the UK, we do use **Gypsy/Gypsies** (capped up) as that is how their distinct racial group has been recognised in a key High Court ruling**.**

**Row**

This word is a great favourite with tabloid headline writers - use sparingly. Many political ‘rows’ are mere jousting and rhetoric, better characterised as an **argument**, a **difference of opinion**, a **debate**.

[**Royal Air Force/RAF**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/military/royal-air-force-size-and-structure)

**Ranks:** Where possible, they should be abbreviated at first reference. But many cannot be abbreviated until second reference - and some cannot be abbreviated at all. But ranks should be spelt out in full (lower case) when they are used without reference to a specific name - eg: **The air vice marshal attended the meeting.**

**Abbreviations to be used at first reference:**

* Group Captain - **Gp Capt**
* Wing Commander - **Wing Cdr**
* Squadron Leader - **Sqn Ldr**
* Flight Lieutenant - **Flt Lt**
* Flight Sergeant - **Flt Sgt**
* Sergeant - **Sgt**
* Corporal - **Cpl**

**Abbreviations to be used only at second reference:**

* Air Chief Marshal - **ACM**
* Air Marshal - **AM**
* Air Vice Marshal - **AVM**
* Air Commodore - **Air Cmdr**
* Senior Aircraftman/woman) - **SAC**
* Leading Aircraftman/woman) - **LAC**
* Aircraftman/woman) - **AC**
* Warrant Officer - **WO**
* Chief Technician -**Ch Tech**

**Ranks that we do not abbreviate:**

* **Marshal of the Royal Air Force**(never becomes just ‘Marshal’)
* **Flying Officer**
* **Pilot Officer**

The RAF has a regiment with a number of squadrons, doing ground-based protection work. Its members are correctly called **gunners**, though **airmen/airwomen** is acceptable - **never**‘soldiers’.

**Royal Commission/royal commission**

Capped up when it is a reality(eg: **The report of the Royal Commission on Lords Reform has been submitted to the Queen**). Lower case if the reference is non-specific (eg:**A government is not bound to accept the advice of any royal commission**).

[**Royal Navy**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/military/royal-navys-size-and-structure)

When identifying a Royal Navy ship, HMS should be included at first reference - eg:**HMS Rhyl**, a frigate,**or**the frigate, **HMS Rhyl**.Do**not**precede**HMS**with‘**the**’.In later references, **HMS**can be dropped-in which case the definite article should be included eg:**the Rhyl**.

**Ranks**: where possible, they should be abbreviated at first reference. But many cannot be abbreviated until second reference - and some cannot be abbreviated at all. But ranks **should be spelt out in full** (lower case) when they are used without reference to a specific name - eg: **The rear admiral attended the meeting.**

**Abbreviations to be used at first reference:**

* Admiral of the Fleet-**Adm of the Fleet**
* Admiral -**Adm**eg:**Adm Lord Boyce**;second reference**Lord Boyce**
* Vice Admiral -**Vice Adm**
* Rear Admiral -**Rear Adm**
* Captain - **Capt**
* Commander - **Cdr**
* Lieutenant Commander - **Lt Cdr**
* Lieutenant - **Lt**
* Sub Lieutenant - **Sub Lt**

**Abbreviations to be used only at second reference:**

* Warrant Officer -**WO**
* Chief Petty Officer - **CPO**
* Petty Officer - **PO**
* Commodore - **Cmdr**

**Ranks that we do not abbreviate:**

* **First Sea Lord**
* **Midshipman**
* **Able Seaman**

[**Royalty**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/royals/royal-correspondents-and-producers)

Ours, as a **family**, are always capped; foreign families are not capped (eg: **Most of the Royal Family are spending Christmas at Sandringham, entertaining members of the Dutch royal family**.) Also cap up **Royal Household**.

Our monarch is unique among royal individuals in retaining the initial cap in all circumstances (eg: **The Queen and Prince Charles arrived this morning. The Queen and the prince will be there until the weekend.**)Foreign royals are capitalised only when the name is used (eg:**Queen Noor** - but **the queen**).

**Rubbish**

is fine as a noun. But do **not** use as a verb (eg: ‘Ferguson rubbishes Arsenal’) unless it is part of a direct quote.

**Rushed to hospital**

is a phrase much used by the tabloids. Given that casualties are bound to be moved with as much speed as possible, it is preferable to say simply **taken to hospital**.

**Sabra and Shatila**

(refugee camps in Lebanon where hundreds of Palestinians were killed in 1982) ie **both**words begin with an ‘S’. We do **not** use the spelling ‘Chatila’.

**Saddam Hussein**

Second reference can be to the former Iraqi president or the former Iraqi leader - or even Saddam Hussein again. But ‘Saddam’ is acceptable only in headlines.

**Sainsbury’s**

ie with an apostrophe before the ‘s’ (the company being **J Sainsbury plc**).

**St Catharine’s College/St Catherine’s College**

The one in Cambridge has the ‘a’ in the middle(ie**St Catharine’s**). The one in Oxford is spelt with an ‘e’ in the middle(ie**St Catherine’s**).

**St James Park, St James’ Park, St James’s Park**

The football ground in Newcastle is **St James’ Park**and in Exeter it is**St James Park**. The open space in London is **St James’s Park**(also**St James’s Palace**).

**St John Ambulance Brigade**

ie not ‘St John’s’.

**St Peter’s**

(in Rome) is not a cathedral - it is a basilica. The cathedral in Rome is **St John Lateran**.

**St Thomas’ Hospital**

(London) ie just one ‘s’.

**Salary/wages**

A **salary** is a fixed sum paid regularly, usually for non-manual work. **Wages** are usually paid weekly or monthly for the labour or service of an employee.

**Sat-nav**

is acceptable shorthand for satellite navigation system.

**Sats**

is the abbreviation for standardised assessment tasks - but better to call them **national curriculum tests, often known as Sats**. For headlines, **Sats** is fine; initial cap only as it is pronounced as a word. In the American education system, **SATs** are ‘scholastic aptitude tests’ (pronounced as separate letters).

**Schoolchildren**

ie one word, no hyphen.

**Schoolteacher**

ie one word, no hyphen. Similarly, **schoolmaster** and **schoolmistress**.

**Scilly Isles**

They are properly called either**the Scilly Isles**or**the Isles of Scilly**.Do **not**say ‘the Scillies’.

[**Scottish National Party**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/devolution/what-is-devolution)

ie**not**‘Nationalist’**.**

**Scottish Parliament**

The word ‘parliament’ is capped up if prefaced by ‘Scottish’(eg:**A report will be laid before the Scottish Parliament**). But it is lower case if you are not giving the full title (eg:**He announced his resignation to parliament in Edinburgh**).Its members are **MSPs**.

**Scottish Power**

ie two words - in line with its company registration,**Scottish Power plc**(and despite its rebranding as ‘ScottishPower’).

**scouts**

(lower case) is correct for all those who are part of **the Scout Association**. They are no longer ‘boy scouts’.

**SDLP**

(ie all caps) is acceptable even at first reference to the **Social Democratic and Labour Party**. In a story likely to be placed on indexes other than Northern Ireland, you should note in the first four pars that **it draws most of its support from the nationalist community**(or...**from the Catholic community**). But do **not**call it ‘the mainly Catholic’ SDLP.

**Sea of Japan**

is the term we generally use to describe the body of water between Japan and the Korean peninsula. However, when a story is predominantly of interest in Korea, or there is any scope for confusion, we write **Sea of Japan/East Sea**, in recognition that East Sea is the term used in Korea.

**Seasonal Affective Disorder/SAD**

It must be spelt out in full at first reference. Subsequently, it can be abbreviated to **SAD**ie**all caps** - despite our usual style with acronyms (because the alternative carries the potential for confusion).

