

# **Physics World**

## Style Guide 2026

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## Physics World style: the abbreviated version

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### Spelling

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Use UK English. Follow the first spelling preference given in *Chambers Science and Technology Dictionary* or *Chambers English Dictionary* – [available free online](#)

Note that *Chambers* follows the -ize, -ization pattern of spelling, not -ise, -isation.

- realize, customized, organization

Spell proper names according to the country of origin (e.g. Pearl Harbor, Australian Labor Party, National Tritium Labeling Facility), except where this goes against common UK usage (e.g. Munich not München).

### Grammar

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Use standard British English grammar.

Keep punctuation simple.

Use an en rule (–) with a space either side around clauses, not a hyphen (-) or em rule (—), e.g. “The procedure – discovered by Sanchez in 1971 – was employed in this case to great effect.”

Use hyphens to avoid ambiguity (little used car?), generally for compound adjectives.

- high-frequency sound; low-voltage power

Use singular not plural for organizations, groups and teams.

- The Institute of Physics is ... / The research team is ...
- but John Smith and his team are ... / data are ...

### General

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Use sentence case for headings and subheads as well as body text [only the first word is capitalized, except for proper nouns and titles].

Date format: Monday 7 March or 7 March 1998 (don't include year if current year).

Write out numbers one to nine, use numerals from 10 up. If you are writing a number with a unit, always use numerals.

Don't use commas in numbers 1000 to 9999. On web use comma for 10,000 upwards. In print use thin space.

Insert a space between figures and units, e.g. 21 cm.

Use double quotes throughout.

Don't use bold, italics or exclamation marks for emphasis.

### Accessibility

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Don't use a long word/phrase where a short one will do just as well.

Keep sentences short.

Avoid jargon and overly technical terms. When it is necessary to include them, explain in clear, simple language on first use.

Make sure you use inclusive language and bear in mind cultural and other sensitivities. Using the right terminology is important for accuracy as well as because words reflect our attitudes and beliefs. Disparaging language may not only cause offence, but can be deeply upsetting and can reinforce stereotypes.

We follow the C4DISC inclusive language guidelines. Some C4DISC notes are included in this guide; in other places a link is provided to the relevant page online. [The full resource can be accessed online](#)

### Images

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Diversity in images should be a concern not only when full people are shown but also when only part of people, such as just hands, are shown.

Beyond single factors like gender, you should also account for variety within a characteristic. For example, when you show women, do you tend to show women of a certain race or body type? Identify what patterns in your imagery may exclude people and how you can introduce greater diversity.

Before including images of a certain population, do research on how to most respectfully portray them.

Avoid using images that show self-harm, people with mental illness in acute distress, or emaciated body parts.

Figures should meet accessibility guidelines in use of colour, size of label text and choice of images or icons.

Online, every image should have alt text. Keep it to a max of 150 characters and think about what information is useful that isn't already in the image caption.

See also [C4DISC guidelines on inclusive images](#); [C4DISC guidelines on accessible images](#)

# #

% Use in preference to “per cent” (and never percent).

## 19th century

–19th-century artist

**1D** This is uncommon so make sure the context is clear before using.

**2D** No need to give “two-dimensional” in full.

**3D** Use for both the adjective (three-dimensional) and the noun (three dimensions).

# A

Å (abbrev.) angstrom

A (abbrev.) amp

## A/an

Use “a” with words beginning with a consonant

- a bridge
- a hero
- a hotel
- a MENSA member
- a swing

but not where the sound is like a vowel

- an honest person
- an hour
- an MP
- an SAS officer

Use “an” with words beginning with a vowel

- an orange
- an elephant
- an EU minister

but not where the vowel has a hard sound

- a eulogy
- a European
- a UNESCO project
- a unit

## Abbreviations and contractions

**Use abbreviations only** where necessary to avoid repetition of the term in full; where they are more familiar to the reader than the full version; or in tables or diagrams where space is limited (in which case use the caption text to expand the abbreviations).

Where a definition is necessary, **define abbreviations on their first use** by giving the term in full followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. Don’t give the abbreviation in brackets if it is not subsequently used in the story.

In general, **confine common abbreviations** (“e.g.,” “i.e.”) to parentheses, tables or lists and write them out in full (“for example,” “that is”) in body text.

**Avoid ambiguous abbreviations** (“v.” could be “verse”, “volume”, roman “5”, “version” or “verso”).

**Don’t punctuate upper-case** abbreviations (NATO, AD, PhD).

In general, **punctuate lower-case** abbreviations.

- a.m.
- e.g.
- i.e.
- p.m.
- Prof.
- Rt Hon.

but note exceptions

- etc
- p
- pp
- plc
- Co
- Inc
- Corp
- lab
- tel

For **capitalization** of abbreviations and contractions, follow *Chambers Dictionary*

**Don’t use an apostrophe** in plural abbreviations

- 1990s
- MPs

except where its omission might be confusing

- dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s

Don’t use full points for someone’s initials but use a thin space between them (JIR<sup>^</sup>Smith).

Spell out **chemical names** at their first mention, but give the symbols if they are repeated often, appear with their valencies, or occur in equations/tables/lists.

List **degrees** as per their institution of origin. Don’t include the Hons.

- PhD
- MSc
- DPhil
- MPhil

Use **“a” or “an”** according to the pronunciation of the abbreviation

- an MP
- a NATO base

Use **“the”** according to common usage. In general, the rule is to use “the” where you say the letters individually, no “the” where you say the acronym as a single word.

- the BBC
- MENSA

Use abbreviations for **journal titles** only in brackets.

Use “m” and “bn” for “**million**” and “**billion**” only when quoting amounts of money.

- £12m, \$33bn

Use “**trillion**” and “**thousand**” rather than an abbreviation.

For other values, use the terms in full.

- three billion units

**Avoid using &** except in proper nouns (Brüel & Kjaer), abbreviations (R&D) or when used as a style device in page furniture (News&Views).

For **versions of software**, give the number after the name (WordPerfect 5.1) and only add v. if this is necessary for clarity (Fortran 77 v.3).

Don’t use a comma between a name and an **honour/attribution**.

- Gillian Shepherd MP

Never use **small capitals**.

Use “Jr” and “Sr” for “**Junior**” and “**Senior**”.

Where associated with a number, abbreviate “**page**” and “**pages**” to “p” and “pp” (p5, pp7–9).

See also **Capitalization, Cross-references, Headings, Names, References, Units of measurement**

**AC** (abbrev.) alternating current

## Accents on letters

**Use accents** according to *Chambers Dictionary* (including on upper-case text).

- café
- cliché
- pied-à-terre
- protégé
- rôle

For **proper nouns**, follow the accents used by the person or institution.

When **copying** accented letters from one document to another, or into Wordpress, check the correct accent is retained.

**accessary** to a crime

**accessory** attachment/handbag

**acknowledgement** thank you

**acknowledgment** legalese only

**Act of Parliament**

**AD** use **CE** for dates

**adaptation** not adaption

**adapter** someone who adapts

**adaptor** electrical device

**addendum** plural **addenda**

**ad hoc** no italics

**administration** US for government

**admissible**

## Adverbs

**Place adverbs** where you would in normal speech. This is usually after the verb (I walked quickly to the bus stop), but may be before the verb to create a different emphasis (I slowly turned round).

**Do not use hyphens** after adverbs ending in “-ly”.

- a hotly disputed penalty
- a heavily pregnant patient
- the colourfully decorated room

**advisable**

**adviser** not advisor

**A&E** not Casualty or ER

**aesthetic** relating to sense of beauty

**affect** (verb) have an effect on

– **effect** (noun) result/(verb) bring about

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

**African-Caribbean** not Afro-Caribbean

**Afrikaans** language

**Afrikaner** person

## Age

To avoid age discrimination, only include an individual’s age or age grouping if it is essential to the text and/or context. In that case report specific age.

See also **C4DISC guidelines on age**

**ageing** not aging

**aggravate** make worse, not annoy

**ahead of** don’t use to mean before/prior to

**A level** no hyphen, except as compound, e.g. A-level results

**alibi** being somewhere else, not an excuse

**all right** not alright

**all together** in one place

**allusion** reference

**α-particle**

**alternate** (verb) switch between; (noun/adjective) other

**alternative** one of only two options

**altogether** completely

**alumnus** plural **alumni**

**a.m.**

## America

**America** is the continent, **US** is the country.

In general, try to use **American** as in “American cities, American food” etc; but **US** in headlines and in the context of government institutions, such as US Congress, US Navy, US military operation. Never use **America** or **American** when ambiguity could occur between the country and the continent.

For **US states and possessions**, in body text and headings, write out in full. In author bylines or addresses, use two-letter abbreviations.

- the researchers at Duke University, North Carolina
- Peter Gwynne, Boston, MA

**American Indian** > **Indigenous** or Native American or, ideally, name their specific people

**amid** not amidst

**amok** not amuck

**among** not amongst

**analogue** not analog

**analysis** plural **analyses**

**analyse** not analyze

### And/but/because/or

Use sparingly to open sentences (and even more so paragraphs).

Avoid using “or” where “and” is more appropriate.

- He had to choose between red and blue

**annex** (verb)

**annexe** (noun)

**antenna** plural **antennae** (biological); **antennas** (radio kit)

### Anthropomorphism

Avoid using anthropomorphisms. Watch out for phrases such as:

- The atom **knows** about the mirror because it reacts to the ever-present fluctuations in the vacuum.
- As the satellite passes through the cusp, it **sees** an energy spectrum of particles that are aligned with the field.

See also **Pronouns, Whose/of which**

**anti-atom**

**antimatter**

**antineutrino**

**antiparticle**

**any more** not anymore

**apex** plural **apexes**

### Apostrophes

Don't use an apostrophe in the name of a **historical event**.

- Hundred Years War

Use an apostrophe in most **possessives**.

- He gave me five minutes' start.
- The ball is my aunt's.

but not for

- its
- yours
- ours
- theirs
- hers

For possessives of **plural nouns**, add an apostrophe after the “s”.

- four hours' work
- Hospital Physicists' Association

Don't use an apostrophe in **plural abbreviations**

- MBEs
- 1990s
- mind your Ps and Qs

except where omission might be confusing.

- dot the i's and cross the t's

In a **compound possessive** (comprising more than one noun), a single apostrophe should follow the last noun only.

- William and Mary's reign
- my father-in-law's house

Don't be tempted to take this rule too far; rewrite instead.

- “the man down the road's dog” should read “the dog belonging to the man down the road”

With **-s possessives**, our preference is to reproduce in text the way the possessive would be said aloud. If there are two “s” sounds, then use -s's.

- Archimedes's
- Charles's
- Chris's
- Columbus's
- Euripides's
- Flowers's
- for goodness's sake
- James's
- Jesus's
- Jones's
- Moses's
- Socrates's
- Thomas's
- Ulysses's

### appendix

- in a book, plural **appendices**
- internal organ, plural **appendixes**

**appraise** estimate worth

**apprise** inform

**archaeology** not archeology

**Arctic**

**Argentine** noun/adjective, not Argentinian

**artefact** not artifact

**artist** not artiste

**artist's impression**

**ascetic** austere person

### As much as/more than

These can have very different meanings depending on the numbers involved.