**Seasons**

are lower case (**spring**,**summer**,**autumn**,**winter**). But references to the seasons should be kept to a minimum because many of our readers live outside the UK. We should **not**say eg: ‘An election will be held in the spring’ - say instead **An election will be held in five months’ time**, or similar.

**Second half, second-half**

There is **no** hyphen in the noun (eg: **Germany were on the defensive throughout the second half**). There **is** a hyphen in the adjective (eg: **England scored three second-half goals**).

**Sellafield**

is a decommissioning and reprocessing site. It is not a nuclear power station, though there was one on the site – Calder Hall – now defunct.

**Semi-colons**

are best avoided. They are difficult to read on screen.

**Semi-final**

ie hyphenated.

**Senior**

In distinguishing between two family members with the same names, our favoured form is **Sr** with an initial cap for the older (and **Jr** for the younger party).

**Sepa**

is the Scottish **Environment** Protection Agency, not Environmental.

**Sephardim**

(collective noun, upper case ‘S’) These are Jewish people of Middle Eastern or North African origin. Adjective: **Sephardi**.

**Serial killer**

Whether in the context of Harold Shipman or anyone else, avoid the phrase ‘the world’s worst serial killer’. It could be taken to mean someone who is uniquely unsuccessful.

**7/7**

is acceptable shorthand for the attacks in London on 7 July 2005. It may be used in headlines, but not in copy unless within direct quotes. Separate the digits with a slash,**not**a hyphen.

**Sewage/sewerage**

The nasty stuff called **sewage** is treated in a **sewerage** system.

**Sexism**

Unless you are sure only males are involved, avoid words such as ‘newsmen’, ‘businessmen’ and ‘policemen’. Substitute **journalists**, **business leaders**, **police officers**etc, as appropriate.

**Sexual offences**

Our policy is dictated by the need to protect the identity of victims of sexual offences. A frequent problem has been ‘jigsaw identification’ in cases of offences within the family - where the victim’s identity can be deduced, because some of the media name the accused, and others specify the offence. In line with most of the media, our **usual** practice is to name the accused, but **not** the specific charge - instead, saying ‘a serious sexual offence’. This means we do **not** refer to specific cases of incest, or of rape or sexual assault within the family. If in doubt over a specific case, refer to the **Editorial Policy Unit**.

**sex offenders register**

ie lower case, no apostrophe.

**shadow**

In a political context, the word **shadow** is always lower case - whether the reference is to **the shadow cabinet** or to an individual politician, with or without the name (eg: **The shadow health secretary backed the proposal. The shadow chancellor, Michael Mitchell, begged to differ**).

**Shankill Road**

is inBelfast (ie not ‘Shankhill’, which is an area of Dublin).

[**Sharia**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/religion/reporting-islam)

Islamic religious law - capital ‘S’ no ‘h’ at the end. (‘Sharia law’ is tautologous).

**Sheikh**

Informal honorific, sometimes for a religious figure or leader, but can also be a family name.

**Shetland**

The name Shetland applies to a group of islands. So you can properly say **Shetland**, or **the Shetland Islands** or **the Shetland Isles**-but**not ‘**the Shetlands’.

[**Shia**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/religion/reporting-islam)

(one of the two main denominations of Islam) ie no apostrophe, and not ‘Shiite’ or ‘Shi’ite’. **Shia** should be used for both the noun and the adjective.

**Ships**

Ships should **not** be treated as feminine (eg: **A US aircraft-carrier has disappeared in the Atlantic. It was carrying 400 men**- and not ‘She was carrying...’). Ships are **unloaded** - and **not**‘offloaded’. Naval ships and liners generally have **captains**. Cargo ships, including tankers, have **masters** (although, if a name is used, they too are referred to as **Capt**). Trawlers have **skippers**.

**Short-term, short term**

as an adjective, it takes a hyphen (eg: **Experts see this as a short-term investment**). But there is no need for a hyphen for the noun (eg: **Big gains can be expected in the short term**).

**Showbiz**

is acceptable as an abbreviation of showbusiness **only** in informal contexts.

**Silicon Valley**

(Californian centre of the US high-tech industry) ie both words capped.

**Sim card**

It stands forsubscriber identity moduleor subscriber identification module and, like most acronyms, we cap the first letter and put the rest in lower case.

**Singulars and plurals**

Treat collective nouns - companies, governments and other bodies - as singular. There are some exceptions:

* Family, couple or pair, where using the singular can sound odd
* Sports teams - although they are singular in their role as business concerns (eg: **Arsenal has declared an increase in profits**)
* Rock/pop groups
* The police, as in **Police say they are looking for three men.**But individual forces are singular (eg **The Metropolitan Police says there is no need to panic**).

**Press**and **public**should be treated as singular, but rewording may be advisable (replacing eg: ‘The press arrived soon afterwards. It had lots of questions.’ with **Journalists arrived soon afterwards. They had lots of questions.**)

Be consistent within a story (eg: don’t say ‘The jury has retired to consider its verdict’ followed by ‘The jury are spending the night at a hotel’).

Some words remain the same even as plurals, such as **aircraft**, **cannon**, **sheep** and **fish**(although you would use **fishes** when referring to different kinds of fish, eg **He studied freshwater fishes of the UK**). Be careful with some words that are plural but often mistakenly used as singular: **criteria** (criterion), **bacteria** (bacterium), **phenomena**(phenomenon). **Data** is strictly a plural, but we follow common usage and treat it as singular, as we do with **agenda**. Our preference for words ending in -ium, such as **stadium**, is **stadiums**. For **index**, our favoured plural form (as in stock markets) is **indexes**. The plural is **indices** only in a mathematical/scientific context.

Watch names when using the plural. If you were writing about a family called Phelps, you would say: The **Phelpses** were going for a day at the seaside.

For words **ending in ‘o’**, there are no hard and fast rules, though the principle is that most words just add an ‘s’, but there are exceptions. However, there are a few general patterns. If a word is a short version of a longer word, just add an 's': **memos**, **photos**, **demos**. The same applies to words that clearly have their roots in another language, such as **stilettos**, **calypsos**, **chinos**, **bistros**, **casinos**. And where a word ends with two vowels, just add an 's' as in **videos** and **cameos**.

The best way of checking is to take the first version offered by the Oxford English Dictionary, so we would use: **avocados**, **banjos**, **flamingos**, **ghettos**,**manifestos**,**mementos**. Those taking an 'e' include: **buffaloes**, **cargoes**, **dominoes**, **echoes**, **embargoes**, **haloes**, **heroes**, **mangoes**, **mottoes**, **potatoes**, **tomatoes**, **torpedoes**, **vetoes**, **volcanoes**, **tornadoes** and **mosquitoes** (though **Tornados** and **Mosquitos** when talking about the planes).

**Sky marshal**

(undercover anti-terrorist agent on commercial aircraft) ie spelt with single ‘l’.

**Slam**

A word to be avoided in headlines - use **criticise**,**condemn**,**dismiss** etc.

**Slate**

is a word that is liable to cause confusion. In the UK, it usually means ‘heavily criticised’; in the US it tends to mean ‘nominated’. Best avoided.

**Smithsonian Institution**

(research organisation based in Washington) ie **not** ‘Institute’.

**Snowdon**

(the highest peak in England and Wales) - **not** ‘Mount Snowdon’.

**Soccer**

is **not** a word we use - except in official titles (eg: **Soccer Australia**). Stick to **football**.

**social media**

although media is plural, we should treat social media as singular.