- Five times as much =  $X \times 5$
- Five times more than =  $X \times 6$

The first is multiplicative, the second additive, but the latter is frequently written when what is meant is the former. When the values involved are large, the difference between the two meanings is minimal; but when the values are small, the difference can be significant. Even more misleading is “10 times less than” rather than “a tenth”. Check if you can.

**assure** make someone confident of something

**atm** (abbrev.) atmosphere

**auger** make holes

**augur** predict

**autistic person** not person with autism

**axeing** not axing

**axis** plural **axes**

## B

**BaBar**

**bachelor's** degree

**back up** (verb)

**back-up** (noun)

**backward** (adjective)

**backwards** (adverb)

**band gap**

**bankruptcy** file a petition for bankruptcy, not file for bankruptcy

**BC** use **BCE** for dates

**beamline**

**bellwether** not bellweather

**benefited/benefiting** not benefitted or benefitting

**benzene** substance obtained from coal-tar

**benzine** spirit obtained from petrol

**Berne** not Bern

**B-factory**

**biannual** half-yearly/twice a year

**the Bible**

**biblical**

**bicentenary** (noun)

**bicentennial** (adjective)

**biceps** never use bicep

**bidirectional**

**biennial** two-yearly

**Big Bang**

**bill of rights**

**bimonthly** twice-monthly/two-monthly

**biweekly**

**Black** not black when referring to race

**black hole**

– black-hole interactions

**blacklist** > **blocklist** or exclude list

**board of directors**

**boffin** do not use – outdated and gendered

**bogey** golf

**bogie** trolley

**bogy** ghost

**Bombay** > **Mumbai**

**born** of birth

**borne** participle of bear

**Bose–Einstein condensate** (with en dash)

**Bq** (unit) becquerel

**brand-new** (adjective)

**Bronze Age**

the **budget**

**bumf** not bump

**bureau**

• plural **bureaus** (furniture); **bureaux** (firms)

**buses** multiple large passenger vehicles

**busses** clears tables at a café or restaurant

**businesslike**

**buy-in**

**buyout**

**bypass**

**byte**

## C

**C** (abbrev.) coulomb

**°C** degrees Celsius

the **cabinet**

**cabinet minister**

**café** not cafe

**cal** (abbrev.) calorie

**calibre** not caliber

### Can/may

“Can” is used to indicate the ability/capacity to do something (e.g. “You can see for miles.”), while “may” is used to suggest a possibility (e.g. “You may (or may not) see for miles.”) or as a substitute for “can” in formal writing or speech (e.g. “You may use my car.”).

**cannon** weapon

**canon** body of works

**canvas** tent/painting

**canvass** solicit votes

**capitalism**

### Capitalization

Follow *Chambers Dictionary* except where stated otherwise in this style guide.

In general, minimize upper case initials for titles, institutions, ranks and administrative posts.

Use capital letters for **specific named ranks** or titles.

- Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh
- the Lord Mayor of London
- General Eisenhower
- the Board of Trade
- Lucasian Chair of Mathematics

Don't use an upper-case initial where a title is given in **shortened** form

- the duke
- the mayor
- the general
- the board
- the branch

or where **more than one title** of the same form is given

- the dukes of Gloucester and Monmouth
- Reading and Sussex universities

Use lower-case initials for job titles.

- professor of physics
- chief executive
- head of mathematics

Use upper-case initials for specific **geological and historical periods**.

- Carboniferous Period, Iron Age, First World War, Middle Ages
- but
- ice age
  - medieval times

Use an upper case initial for **generic Latin names**

- *Homo sapiens*
- *Escherichia coli* / *E. coli*

Use an upper-case initial for Sun, Moon and Earth in an **astronomical context** when referring to our own galaxy, but use a lower case initial for universe, galaxy and solar system.

Where possible, follow the original capitalization of **tradenames**

- Sellotape
- QuarkXPress
- adidas

but ignore the idiosyncratic use of typeface, bold, italic, etc.

- Bhs not *Bhs*

Use an upper-case initial for the first word and proper nouns in **headings**, with the rest lower case.

Use upper case for **acronyms** and initialisms (NATO, CLEO).

In **tables**, use an upper-case initial for the first word of column headings but lower-case initials for other entries, unless they are whole sentences or proper nouns.

In **vertical lists**, be consistent about the capitalization of the initial of the first word of each item (upper case if full sentences or proper nouns, lower case if not).

Use an upper-case initial for **“river”, “abbey”**, etc when it is used as part of the full name

- River Thames
- St Paul’s Cathedral
- Glastonbury Tor

but otherwise leave it lower case

- the river burst its banks

Use upper-case initials for titles of conferences and conference sessions.

- The 2018 International Conference on High Performance and Optimum Design of Structures and Materials

Use upper-case initials for words that indicate a family relationship when they are used as the equivalent of a name.

- I will take Mum and Dad to dinner to celebrate.
- I’ll have to talk to Auntie about this.
- She’s a mum. He’s a dad.

- I’ll have to talk to my aunt about this.

Use lower-case initials for cross-references.

- figure 4
- chapter 2

Don’t use an upper case character **after a hyphen** unless it is the accepted form of an establishment, tradename or proper noun.

- Institute for Solid-State Technology
- Hewlett-Packard
- anti-Darwinism

Use upper-case initials for the **main words in the title** of a publication (*My Life: a Soldier’s Tale*), but only for the first word in the title of an article or chapter (“The start of war”).

Use lower-case initials for **figure labels**, except for proper nouns.

Use lower-case for **theories and laws** except for any proper names included as part of them.