**Social networking**

When using tweets (from Twitter), comments from Facebook etc in our reports, it’s important to use judgement in deciding how to deal with any literals or grammatical errors. Our aim should be to facilitate understanding by removing minor mistakes while retaining the general flavour of the message. We should tolerate spellings that do not conform to our style as long as they are legitimate, and should in general avoid the use of (sic) to point to an error. Sometimes, when a tweet is full of mistakes it may be best to leave it as it is. It will be obvious to the reader that the errors are the writer's and not ours: eg **This trust are my employees, but whatthey are tryong to do is sickening**,**and they need to be fired**,**and repairations need made**.

If the incoherence of the message makes it hard to understand, paraphrase or put into indirect speech.

Also, when talking about someone liking something in a social networking sense, our style is **‘like’**.

**Solar System**

ie both words capped up.

**Sotheby’s**

(the auction house) ie with an apostrophe before the ‘s’.

**Sources**

Good sourcing is critical. News agencies often run with a partial account because they are trying to beat the opposition. In such circumstances, tell the readers who is saying what. Some stories, particularly from Africa, will never be covered by more than one agency - in which case, ensure the attribution comes in the first four paragraphs. If in doubt, consult the relevant BBC bureau. BBC correspondents may be used as a single source. The broader phrase **correspondents say** is a useful one for injecting analysis or opinion - but should not appear more than twice in a story.

**South Asia**

ie both words are always capped.

**South East Asia**

ie all three words capped - and no hyphen.

**southern hemisphere**

ie lower case.

**south pole**

ie lower case.

**Speaker**

The parliamentary title **Speaker**should be capped up - **whether or not** accompanied by a name. This rule applies to any parliament or assembly where the office exists. But it's a lower case 'd' for **deputy Speaker**.

**Special hospitals**

is for psychiatric patients who need treatment in conditions of special security. Inmates include criminal psychopaths who are judged to be a danger to the public.

There are three in England - at **Ashworth**on Merseyside, **Broadmoor** in Berkshire and **Rampton**in Nottinghamshire - and one in Scotland at **Carstairs**in south Lanarkshire. They may be described as **high-security hospitals** or **high-security psychiatric hospitals** - but under **no** circumstances as ‘lunatic asylums’ or similar.

**Specialty**

is acceptable in medical/scientific contexts - otherwise ‘speciality’ is preferable.

**Speeds**

Our style is: **2.5km/h**and**60mph**-ie with **no** gap after the number.

**Spelling**

As a general rule, refer to the Oxford English Dictionary - and where there is an option choose the first use - hence, say **protester** and **not**‘protestor’, **medieval** and **not**‘mediaeval’, **focused/focusing** and **not** ‘focussed/focussing’).

One exception is that we use ...’**ise** rather than ‘...’ize’ -hence, **recognise** and **not**‘recognize’; **specialise** and **not** ‘specialize’. It is also our style **not** to use ‘x’ in the middle of a word where there is an alternative spelling of ‘ct’ -hence, **inflection** and **not**‘inflexion’; **reflection** - and **not** ‘reflexion’; **connection** - and **not** ‘connexion’.

Take care not to pick up American spelling from the agencies (‘color’, ‘TV program’ etc). This policy also covers job titles (eg: **American Defence Secretary Michael O’Brien**- and **not** ‘Defense’). However, US spelling will be retained when we are using the official name of a place, an organisation, building etc (eg **Pearl Harbor**, **US Department of Defense**, **Australian Labor Party**, **World Trade Center**, **World Health Organization**). Take special care with proper names - including those of our own correspondents.

**Split infinitives**

are **not** banned. By all means, split the infinitive if the alternative looks ugly - eg: **He said his wages were going to more than double**.

**Spokesperson**

is an ugly word we should try to avoid. **Spokesman** and **spokeswoman** are possible alternatives. Where it is not obvious, consider rephrasing the sentence - eg: **The company said**... or **A company statement said**... or **A company representative said**... etc.

**Sponsored events**

If the name of the sponsor is the only way of identifying an event (eg: **The Carling Cup**), it must be used - though the number of mentions should be kept to a minimum. Where the sponsor’s name is not necessary for identification (eg: **Barclays Premier League**), the sponsor need not be mentioned as a matter of course - and there is never any need to include it in a summary. But it should be included occasionally: eg in a round-up of results. It should never feature more than once in a single story (unless the sponsorship is itself the subject). Be aware that sometimes different rules apply as a result of audio and video contracts.

[**Sports scores**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/sport/producing-a-live-sports-programme)

Scorelines at the top of match reports in football, rugby etc are always in the form of **Luton 0-4 Watford** (and never ‘Luton 0 Watford 4’). Within copy, too, always use digits eg: **4-0**(and never ‘4-nil’, or ‘four-nil’).

**Cricket** uses digits for all numbers, both in stories and in summaries eg: **Anderson took 3-42**.

Tennis scores use digits for all numbers, without commas between sets eg: Smith beat Jones 6-4 6-7 (2-7) 7-6 (7-4). Note that tiebreak scores are inside brackets and separated by dashes.

Winning margins in matchplay golf are written in digits with an ampersand eg: Morris beat Rose 4&3.

Golf holes are referred to as the 3rd, 4th etc (not ‘the third’, ‘the fourth’ etc).

In athletics events such as the 100m, where times below 10 seconds are regularly achieved, all numbers should be written as digits - and the word ‘seconds’ need not be used throughout - eg: Hare took gold with a time of 9.93 seconds. In second place was Rabbit, on 9.94. And the bronze medal went to Mole, on 9.96.

Elsewhere, the first reference to a time in athletics should spell it out in full, following the usual convention with numbers below 10 - eg: one hour two minutes 23.34 seconds (with no commas between units). After that, switch to a more compact style - eg: 1:03:25.67.

Insert commas into numbers of four digits and above - eg: The race attracted a crowd of 65,000 - but not necessarily in athletics events - eg: A smaller crowd watched the final of the men’s 1500m - where the figure is pronounced ‘fifteen hundred’).

The ‘One’ in Formula One is written as a digit eg: Formula 1 or F1.

**Spree**

is often misused. The Oxford English Dictionary definition is ‘a lively or boisterous frolic’. Killing spree and shopping spree are cliches best avoided.

**Square brackets**

Can be used for interpolations Eg: Reacting to the news, Mr Jones said: ‘He [President Brown] must not back down.’ BUT: if an explanation is required, it is probably not worth a direct quote anyway!

**Stalemate**

Is **not** synonymous with ‘deadlock’ - since stalemate is the end of a game (in chess) and so **cannot** be resolved.

**Standfirsts**

Standfirsts should be short and snappy, ideally a single paragraph - in bold - of one or two sentences to introduce readers to the story. On bylined pieces, the standfirst appears **below** the byline and should **not** repeat the name of the writer. A standfirst should **not**refer to the BBC, as in ‘BBC News examines...’ or ‘The BBC News website considers...’ as this is self-evident.

**state broadcaster**

a broadcaster whose output is controlled by the state. That’s not the same as being a national, or public, broadcaster, such as RTE in Ireland, Australia’s ABC and of course the BBC.

**State visits**

By definition, these are carried out only by heads of state. But not **all** visits by heads of state are state visits.

**Stealth bomber**

ie lower case, because it refers to a type of weapon, rather than a specific one.

**Stigma**

Whether in the sense of a mark of disgrace, or part of a flower, the plural is **stigmas**. (The plural **stigmata**refers only to wounds on the body said to resemble those of Jesus on the Cross.)

**stock exchange**

ie lower case unless it is part of a name (eg: **Shares fell sharply on the London Stock Exchange**).

**Stock market**

**always** two words

**Stop Online Piracy Act**

is written as Sopa, just as the Protect Intellectual Property Act is Pipa.