- Ohm’s law
- Pythagoras’ theorem

Use upper-case initials for **prizes and awards** when giving its full name

- Nobel Prize for Physics
- Turner Prize

but not when referring to a group of prizes.

- She won a Nobel prize.

Use a lower-case initial for **ordinary nouns** (e.g. spring, summer, autumn, winter, nature).

Use lower case for **e-mail addresses** and **URLs**.

- iop@ulc.ac.uk
- iopscience.org

See also **Abbreviations and contractions, Cardinal/compass points, Captions, Cross-references, Headings, Lists, Names, Tables**

## Captions

Use a **full point** at the end of captions.

Where possible, write captions in the **present tense**, even if they refer to events in the past.

- Einstein demonstrates relativity in front of a packed audience at the Royal Society.

Avoid stating the obvious.

- This picture shows...

Where possible, relegate **positional information** to parentheses and use a consistent form.

- Left to right: Marie Curie, Stephen Hawking and Erwin Schrödinger.
- Paul Dirac (left) awards the prizes to Simon Singh (centre) and Jim Al-Khalili.

Online, make sure the caption includes the image source/**credit**.

See also **Capitalization, References**

### Cardinal/compass points

Use lower case when used simply as cardinal points and always spell out in full.

Use upper case when used for distinct geographical regions or political divisions.

- North America
- South Africa
- Western Australia

Follow common usage where there appear to be no universal rules.

- East London
- the south of France
- the North Atlantic
- the North (UK)
- South-East Asia
- the West (the western world)
- the West Coast of the US
- north-western Britain
- eastern Europe
- southern Africa
- southern Europe
- north of the border
- the west of Scotland

**cast off** verb

**cast-off** noun

**catalyse**

**Catholic** referring to the Catholic Church

**catholic** referring to taste

**Caucasian** outdated pseudoscientific category; do not use to mean white

**cd** (unit) candela

**CDs**

**Celsius**

l°C degrees Celsius

**censor** vet

**censure** blame

**centimetre** not centimeter

**centre** not center

**centring** not centering

3rd **century**

- 20th century
- 20th-century artist

**CFCs**

**chair/chairperson** not chairman/chairwoman

**chancellor**

- Chancellor of the Exchequer

**changeable**

**Channel tunnel**

**charged-particle traps**

**charge-parity (CP)** with en dash

**chassis** plural **chassis**

**check-in** noun

**check in** verb

**checkout** noun

**check out** verb

**check-up** noun

**cheque** noun

**Cherenkov radiation**

**chief executive**

**choice** never “the only choice” because having a choice requires at least two options

**chord** music

**Christian name** > **first name** or given name

**church**

in the **circumstances** not under the circumstances

**cipher** not cypher

**classroom**

**clean room** sterile/dust-free

**clear-cut**

### Cliché and overuse

The following are overused and should be avoided where a better word/phrase can be found, where they add nothing to the meaning or where they may mislead:

- actual/actually
- as it were
- basically
- completely
- definitely
- extremely
- in fact
- in order to
- in terms of
- in the order of
- literally
- moreover
- now
- quite
- real/really
- sort of/kind of
- the fact that
- totally
- unique
- utilize
- very
- wide range
- wide variety

See also **Redundant words**

**client/server** not client–server

**climb down** verb

**climbdown** (noun)

**cm** (abbrev.) centimetre

**co-author**

**coaxial**

**co-editor**

**co-founder**

**cold dark matter**

**Cold War**

## Collective nouns

Collective nouns should be treated as singular when it comes to verb agreements, so “The team is...”, “The group says...”. If this leads to a sentence that seems awkward, rewrite it.

See also **Singular/plural**

## Colon

Use a colon to link two grammatically complete clauses to mark a step forward, from introduction to main theme, from cause to effect or from premise to conclusion.

- “The circumstances had changed: the staff had left and funding had stopped.”

Use to introduce a list where the sentence doesn’t flow normally without it.

- “I used the following ingredients: flour, milk, butter and eggs.” but
- “I bought oranges, apples, pears and bananas.”

A colon shouldn’t be followed by a capital letter unless it belongs to a word that would normally have a capital initial anyway.

## Comma

As a rule, the comma should be used to **aid the reader** and not be inserted so as to cause an unnecessary break in a sentence.

The meaning will change according to how commas are used with “**however**” (e.g. “However it is portrayed it will sell.”; “However, it is portrayed in such a way that it will sell.”; “The product, however, will sell.”; “These incidents, however trivial in themselves, are liable to lead to more serious demonstrations.”).

A comma should not normally be used **before “and”** (e.g. “red, white and blue”), except for clarity in long or complex sentences (e.g. “egg and bacon, cheese and tomato, and fish and chips”).

There is often no need for a comma **after “that is”**, but often the need for one before (e.g. “the division, that is the oil–water interface, should serve this purpose”).

There should be a comma **before and after “for example”** where it forms a parenthetical phrase on its own (e.g. “sodium chloride, for example, is ideal”). There should normally be a comma after “for example” when it introduces something (e.g. “For example, Philip Jones will talk on the origin of black holes.”) In some cases, however, the comma is best left out after “for example” to keep the punctuation simple (e.g. “A number of reagents, for example sodium chloride, potassium chloride and calcium carbonate, can be used.”).

There is often no need for a comma **after an introductory phrase/word**, such as a date (e.g. “In 1921 Peter Kapitza arrived in England.”), except for clarity (e.g. “By the 1980s, the year 1918 seemed a long time ago.”).

Where there are **several adjectives/adverbs** qualifying a noun/verb, commas should be used to separate them where this

improves clarity, such as when adjectives qualify a noun in the same way (e.g. “a cautious, eloquent man”). They should not be necessary where adjectives qualify a noun in different ways (e.g. “a distinguished foreign author”) or where other punctuation serves to link or separate other adjectives (e.g. “expensive low-power ground-glass light microscope”).

In some cases the inclusion or omission of a comma can change the sense completely (e.g. “They revealed a third, unknown source.”, i.e. there were three sources in total and the other two were known; “They revealed a third unknown source.”, i.e. the other two sources were also unknown.).

Commas can be placed round a **parenthetical phrase/word** in the same position as curved parentheses would occur (e.g. “I walked home, some five miles away, because my bike had a puncture”; “The researchers from Stuttgart, Germany, have developed a new technique.”) However, the use of parenthetical commas can alter the meaning (e.g. “His daughter (Margaret) was seven” can be written “His daughter, Margaret, was seven”, but these are each only correct if the man has only one daughter. If he has more than one daughter, the parentheses/commas should be omitted).

See also **That/which/who**

**common** same  
**common sense** noun  
**commonsense** adjective  
**communism**  
**communist**  
**Communist Party**

## Compare with/to

Use **compare with** when you are assessing the similarities/differences of two things, whether they are similar or not.

- There are an astounding 5 million people unemployed in this country, compared with only 2 million five years ago.
- The scientific study will compare modern genes with gene samples from Neanderthal man.

Use **compare to** when you want to point out the similarities of one thing/person to another.

- Many have compared Stalin to Mao.
- Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?
- Don’t compare me to your ex-husband!

**complement** completing something  
**complementary** goes well with  
**compliment** praise or tribute  
**complimentary** free gift or admiring comment  
**comprise** be made up of  
**confectionery** sweets, cakes, etc;  
**confectionary** a place where confectionery is made  
**conjoined twins** not Siamese twins  
**consist** (of) constitute  
**consortium** plural **consortia**  
**consult** never “consult with”

## Contractions

Avoid non-standard contractions (“there’ve”) altogether.

Don’t use full points in contractions (Mr, Ltd, St).

Generally, a limited number of contractions are fine in opinion pieces, newsletters, blogs and features, but not news.

**convince** someone of the facts

**co-operate** not cooperate

**coordinates** noun, maths or geography

**co-ordinate** verb, to adjust or align

**co-producer**

**cord** vocal, spinal

**co-researcher**

**coronavirus** group of viruses that cause colds, pneumonia, SARS, MERS and COVID-19

**coseismal**

**co-signatory**

**cosine**

**cosmic microwave background**

**cosmic ray**

**cotangent**

**council** assembly

**counsel** advice/adviser/advice

**counter-attack**

**counterintuitive**

**counter-productive**

**county council** except when giving a full proper name

**co-workers**

**COVID-19** disease identified in December 2019 caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2

**crescendo** getting louder, growing stronger – nothing rises to or reaches a crescendo; plural **crescendos**

## Credits/sources

All images must be credited to their source, even if it’s the same as the author or IOP Publishing.

Give the artist and/or the agency, as appropriate

- F Henderson/Science Photo Library

or the bibliographical reference

- B Crystal 1992 *Road and Rail* **45** 4871

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**criterion** plural **criteria**

## Crime and incarceration

Language used to describe people who are affected by the criminal justice system should be respectful, factual and neutral, person-centred, and free of stereotypes.

Exercise caution when choosing images related to crime. Bear in mind the effect on both persons accused of crime and victims of crime if a specific named person is pictured.

See also **C4DISC guidelines on crime and incarceration**

## Cross-references

Where possible, include at least one **in-text reference** to each figure, box, table or other item of display material.

Number **figures** but not other display items.

Refer to cross-references **in full with a lower case initial**.

- chapter 2
- figure 1
- page 4 (except in brackets where this should be p4)

Omit the word “see” unless this is required to make sense.

- see box on page 51.
- (figure 4)

For an **in-text reference to an article** in another issue of *Physics World*, use the form

- (December 1994 pp24–25)

but omit the year if it is the same as the current issue.

For **vertical lists**, only use numbers if they are required to allow you to cross-reference items in the list. Otherwise use bullets.

Use quote marks for the **title of a chapter, section or article**.

- See “Advanced methods”

See also **Abbreviations and contractions, Numbers, References**

## cross-section

## Currencies

Amounts of money should be quoted in the relevant currency throughout a story but a conversion in brackets to euros, UK sterling or US dollars (dependent on primary audience) should be given at the first mention. Currencies without values should be written as lower-case (e.g. euros, dollars, pounds sterling).

For multiples of a million or a billion, use m and bn closed up to the numeral. Write out larger multiples in full.

- £75m
- €17bn
- \$14 trillion

Use the symbols or standard abbreviations for units of currency, where they are commonly used in UK publications.

- A\$100 (Australian dollar)
- C\$100 (Canadian dollar)
- €0.50 (euros)
- £100 (British pounds, not GBP/Sterling)
- \$100 (US dollar)
- ¥100 (Japanese yen)

For others, write out in full or explain on first use and consider using ISO.

- R\$100 (Brazilian dollar)
- 100 yuan (Chinese yuan)

- DKr100 (Danish krona, or DEK)
- HK\$100 (Hong Kong dollar)
- NZ\$100 (New Zealand dollar)
- NKr100 (Norwegian krona)
- 100 zloty (Polish zloty)
- 100 roubles (Russian rouble)
- S\$100 (Singapore dollar)
- SKr100 (Swedish krona, or SEK)
- SFr100 (Swiss franc, or CHF)
- NT\$100 (Taiwanese dollar)
- 100 bt (Thai baht)

**current** in this time

– **present** in this place

**currently** now

– **presently** in a while

**cut-off** noun

**cut off** verb

# D

Dad/**dad** see **Capitalization**

## Dangling participles

You get a dangling participle when the subject of the participle (-ing verb) and the subject of the sentence don't agree. Beware of constructions such as "having died, John buried him".