**Storms**

When talking about the strength of storms, the word **category**should be lower case and followed by the number written out (unless it is 10 or higher) eg: **The storm weakened to a category one hurricane**.

[**Strasbourg**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/eu/eu-how-it-works)

is our favoured spelling (and **not** ‘Strasburg’).

**Stratford-upon-Avon**

ie with two hyphens, and **upon** rather than ‘on’.

**Substation**

ie one word, no hyphen.

**Sudan**

In July 2011, following a referendum, the southern part became a separate country, known as **South Sudan**. We should continue to refer to the remaining territory as Sudan (and not ‘the Sudan’). However, when reporting on any issues involving both countries, avoid describing it as North Sudan, which could offend. Options are ‘the Republic of Sudan’ (its correct name) or ‘the Khartoum government’ or similar. Or, when appropriate, it's OK to talk about ‘the north and the south’ or ‘northern and southern forces’ - but use lower case.

**sudoku**

ie lower case.

**Suicide**

Some people are offended by the use of the term ‘commits suicide’, as they say it implies a criminal action. It's not banned by us, but the BBC’s [Editorial Guidelines](http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/page/guidelines-harm-suicide/) say that ‘**kills oneself’** or ‘**takes one's life**’ are preferable options. At inquests, say: **The coroner recorded a verdict of suicide**. The Editorial Guidelines stress that detailed descriptions of the method of suicide should be avoided, as it could lead to copycat behaviour.

**Sultan of Brunei**

is one of the few who retain the initial cap, even in the absence of the name or the full title (eg:**Among the guests were the Sultan of Brunei and his eldest son. The Sultan is spending a month in London**).

**Summaries**

Do not repeat the headline in the summary as the two appear together on the site. One sentence is enough, and it should be in the present tense. A summary should be enticing - without giving too much away. The aim is to persuade the reader to click on the full story. So, rather than simply repeating the first paragraph, it should try to tell the story in a wider sense.

**Sun/sun**

ie upper case, if it is our one; lower case when referring to the thousands of suns in other galaxies. Lower case when referring to it in terms of sunglasses, sunbathing etc.

**Super-casino**

ie hyphenated.

**Super-nanny**

ie hyphenated.

**Superlatives**

Do **not**use ‘biggest’, ‘tallest’ etc, unless you are **absolutely sure** it is true.

**Super League/Superleague**

It depends on the sport: rugby league has a **Super League**, while ice hockey has a **Superleague**.

**Supporters of Shariah**

(radical Islamic group) Our policy is to run stories about this group and others like it (eg: **al Muhajiroun**) **only** if we can make it clear that they are regarded by the majority of British Muslims as unrepresentative - ideally, through a quote to that effect from a leading mainstream Muslim group, such as **the Muslim Council of Britain**. Preachers associated with these groups should not be described simply as ‘Muslim clerics’, but should be labelled as**radical**, **fringe**, or something similar. Do not confuse the mainstream **Muslim Council of Britain**with the more radical **Islamic Council of Britain** - which should be labelled as **self-styled**.

**Surgeons**

All surgeons, even trainees, are normally referred to as Mr/Ms (Miss/Mrs if you know their status). There is a misconception that all consultants can be referred to in this way, but it is only appropriate if they are surgically qualified. However, someone who is a professor of surgery may well prefer to use Prof.

**Surrogate**

means ‘substitute’ - so it is the **mothers** who are surrogate, **not** the children.

**Surveys**

With opinion polls or any other kind of survey, do not say they ‘show’, ‘prove’ or anything else so definite. They do no more than **indicate**, **suggest** etc.

**Suu Kyi**

is the abbreviated form of the ruling National League for Democracy leader**Aung San Suu Kyi**,for second reference, or headlines. She is Ms Suu Kyi - **never** Mrs (her husband, now dead, had a different name).

**Sven-Goran Eriksson**

ie with a hyphen.

**Swear words**

should generally be avoided unless considered integral to the story. We do **not**adopt the convention of using asterisks. If possible, omit the offending term from a direct quote or use indirect speech. You **may** include some swear words, if you think their omission seriously undermines the impact of the story - but this is **subject to the approval of a senior editor**. Swear words should be clearly signposted, either by saying early in the story that strong language is involved or by having a standalone warning at the top. There is no ‘Top 10’ list of swear words, but do bear in mind that racial and religious terms may be considered very offensive. If in doubt - leave it out.

**Swoop**

Birds swoop - and it is acceptable to talk about a **police swoop**-but alternatives such as**raid**are preferable.

**T-shirt**

Capital ‘T’ and hyphenated.

**Table, to**

This is generally understood in the UK to mean ‘to present formally for discussion’, whereas in the US it is more likely to mean ‘to postpone consideration’ of an issue.

**Takeover, take over**

ie as a noun, one word, no hyphen (**takeover**and **merger** are not synonyms - a merger is not hostile; a takeover can be). But separate words as a verb (eg: **He planned to take over the world**).

**Taliban**

and **not**‘Taleban’. Note that it’s a plural (the singular is **Talib**), so it needs a plural verb eg: **The Taliban were on the attack.**

**Talk**

Say **talk to** - and **not** ‘talk with’.

**Tamil Tigers**

(full name: **the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam**). This rebel group fought a long and violent campaign for autonomy in the north and east of **Sri Lanka**. They lost their last stronghold in May 2009.The Tamils are mainly Muslim or Hindu. Most of Sri Lanka’s majority **Sinhalese** are Buddhist. But not all Tamils are Tigers - so do not refer to ‘Tamil leaders’ if you mean **Tamil Tigers’ leaders**.

**Taoiseach**

There should be at least one mention of the title **taoiseach** in any story about the prime minister of the Republic of Ireland (though not necessarily in the first four pars). But do**not**use ‘Taoiseach’ in headlines or summaries. As with other government jobs, initial cap if you are using the name. Otherwise, lower case.

**Taser**

ie with a capital ‘T’ for the electric stun weapon. But it’s a tradename, so make sure the gun in question is a Taser.

**Tate**

The gallery in Southwark, London is **Tate Modern**. The old one, in Millbank, London is called **Tate Britain**. The other galleries are **Tate Liverpool** and **Tate St Ives**.

**Tautology**

Try to avoid them. Common examples include ‘**advance** warning’, ‘**armed** gunmen’, ‘**universal**panacea’. Also: ‘She has given birth to a **baby** boy’, ‘**mutual** co-operation’, ‘crew **members**’, ‘**past**history’, ‘**exact** replica’, ‘**anti-government** rebel forces’, ‘**pre**-conditions’, ‘**pre**-planned’ etc.

**Taxis**

**hackney carriages** (generally black cabs) are licensed by the local authority, and can pick up fares in the street. **Minicabs**-or private hire vehicles-should carry only passengers who have booked. We can follow common usage and use taxi generically for both. However, when describing a specific car or driver, we should clarify the type. In headlines, **cabbies**is acceptable for either.

**Taxman**

is best avoided on the grounds of sexism. So for sentences such as ‘The new policy will mean more money for the taxman’, substitute **HMRC**, or **the Revenue** in later references.

**Teachers’ unions**

And **not** ‘teaching unions’.

**Team-mate**

ie **with** a hyphen.

**Teams**

Sports teams are plural (eg: **Portsmouth have just been relegated**) - but the clubs (as corporate entities) are singular (eg: **Leicester City has signed a new sponsorship deal**).

**Tear gas/tear-gas**

The noun is two separate words (eg: **Police twice used tear gas during the protest**); the verb is hyphenated (eg: **Four people were taken to hospital, after being tear-gassed**).

**Teen**

is acceptable only in headlines. Elsewhere use teenage, teenager, teenaged.