## dark matter

- dark-matter particles
- dark-matter ring/halo
- cold dark matter
- warm dark matter

## Dashes

Use a **spaced en rule** as a parenthetical dash to mark an interruption in the structure of a sentence

- He was not – though you may disagree – an ideal candidate.

The text between dashes tends to be of a more abrupt nature than that between commas and is generally more pertinent to the rest of the sentence than text in parentheses.

Dashes can also occur singly

- The crew of *Integrity* saw five remarkable events – flashes of light as meteorites slammed into the surface of the Moon.

See also **En rules and minus sign, Hyphens**

**data** are plural, singular is **datum**

**datalogger**

**dataset**

## Dates and times

Use BCE and CE, not BC and AD. Use the format:

- 26 May 1993
- 20th century
- 2020 CE / 1492 BCE

Use a **closed-up en rule** between dates within a single month (14–16 March) but a **spaced en rule** where the dates span more than one month (23 September – 30 October).

Don't elide **BCE dates**

- 1498 BCE – 1492 BCE

For **decades** use the form "the 1990s" not 90s/'90s/the Nineties.

**Hyphenate centuries** as follows:

- in the mid-14th century
- in the early 14th century
- a 14th-century explorer.

Use an oblique with maximum elision instead of an en rule to denote an **academic year**, fiscal year or football season (1995/6) but give obituary dates in full (1900–1982).

Don't use an apostrophe in **decades** (1990s).

Use upper-case initials for specific **geological and historical periods**.

- Carboniferous Period, Iron Age, First World War, Middle Ages but
- ice age
- medieval times

In **writing about time**, use words (2 o'clock) or figures with a.m. and p.m. (12.45 p.m.), but for clarity use "midday" and "midnight", not 12.00 a.m. and 12.00 p.m.

Be specific about dates – instead of "recently" use "in May 2018". But don't be over-specific where the actual day of the month isn't relevant.

See also **Abbreviations and contractions, Apostrophes, Numbers**

**daytime**

**dean of science**

**debatable** not debateable

**decoherence**

**de-excite**

**deflection**

**defuse** render harmless

° degrees

**de luxe** not deluxe

**department** except when giving a full proper name

**dependant** noun

**dependent** adjective

**depository** person

**depository** place

**despoiled**

**devil's advocate**

**dialyse**

**dietitian** not dietician

**different from** not different than or different to

**diffuse** spread about

**director**

- director of the Centre for Liquid Crystal Research
- director-general

**disability** see **Health**

**disc** non-computing

**discreet** circumspect

**discrete** separate

**disk** computing

**disorientate** not disorient

**dispatch** not despatch

**dissociate** not disassociate

**distil** not distill

**disused** no longer used

**diverse** an individual cannot be diverse, a group can be

**divorcé** man

**divorcée** woman

**divorcees** (no accent) both men and women

### Double negatives

Avoid double negatives (e.g. “The subtleties did not go unnoticed”). Be directly negative (e.g. “The subtleties were noticed”).

**double-edged sword** not double-edge sword

**doveish** not dovish. Doveish has the opposite meaning of being bullish. Doves tend to be cautious; bulls tend to be reckless.

**downplay** > **play down**

**down-to-earth** not down-to-Earth

**dreamt** not dreamed

**driving licence** not driver’s licence

**drug abuse/misuse** > (heavy) **substance use** or dependence

**dubbed** > **called**

### Due to/owing to

Use “owing to” when you mean “because of” and “due to” when you mean “caused by” (e.g. “Owing to illness, he missed the game.”; “His missing the game was due to illness.”). “Due to” must be attached to a noun or pronoun. For example, compare “It was difficult to assess the changes due to outside factors” with “It was difficult to assess the changes owing to outside factors”. The first says the changes that were a result of outside factors were difficult to assess, the second says outside factors made the changes difficult to assess (if in doubt, because of can be substituted for owing to, but not due to).”

**duke** except when giving a full proper title

# E

**e** charge of an electron, styled in bold, no italics

**earned** not earnt

**Earth** planet

**earth** ground/soil

- earth sciences

**east** see **Cardinal/compass points**

**ebook**

**the EC** see **EU**

**ecosystem**

**editor**

**educationist** not educationalist

**effect** noun – result/verb – bring about

–**affect** verb – have an effect on

**effectively** (with effect)

– **in effect** (essentially)

**e.g.** should only be used within brackets. For text outside brackets, use “for example” instead.

### Either/or, both/and

In an either/or phrase, the “either” and “or” parts should have a parallel structure (e.g. “it may either be disposed of to landfill or be used in building materials”).

In an “either/or” phrase there should be only two alternatives (e.g. in “when confronted with this figure, many managers either deny it, express a lack of options or blame employees”, “either” should be omitted because here there are three possibilities).

The same applies to a sentence involving “both” (e.g. “who both knew him and me” should read “who knew both him and me”).

**elderly** > **older adults** or ideally use a specific age range

**electrocution** death by electricity, not an electric shock

**electrolyse** not electrolyze

**e-mail** e-mail addresses should always be lower case

**embargo** plural **embargoes**

**emigrate** leave a country

**emir** not amir

**emphasized**

**enamour** not enamor

- **enamoured of** to be pleased with/enthusiastic about something

- **enamoured with** to be in love with someone

**enforceable** not enforcable

**en masse**

**enquire** ask

**enrol** not enroll

**en route** not on route

### En rules and minus sign

Wordpress will not auto convert two hyphens into an en dash so please ensure you are pasting in the correct en dash character where needed, or select it from the glyph palette.

Use an en rule in ranges of precise numbers (e.g. “6–8 mm” or “the conference is on 12–17 July”).

Use an en rule for a **minus** sign. Rewrite to avoid a clash between an en rule and a minus sign, or use “to” instead of an en rule (e.g. –6 to –4 °C). Omit plus signs where their omission is not ambiguous (e.g. –3 to 4 °C).

Use an en rule to indicate a **bond** (e.g. C–H) but don't use for chemical compounds (e.g. sodium chloride salt).

Use en rules to indicate an equal **partnership**, e.g. Einstein–Rosen bridge.

Don't use em rules.

See also **Dates and times, Hyphens, Numbers, Ranges and bonds**

**ensure** make sure, check your facts

**enthral** not enthrall

**envelop** verb

**envelope** noun

**equator**

**Eskimo** > **Alaska Native** (a group that includes Aleut, Inuit and others)

**equity** having an equal outcome, even if that requires unequal distribution of resources or access

**especially** particularly

–**especially** for a special purpose

**et al.**

**etc**

**ethnic** do not use to refer to people

## EU/EC

The EC and EU are not the same entity. The **EU** is the European Union and is what many Europeans are citizens of.

The **EC** is the European Commission, the executive branch of the EU. The **EEC** is the European Economic Community, and is a business region – not populated by people. The **EEA** is the European Economic Area, which includes European countries and people outside the EU, such as Norway and Switzerland.

**euro** not Euro (like pound, dollar)

**eurozone**

**eV** (abbrev.) electron volt

**everyday** (adjective) commonplace

**every day** noun/adverb

- “I use my everyday mug every day.”

**the exchequer**

## Exclamation mark

Use sparingly in informal writing (blogs, opinion). Never use in formal writing (news, features, research updates).

**ex dividend** (not ex-dividend) in financial contexts

**execution** carrying out of death sentence by lawful authority, so a terrorist does not execute someone

**expatriate** noun and verb

**exposé**

**extrasolar**

**extraterrestrial**

**extrovert** not extravert

# F

**F** (abbrev.) farad

**fact sheet**

**fallacy** a faulty argument, not an erroneous belief

## Family and relationship status

Refer to someone's marital status only when that information is necessary. When it is necessary, refer to the parties in the relationship equally.

Avoid the assumption that a woman is the primary caregiver.

Avoid assumptions about partners, sexuality or marital status and avoid stereotypes, e.g. don't assume that people without children are more career-focused or willing to work long hours than their peers with children.

Use positive adoption language to treat birth and adoptive families with respect. “Parent” alone is usually appropriate for an adoptive parent unless you need to note the adoption or distinguish between the adoptive and birth parents.

See also **C4DISC guidelines on family and relationship status**

**Far East** > **East Asia**

**farther** more distant

**fatwa** edict, not necessarily a death sentence

**fault-line**

**faze** intimidate/overwhelm

**feel-good factor**

**fellow**

- IBM fellow emeritus

- Royal Society research fellow

**fiancé** man

**fiancée** woman

**fibre** not fiber

**fibre optic** (noun)

– **fibre-optic** (adjective)

## Figure labels

Don't use a **full point** at the end of labels, unless they include a grammatical sentence, but this would usually be too wordy for a label.

Use **lower-case initials** for figure labels, except for proper nouns.

**fine-tune** (verb) not fine tune

- fine-tuned engine

**fire brigade**

**firefighter**

**first, second, third** not firstly, secondly, thirdly

**first aid**

**First World War** not World War I, WWI or the Great War

**fledgling**

**focused** not focussed

**focusing** not focussing  
**forbear** abstain  
**forebear** ancestor  
**forego** precede  
**foreign** do not use to refer to people  
**for ever** always  
**forever** continuously

## Foreign words and phrases

Use italics for most foreign words such as:

- *ab initio*
- *annus mirabilis*
- *et al.*
- *Gedankenexperiment*
- *in situ*
- *inter alia*
- *in vitro*
- *in vivo*
- *non sequitur*
- *quid pro quo*
- *praxis*
- *raison d'être*
- *vis-à-vis*

But not for words in common English usage:

- ad hoc
- status quo
- via
- vice versa

**for free** > **free**

**forgo** do without

**former Soviet Union** not Former Soviet Union

**formula**

- physical product: plural **formulas**
- in science/mathematics: plural **formulae**

**fortuitous** by chance, not by good fortune

**forum** plural **forums**

## Fractions

Rewrite 1/7 of a second as “a seventh of a second”.

In numerals, calculate the decimals rather than using a fraction, e.g. “1.25 m tall”.

**freefall**

**front-runner**

**fulfil** not fullfill

**fulfilment** not fullfillment

## Full stop

A full stop should be used to define the end of a proper sentence. Views on what constitutes a proper sentence differ, but in general it should contain a verb, a subject and an object. While sentences without verbs are commonplace in fiction and popular writing (e.g. “So far so good.”; “Now for his final arguments.”), in science writing they should be avoided in technical work and restricted to more informal pieces, such as opinion articles.

See also **Abbreviations and contractions**, **Quote marks and quotations**

**fulsome** disgusting by excess, so “fulsome praise” should not be used in a complimentary sense

**fungus** plural **fungi**

**further** more advanced

Both further and farther can be used to refer to physical distance, but only further can be used in a figurative sense, such as “furthermore” and “further details”.

# G

**g** (abbrev.) gram

**galaxy** not Galaxy

**gambit** opening strategy, so “opening gambit” is tautologous

**game plan**

**gamma rays**

- gamma-ray bursts

**gas** plural **gases**

**gasses** (verb)

## Gender and gender identity

Use non-binary, gender-neutral and stereotype-free language.