**Teesside**

(heavily industrialised area surrounding the estuary of the River Tees in Cleveland) ie with a double ‘s’.

**Tehran**

(capital of Iran) ie not ‘Teheran’.

**Television channels**

Stick to the official names for BBC channels - even though this often involves using extra characters. We say: **BBC One**/**BBC Two**/**BBC Three/BBC Four/BBC News channel/BBC World/Cbeebies/CBBC**. Also: **ITV/ITV2**(no space)/**Channel 4**(space)/**Sky One**.**Channel 5** reverted to its original name in 2010 after a period of being known as ‘Five’.

**Temperatures**

Always use Celsius, not centigrade or Fahrenheit. Contrary to our usual style with numbers, we always use**digits** with temperatures (eg: **8C**,**10C**, **42C**). It may sometimes be appropriate to add a Fahrenheit conversion to UK stories eg: **The temperature rose above 38C (100F) on Friday, a UK record.**

**Temple Mount**

ie both words capped. Note that the area in Jerusalem that translates from Hebrew as **the Temple Mount** should also be described, though not necessarily in the first four pars, as **known to Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif** (ie lower case ‘al’, followed by a hyphen - and**never** ‘the al-Haram al-Sharif’, which is tautological). The Arabic translates as **the Noble Sanctuary**.

**Terrorist**

The word ‘terrorist’ is not banned, but its use can be a barrier rather than an aid to understanding. We should convey to our audience the full consequences of the act by describing what happened. We should use words which specifically describe the perpetrator such as **bomber**,**attacker**,**gunman**,**kidnapper**,**insurgent**and**militant**. We should not adopt other people's language as our own. Our responsibility is to remain objective and report in ways that enable our audiences to make their own assessments about who is doing what to whom.

When we do use the term we should strive to do so with consistency in the stories we report across all our services, and in a way that does not undermine our reputation for objectivity and accuracy. It is also very important that we strive for consistency across the international and UK facing sites. If a BBC World story uses very measured language but a UK version does not, a user will rightly question the different approaches.

The words ‘terror’ and ‘terrorist’ may be used in a non-specific context, or in direct quotes - but it is not for us to label a particular group or specific act as terrorist.

Beware of paraphrasing and selective quotation, eg: “The Israeli prime minister said that while ‘terrorist’ attacks continued he would not back down.” Putting the single word ‘terrorist’ in quotes may give the impression that the BBC is sceptical about the prime minister’s assessment of the nature of the attacks.

Domestically, we tread a similar line on Northern Ireland. The IRA is so well known, worldwide, that a label is not necessary. Groups such as the Real IRA and Continuity IRA can often be best labelled as **dissident**. A second reference to organisations such as the UFF and UVF could be along the lines of: **The loyalist paramilitary organisation warned**...

**Test**

(cricket, rugby league etc) is always capped. Accompanying ordinal numbers should be lower case (eg: **the second Test**).

**That/which**

Generally: ‘that’ defines, and ‘which’ informs. So: in the sentence **The house that Jack built is to be knocked down** the phrase ‘that Jack built’ is included to differentiate **his** house from the houses built by Jill, the Three Little Pigs, Wimpey etc. It defines which house we are talking about. Compare: **The house, which Jack built, is to be knocked down**- where the fact that Jack was the builder is the new information.

**Think tank**

ie no hyphen

**Third World**

ie with both words capped - but best avoided unless you are quoting someone. Instead, say **developing world** or **developing nations**.

**Thirty-something**

ie the number is expressed as a word, not as digits - and is followed by a hyphen. Similarly, **twenty-something**etc.

**3D**

An acceptable abbreviation for three-dimensional.

**Time references**

**Hours:** We use the 24-hour clock (with a colon) in all circumstances (including streaming), labelled GMT or BST as appropriate. World stories put local time first, followed by conversion into GMT. Domestic stories which mention overseas local time should convert into UK time eg: **The foreign secretary** **will leave London immediately after the cabinet meeting - arriving in Washington at 11:00 local time (16:00 BST**). In a story with several time references, we don’t need to use BST/GMT on every occasion; establishing the time zone once should be enough. Also, judge whether it adds anything in a historical sense, as in: **‘The court heard Jones had burgled the house at 14:25 GMT in November last year.’**

**Days:** Since our international users live in various time zones, we must **not** use ‘yesterday’, ‘this morning’, ‘today’, ‘tonight’, ‘tomorrow’ etc. Instead, days should be referred to by name (eg: **Voting begins on Monday**) - and we should **not** follow the American custom of omitting the preposition (eg: ‘Voting begins Monday’). When writing about events which have happened or are due to happen on the day a story appears, we should avoid putting the day of the week in the top four pars. If some indication of timescale is needed, use another form of words such as ‘within hours’, ‘shortly’, ‘later’ or ‘earlier’. If there is scope for confusion, include the day lower down the story.

**Seasons:** For similar reasons, references to the seasons should be kept to a minimum. We should **not** say eg: ‘An election will be held in the spring’. Substitute with **An election will be held in five months’ time**-or similar.

**Dates:**Put the day before the month (eg: **12 April 2001**). One exception: in a US context, we should spell out **the Fourth of July**. Do **not** include suffixes after the day (eg ‘20th’).

**Decades**: are written **1960s**, **1970s**, **1980s**,**ie**with**no**apostrophe before the ‘s’. But there **should**be one at the start of a date if you omit the century - eg: **The oil crisis of ‘73**or whenan adjective is attached - eg:**the Swinging '60s**. Digits are also used in the decades of an individual’s age (eg: **Henry Higgins** **is now in his mid-50s**).

**Centuries:**with an initial cap if labelled with a number (eg:**21st Century**). Otherwise, lower case (eg: **Scientists expect a cure for cancer by the end of the century**).

**Titles (books etc)**

Use initial caps for the titles of books, films, plays etc (though not for words such as **in** or **and** in the **middle** of titles). Do **not** use quotation marks or italics eg: **Dickens wrote Great Expectations. Crowds queued to watch Shakespeare in Love.**

**Titles (people)**

A marquess, earl, viscount or baron can be called **Lord Surname**or, where they have taken the name of a place,**Lord Placename**. The forename must not be included. An exception is where two people have the same title, so Lord Alan Smith and Lord Peter Smith may be used to distinguish.

The title ‘Lady’ is conferred on the wife of a marquess, earl, viscount, baron, baronet or knight, or the daughter of a duke or marquess or earl. In the first of these groups, the first name is not used, so it is **Lady Hermon** rather than Lady Sylvia Hermon. But those in the second group do include their first name in the title (eg: **Lady Antonia Fraser** is the daughter of the late Lord Longford, the surname having changed when she married). A baroness may use that title eg: **Baroness Simpson**, but can also be referred to less formally as eg: **Lady Simpson**. We would generally use Baroness at first reference, then Lady.

**Tonne**

Use the metric measurement rather than the imperial ‘ton’. In reality, there is very little difference between the two. Avoid the term ‘metric ton’, and of course the tautological ‘metric tonne’.

**Top**

This is journalese (as in **Top policeman murdered**) that, for space reasons, is acceptable in both headlines and text. But try to find something better if space allows (eg: **senior**).

**Tornado**

Note that the plural for the wind is **tornadoes**. The plural for the plane is **Tornados**.

**Tortuous/torturous**

are not synonymous - **tortuous** means full of twists and turns (the opposite of straightforward); **torturous** means extremely painful (and possibly involving torture).

**Touchline**

ie without a hyphen.

**Tour de France**

(cycling) The capital is retained if you abbreviate to **the Tour**.

**Towards**

Is our preference, as in **He walked towards me**. Toward is considered US usage.

**TPim**

is our preference for Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures, and not T-Pim, TPIM or other variants.

**Trade balance**

The trade balance is **not** the same as the balance of payments. Trade involves only visible imports and exports, whereas the balance of payments includes so-called ‘invisibles’ (earnings from the City, insurance, tourism etc).

**Trademarks**

are registered by companies to prevent others from using them. They should not be used generically, and there is a risk of legal action if they are. Use the trade name (with initial cap) if it has direct relevance to the story; otherwise substitute with a general description. Some commonly used trademarks are listed below with suggested alternatives:

Ansafone - answering machine

Bluffer’s Guide - title registered by Oval Projects; **avoid**

Cashpoint - cash machine

Elastoplast - sticking plaster

Fibreglass - glass fibre

Filofax - personal organiser

Formica - plastic laminate

**Gumbusters -**gum-removing machine

Hoover - vacuum cleaner

Jacuzzi - whirlpool bath

Jeep - four-wheel drive vehicle

Jiffy bag - padded envelope

Kleenex - paper tissue

Levi’s - jeans

Muzak - background music

Outward Bound - a [court order](http://explore.gateway.bbc.co.uk/legal/bbc_legal/reporting_restrictions/outward_bound.aspx) exists concerning this (internal link); use adventure training or similar

Perspex - acrylic sheet

Plasticine - modelling clay

Polaroid - instant camera/sunglasses

Portakabin - portable building

Portaloo - portable lavatory

Primus - portable stove

Rawlplug - plastic wall plug

Ray-ban - sunglasses

Rollerblade - rollerskates

Rough Guide - guide book

Scotch tape - adhesive tape

Sellotape - sticky tape

Smart Board - interactive whiteboard

Snowdome - indoor snow centre

Tannoy - public address system

Teasmade - automatic teamaker

Teflon - non-stick

Thermos - vacuum flask

Time Out - listings magazine

Tupperware - plastic food container

Vaseline - ointment

Velcro - fabric fastening

Weightwatchers - slimming club

Xerox - photocopy

Yellow Pages - classified telephone directory

Zimmer - walking frame

**Trade union**

ie without an ‘s’ at the end of ‘trade’. But there **is**one in **Trades Union Congress** (which should **never** be written as ‘TUC Congress’; instead, say **TUC conference**).

**Train-spotter**

ie hyphenated - but **no** hyphen in the book/film **Trainspotting**.

**Train station**

This is an [acceptable alternative to railway station](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/blogcollegeofjournalism/posts/Steamed-up-about-train-stations-).

**T. rex**

Although various spellings can be found, we should stick to normal taxonomy when writing about *Tyrannosaurus rex*. Marc Bolan’s band is T.Rex.

**Trillion**

(One million million) - our preferred style for abbreviation with currencies is **tn** - but spell it out initially if possible.

**Trooping the Colour**

ie with two caps - and **not**‘Trooping **of** the Colour’.

**Troubles**

should be capped in a Northern Ireland context.

**Try**

Correct usage is **try to** do something, and **not** ‘try and’ do something.

**Tsar**

is our favoured spelling, and **not** ‘czar’, whether in expressions such as **drugs tsar** or in a Russian context, where one would use upper or lower case according to context (eg: **The last tsar of Russia was Tsar Nicholas**).

**Tsunami**

is the proper term to describe a wave or series of waves generated when a body of [water](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water) is rapidly displaced on a massive scale - do **not** say ‘tidal waves’. Earthquakes, landslides, volcanic eruptions and large meteorite impacts all have the potential to generate a tsunami. The effects may vary from unnoticeable to catastrophic. (The tsunami which caused widespread devastation in Asia on 26 December 2004 should **not**be referred to as the Boxing Day tsunami. Boxing Day means nothing to a foreign audience.)

**Tube**

(ie underground train) - initial cap.

**TV**

ie caps - and not ‘tv’.

**type 1 diabetes**

ie lower case ‘t’, no hyphen, lower case ‘d’. When selecting photos, be aware that insulin injections are used for type 1 diabetes but very rarely for type 2.

**Uefa**

ie initial cap only (it stands for **Union of European Football Associations**). There is no apostrophe in the Uefa **Champions League**.

**UK Independence Party/UKIP**

Capped up if not written out in full, even though some pronounce it as a word.

**Ukraine**

And **not**‘The Ukraine’.

**Ulster**

Acceptable if in a direct quote or part of a title (for example, **the Ulster Unionists**). But we should not use as an alternative to **Northern Ireland** - since the ‘six counties’ north of the border are only a part of Ulster. Ulsterman/Ulsterwoman can be used in a direct quote.

**Unesco**

ie initial cap only. (It stands for **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**).

**UNHCR**

ie all caps. It refers to the office of **the UN High Commissioner for Refugees** - and **not** ‘the UN High Commission for Refugees’, which does not exist. The **UN refugee agency** is a useful short form for intros, but it should be spelled out later in the story.

**Under age**

A child may be under age - but is an under-age child. **Never one word.**

**Under way**

ie **two** separate words.

[**Unemployment**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/business-and-economy/reporting-economy)

There are two measures for unemployment - the ‘unemployment rate’ measuring the number of people looking for work (also known as ILO count), and the ‘claimant count’, which is the number of people out of work and receiving the jobseeker’s allowance.

The BBC prefers to focus on the unemployment rate (which is always higher than the claimant count) and headlines the broader measure of the ILO count, as this number is less susceptible to fiddling with the benefits system and can readily be compared with unemployment rates in other countries. But when there is space we should also report the claimant count numbers - especially to give a historical perspective.

In the context of the ‘claimant count’ (jargon - to be avoided), the phrase ‘out of work and claiming benefit’ is often used - when what it actually means is **successfully**claiming benefit. Better, therefore, to say **out of work and receiving benefit**.

**Unicef**

ie initial cap only (it stands for **United Nations Children’s Fund**).

**Unification Church**

**Moonies** is an acceptable shorthand in headlines for the Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon, but it should be made clear that this is a term used by critics that many church members find offensive.

**Uninterested**

means ‘not showing any interest’ - eg: a tennis spectator who is reading a newspaper, rather than watching the game, is an uninterested**onlooker**. Do not confuse with **disinterested**, which means ‘impartial’ eg: an umpire at Wimbledon is a **disinterested onlooker**.

**Unionists**

(in Northern Ireland) ie lower case (except in the names of organisations eg: **Ulster Unionists**) - should **not**be used as a synonym for **loyalists**. Both want union with Great Britain, but the label ‘loyalist’ usually implies support for a degree of extremism in pursuit of that aim. The emphasis in our stories should be on **political** affiliation, not religious.

**union jack**

ie lower case. This is the term we use for the UK flag formed by combining the crosses of St George, St Andrew and St Patrick. (The proper term, ‘union flag’, carries potential for confusion - especially in the context of EU stories). However, where there are local political sensitivities, as in Northern Ireland, union flag is acceptable.

**United Arab Emirates/UAE**

Spell out at first reference - then abbreviate to **UAE**. It is made up of seven emirates: **Abu Dhabi** (the capital), **Ajman**, **Dubai**, **Fujairah**, **Ras al-Khaimah**, **Sharjah** and **Umm al-Qaiwain**.

**United Kingdom**

is made up of **Great Britain** (ie England, Wales and Scotland) and **Northern Ireland**- but **not**the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands, which are Crown dependencies.

**United Nations charter**

Chapters of the UN’s charter should be written out as words, eg: **Chapter Seven**.

**United Nations Security Council**

ie all four words are capped up. And you should retain the caps if you go on to write about **the UN Security Council** or just **the Security Council**. Also use caps when referring to a specific UN resolution by number (eg: **He voiced strong support for Resolution 1441**); lower case if the reference is non-specific (eg: **He** **said he understood the pressure for a second UN resolution on Iraq**).

**United States Department of Defense**

ie follow the American spelling when using the official title. But use UK spelling for eg: **the US defence department**. This is often preferable, in order to avoid spelling the same word in two ways in the same story.

**universal credit**

Lower case for this benefit.

**Universe**

ie initial cap.

**University of Wales**

is a collegiate university, with colleges in **Cardiff**, **Swansea**, **Aberystwyth**, **Bangor**, **Lampeter** and **Newport**. So check whether stories apply to the whole university or just an individual campus.

**Upcoming**

Do **not** use, except in a direct quote. Substitute as appropriate **expected**, **imminent**, **forthcoming**, **next** etc.

**upper house**

(at Westminster, or anywhere else) ie both words in lower case. But initial caps are required when giving the Lords its proper title, either in full (eg: **The controversy will mean a late sitting for the House of Lords**) or in abbreviated form (eg: **It fell to the lord chancellor to tell the House of the decision**).

**U-turn**

ie cap ‘U’ with hyphen.

**v**

(abbreviation of ‘versus’) ie lower case and unpunctuated.

**Valletta**

(ie with double ‘l’) is our favoured spelling for the capital of Malta (and **not** ‘Valetta’).

**value added tax/VAT**

ie lower case, no hyphen. The abbreviated form is **VAT**(ie all caps, no punctuation).

**VE Day**

ie no hyphen. It marked the end of World War Two in Europe (**Victory in Europe Day**), on 8 May 1945.

**Verdicts**

are **returned** by inquest juries - and **recorded** by coroners.

**Vicar**

It is fine to speak of someone being eg: **the vicar of Bray**. But do not describe someone as being a ‘vicar’ without immediately naming the parish. In the absence of the parish name, say instead **a member of the clergy**.

**Vice-President**

ie hyphenated. The political position follows our usual rule: ie upper case if accompanied by a name; otherwise, lower case. References to company vice-presidents should always be lower case - whether or not the individual is named.

**Vietnam War**

ie both words capped.

**Virus**

One of the smallest known organisms, which can only reproduce inside host cells - it may cause influenza, measles, mumps, chicken pox, Aids and other diseases. Not to be confused with **bacteria** - these are living cells which, once inside the body, release poisons or toxins that result in food poisoning, cholera, typhoid etc.

**VJ Day**

ie no hyphen. It means **Victory over Japan Day**, andrefers to 15 August 1945.

**Volcanologist**

is our preferred option, rather than vulcanologist.

**Vow, to**

This is journalese (as in ‘The government vows to eliminate waste’) that, for space reasons, is acceptable in both headlines and text. But try to find something better (eg: **promises**) if space allows.

**Wages/salary**

**Wages** are usually paid weekly or monthly for the labour or service of an employee. A **salary** is a fixed sum paid regularly, usually for non-manual work.

**Wahhabism**

is our style for the fundamentalist school of thought founded by Saudi scholar Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab. The adjective is Wahhabi.

**Wailing Wall**

(in Jerusalem) Avoid this term except after a first reference to the Western Wall - eg: **The man attacked tourists near the Western Wall (the so-called Wailing Wall).** Thereafter, just **the Western Wall**.

**Wales'**

is our style for the possessive of the country, ie an exception to the normal rules.

**Wall Street**

(the New York financial district) ie both words with initial caps.

**War on terror**

This policy is associated primarily with the administration of US President George W Bush. It will usually be preferable to use a more general phrase - eg: **the international fight against terrorism**.

When referring to the policy, it should always be lower case and in inverted commas or attributed, whether in copy or headlines, ie **“war on terror”** or ...**what the Bush administration called the war on terror**...

**War-torn**

A cliche which should be avoided.

**Washington/Washington DC**

The state in north-west USA is **Washington**. The nation’s capital, in the eastern US, is **Washington DC** (ie no comma), which occupies the District of Columbia.

**Waterboarding**

The interrogation technique, widely regarded as torture, is one word.

**Water cannon**

ie separate words, no hyphen. It’s the same, whether singular or plural - do **not**add an ‘s’

**Weather**

Do **not**say ‘weather conditions’ if you just mean weather. Do **not** say ‘good weather’ or ‘bad weather’ - what is good for the tourist is probably bad for the farmer. And, in a UK-wide story, do **not** write eg: ‘the recent sunny weather’ - just because it happens to have been sunny where you are.

**web, the**

ie lower case.

**website**

ie one word, and lower case.

**Weights and measures**

**We should use both imperial and metric measures in most stories.**Context will usually decide which measure comes first, but if the first figure is part of a quote it should be retained, with a conversion in brackets immediately afterwards.

Where instantly recognisable abbreviations exist, these should be used throughout, even at first reference. For example, the words ‘metre’, ‘kilometre’ are not written out in full even at first reference; use the abbreviations **m**and **km**. All numbers preceding abbreviations should be rendered as digits; where units are written out in full, our usual numbers convention is followed. There should not be a gap between number and abbreviated unit, and units of measurement do not in general take an ‘s’ in the plural.

UK and US stories should usually use imperial first - eg: **He said the first 50ft (15.24m) of the climb had been hard**. **The president’s** **campaign helicopter has taken him more than 2,000 miles (3,200km).**

For feet and inches, use digits followed by abbreviations - eg: **The hedge was exactly 9ft 4in high (2.84m).**

In non-UK/US stories, metric should usually come first - with a bracketed conversion to imperial - eg: **Police in France say the floods reached a peak of 5.3m (17ft 8in)**. **Many fugitives from English justice are living along a 10km (6.2 mile) stretch of the Spanish coast**.

Sometimes logic will dictate when metric should come first (eg: **Train-speeds on the British side of the Channel Tunnel compare badly with French top speeds of 300km/h (186.4mph)**.

**A nanometre is**one thousand millionth of a metre. Spell it out in full at first reference; then trim to **nm**, with the accompanying number expressed as digit(s) eg: **6nm**,**52nm**.

**For weights** originally expressed as a precise number of stone, write out the word ‘stone’ (**never** ‘stones’) - and follow our usual convention with any accompanying number - eg: **The child weighed less than two stone (12.7kg) at the time of his death**; **She said the company had sacked her because she weighed 15 stone (95.3kg)**.

But if pounds are involved you should use the abbreviations **st** and **lb** (**not** ‘lbs’), and use digits even for numbers below 10, with **no gap** between number and unit - eg: **Charles Atlas said he had once weighed 6st 9lb (42.18kg)**.

From a gram (one thousandth of a kilogram), the abbreviation **g**is used at first reference and throughout. This rule applies whether singular or plural. It is lower case, and there is no gap between number and unit - eg: **Police say they found 30g (1oz) of cannabis in the woman’s handbag.**

**For volumes**,the usual approach, again, is to use both metric and imperial - eg: **The tanker was carrying 30,000 gallons (136,000 litres) of petrol**. (Note that ‘litres’ is not abbreviated, because ‘l’ looks like a number one.) However, phrases where volume and liquid are historically almost inseparable do not have to be converted - eg: **He told the court his favourite pastime was to go out with his friends for a curry and a pint**. Thus, **a pint of beer** or **a pint of blood**are acceptable, unconverted, in any story - though context will sometimes make a metric conversion appropriate in, say, Technology or Health.

Adjectival phrases defining **areas** should include hyphens in both metric and imperial measures. Always mention both; the context will determine which comes first - eg: **The French fishermen denied reports that they had been operating inside the X-sq-km (Y-sq-mile) zone**(Note: there is no ‘s’ on nouns used adjectivally). Elsewhere, there is no need for hyphens - eg: **The UK government is calling for a ban on fishing within a zone of X sq miles (Y sq km).**

Abbreviations should be used throughout. Never write ‘square kilometres’, but always **sq km**. There is no acceptable abbreviation for ‘miles’, so write **sq miles**(and, adjectivally, **sq-mile**).

With **Sports**stories, be guided by the traditions of the individual sport in deciding which system of measurement should be given prominence. For a cricket match in the Netherlands, it should be imperial; for an athletics meeting there, it would be metric. But conversions will always help to reach a wider audience eg: **Anderlecht have signed a striker who is 6ft 8in tall (2.03m)**.

[**Welsh assembly**](http://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/collegeofjournalism/subject-guides/devolution/what-is-devolution)

Use lower case for eg: **The problems facing farmers will be discussed by the Welsh assembly**. But use upper case when giving the full title, the **National Assembly for Wales**. Members of the assembly are **AMs.**

The **Welsh government** should be written with a lower case ‘g’.

**West, the**

(‘the Western world’) ie initial cap - eg: **Western troops in Afghanistan**, **Western governments**, **Western nations**, **Westerners** etc.

**West End**

(in London) ie initial caps.

**west end**

(in Glasgow) ie lower case.

**West country, the**

ie only ‘West’ is capped up.

**Western Europe**

ie initial caps.

**Western European Union/WEU**

An autonomous grouping of European states that co-operates with the EU on matters of defence - ie initial caps. It may be abbreviated to **WEU** (all caps).

**Western Sahara**

(Disputed territory administered by Morocco) ie not ‘**the** Western Sahara’.

**Western Wall**

(in Jerusalem) - and **not** ‘the Wailing Wall’.

**Whereabouts**

To be treated as a plural - eg: **The boy’s whereabouts are unknown**.

**Which/that**

Generally: ‘that’ defines, and ‘which’ informs. So: in the sentence **The house that Jack built is to be knocked down**, the phrase ‘that Jack built’ is included to differentiate his house from the houses built by Jill, the Three Little Pigs, Wimpey etc. It defines which house we are talking about. Compare: **The house, which Jack built, is to be knocked down**- where the fact that Jack was the builder is the new information.

**Which?**

This is the new name for the Consumers’ Association **and** its magazine - ie **with** a question mark.

**While**

And **not** ‘whilst’.

**Whisky/whiskey**

Scotch is **whisky** (ie without the ‘e’). If it’s from Ireland or the US, it’s **whiskey**.

**Whistleblower**

ie one word

**White Paper**

ie both words upper case.

**Who/whom**

The rule is that ‘who’ is the subject of a verb, and ‘whom’ is the object. Where the ‘who’ or ‘whom’ introduces a new clause, work out which pronoun would be correct if you were to create a separate sentence. If the answer is ‘he’, ‘she’ or ‘they’, then the clause should begin with **who**. If the answer is ‘him’, ‘her’ or ‘them’, then it should be **whom** - eg: **Mr Smith ignored Mr Clarke, whom he disliked** is correct, because he disliked ‘him’. And **Mr Smith ignored Mr Clarke, who he believed had been disloyal** is also correct - because he believed ‘he’ had been disloyal.

**Who’s/whose**

The apostrophe is needed if the meaning is ‘who is’ or ‘who has’. It represents the missing letter or letters - eg: **Who’s a pretty boy, then?** and **Who’s left the cage open?** (This is relevant only for direct quotes since it is our policy otherwise not to use contractions.) The apostrophe is inappropriate where you are indicating possession - eg: **Whose parrot is this?**

**Wicket-keeper**

ie hyphenated.

**wi-fi**

For wireless technologies - lower case and hyphenated.

**Wildfire**

One word, not hyphenated.

**Wild West**

ie initial caps.

**Wimpey/Wimpy**

The building company is **Wimpey**. The burger chain is **Wimpy.**

**Wind farm**

ie two words.

**Windermere**

is the name of both a town and a lake. Strictly, ‘Lake Windermere’ is tautological, because the ‘-mere’ means ‘Lake’. But for clarity’s sake, include the label to avoid confusion - and omit it only if there is no scope for ambiguity - eg: **Hoteliers in the Lake District have renewed their complaints about speedboats on Windermere**.

**Winner’s medal**

ie apostrophe before the ‘s’ (because a medal is awarded to each individual).

**Wirral**

and **not** ‘the Wirral’. It’s a metropolitan borough and there are two parliamentary constituencies: Wirral South and Wirral West.

**Wisden**

is the acceptable short form (and not ‘Wisden’s’). Its full title is the **Wisden Cricketers’ Almanack**.

**Wits’ end**

ie the apostrophe after the ‘s’.

**World Bank**

ie both words capped up.

**World Cup**

(football, rugby, cricket etc) ie initial caps.

**World Health Organization/WHO**

Follow the WHO’s own spelling of its name, with a ‘z’ rather than an ‘s’. Any second reference not using the proper title should revert to our usual spelling - ie with an ‘s’ - eg: **The organisation is calling for an urgent vaccination programme**. But where possible rework the copy to avoid spelling the same word in two ways in the same story.

**World Trade Center**

Follow the US spelling (‘Center’) when using its proper title - but revert to UK spelling if a second reference does not use the title - eg: **The World Trade Center is still in flames. Firemen searching the centre say it’s a ruin.**But wherepossible rework copy to avoid spelling the same word in two ways in the same story.

**World Trade Organization/WTO**

ie all capped up. May be abbreviated at second reference to **WTO**.

**World War**

(Revised October 2013) Where space allows, write out **World War One** and **World War Two** (and **not** ‘First World War’ or ‘Second World War’). The abbreviations **WW1** and **WW2** (no gaps) are acceptable in headlines - and should be used in text at second reference. **Never** write about ‘the War’ unless it is already clear from the context which war you mean.

**Worldwide**

The adjective is **usually** one word - eg: **BBC Worldwide** - but not always eg: **world wide web.**

**WWE**

is the set of initials now used by the organisation formerly known as the **World Wrestling Federation**. It now calls itself **World Wrestling Entertainment**, following an unsuccessful battle with the former World Wide Fund for Nature over use of the initials WWF.

**WWF**

The organisation which used to be the ‘World Wide Fund for Nature’ (‘World Wildlife Fund’ in the US) is now known only by its initials, **WWF**. But you should usually add a label at first reference - eg: **WWF, the global environment campaign**. It might sometimes be helpful to mention that it was**formerly the World Wide Fund for Nature**.

**Xbox**

(Microsoft’s rival to PlayStation) ie capped up only at the beginning - and no hyphen.

**X-ray**

ie upper case ‘X’ - and lower case ‘r’ after a hyphen.

**Yahoo**

(the company) and **not**‘Yahoo!’ - ie we drop the exclamation mark.

**Yangtze**

is our preferred spelling for the Chinese river.

**Years**

When writing about tax or financial years or football seasons etc, our preferred style is **2010-11**.

With schools, we refer to Year 4, Year 7 etc.

**Yellow Jersey**

(in cycling) ie initial caps.

**Yemen**

and not ‘The Yemen’.

**Yoghurt (updated April 2017)**

most shops these days might sell ‘yogurt’ but we should use the version with an ‘h’.

**young offenders institution**

is our preferred description. Lower case unless used with the name, as in Hollesley Bay Young Offenders Institution. No apostrophe and institution rather than institute.

**Yugoslav**

and **not** ’Yugoslavian’.

**Yugoslavia**

This federation of six socialist republics disintegrated during the Balkan wars of the 1990s. It was made up of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. (Kosovo declared itself independent of Serbia in 2008, but its secession is rejected by Serbia.) Historical references should be to **the former Yugoslavia**.

**Zanu-PF**

ie hyphenated for the party that ruled Zimbabwe after independence.