Denote a specific gender, sex, and gender identity only where it is relevant, otherwise use neutral terms.

The preferred gender-neutral form is “they”, not “he or she”.

Do not assume a person’s gender identity. Allow people to self-identify where possible.

Do not use stereotyping/patronizing language such as career woman, male nurse, housewife, lady doctor.

Avoid terms that have gendered connotations, such as bossy, housekeeping [in reference to admin], man hours.

**Job titles** should be gender neutral regardless of who holds that job. Use “comedian”, not “comedienne”; “actor”, not “actress”. Other gender-neutral terms to use include firefighter, police officer, chair or chairperson, wait staff, flight attendant.

When gender-specific nouns are required, use “man” and “woman”.

When gender-specific adjectives are required, use “male” and “female” as in “a female researcher”.

Consider a gender-additive approach to language surrounding reproductive health. Use of phrases such as “pregnant women and people” is inclusive of transgender and non-binary people while not erasing women.

Do not refer to “preferred pronouns”. Instead, simply use “pronouns”, as in “X’s pronouns are he/him/his”.

See also **C4DISC guidelines on gender, gender identity and sexual orientation**

## general election

## Geopolitics

Be specific about locations. If grouping terminology is needed, use the World Bank designations (e.g. low-income/high-income countries), not Third World or developing/developed countries. If specific research or quotes use the terms Global South/Global North that is an acceptable alternative.

Avoid terminology that is Western-centric, such as Far East or Middle East. Use the factual geographic locations instead, i.e. East Asia and West Asia (or specific countries).

Avoid referring to people’s immigration status unless contextually relevant and essential.

An **asylum seeker** is a person seeking international protection; a person who has applied for asylum but not received a decision.

A **refugee** is a person fleeing conflict or persecution.

A **migrant** is a person moving away from their usual place of residence for reasons other than conflict or persecution, which may be voluntary or forced; not synonymous with refugee.

See also **C4DISC guidelines on geopolitics; C4DISC guidelines on immigration**

## geoscience

**geriatrics** a field of medicine; do not use to refer to people

**GeV** or **in the giga-electron-volt range**

– **GeV/c<sup>2</sup>** note the italic c

**ghetto** use only for its specific historical meaning

**ghettoize** > **silo**

**giveaway** (noun)

**God/god** [As in: My god is God, your god is Allah. The Vikings and the Romans had their own gods.]

**gothic**

**government**

**graffito** plural **graffiti**

**gram** not gramme

## Grammar

Grammar should be simple and clear. Punctuation should be kept to a minimum (but without making the text ambiguous or hard to read), with the aim that the reader should only need to read something once to understand it and should not be distracted from the content by inconsistency.

See also **Comma**

**grandfathering/grandfather clause** Avoid as this has roots in

racist language and history. Instead use **legacy**

**grisly** gruesome

**grizzly** bear

**guidebook**

# H

**h** (abbrev.) hour

**H** (abbrev.) henry

**handmade**

**hard line/hardliner** (noun)

**hardline** (adjective)

## Headings

Use **sentence case**, i.e. an upper case initial for the first word and proper nouns, but leave the rest in lower case.

In headlines use **single quotes** and use other punctuation sparingly. Use double quotes in sub-headings and all other text.

**Don’t use full points** at the end of headings.

**Avoid using abbreviations**, except for the most common (e.g. UK), in headings and standfirsts.

Never allow word breaks in headings.

Use quote marks when referring to a section heading or a headline (e.g. see “Products”).

Avoid using words that can be either a noun or a verb (e.g. project, target) and might therefore be ambiguous.

As a general rule, headlines should be active, describe what the story is about and be in the form “A does B to C” or “A does B”

- French scientists use lasers to clean artefacts
- Telecoms market hits rock bottom

See also **Capitalization, Numbers**

**head of physics**

**headteacher** not headmaster or headmistress

## Health

Avoid descriptions of appearance unless essential to the subject of the text. A person’s weight or size should only be mentioned when it is directly relevant.

Mention someone’s disability or health condition only when it is necessary for readers to know and when you have confirmation of the diagnosis. Never disclose someone’s health information without their knowledge or consent.

Defer to people’s preferences when deciding how to describe their health condition. When you cannot ascertain someone’s

preference, use the preference associated with groups of people with that condition.

Bear in mind some health conditions are not considered to be an illness or disability by many who have them. Exercise caution in how you frame someone's health situation.

Avoid negative terminology with regard to disabilities and do not use disability as a euphemism. Do not use:

- handicapped
- confined to a wheelchair [the wheelchair usually enables movement, rather than restricting it]
- cripple/crippled
- afflicted with
- suffering from
- the blind
- victim of [illness]
- dumb
- invalids
- spastic
- lame
- tone deaf

Try to be as specific as possible in the context and do not define people as their illness.

Only use **mental-health** labels in a medical context. For example, do not use “schizophrenia/schizophrenic” to mean “in two minds”. Never describe people or behaviour as “psycho”, “schizo” or “nuts”. Be careful with using “paranoid” or “OCD” as these are medical conditions.

Avoid discussing details about suicide, self-harm methods, specific weights and food eaten, as they can trigger others.

See also **C4DISC guidelines on health**

**northern hemisphere**, **southern hemisphere**

**hiccup** not hiccough

**hi-fi**

## High/great

“High” is sometimes used where “great” would be more appropriate, but this should be avoided (e.g. “the danger of this is especially high” should read “the danger of this is especially great”).

**high-quality** (adj.)

**high-*T*<sub>c</sub>** note the italic T and subscript c

**historic** (memorable) a historic (not an)

**historical** (of history) a historical (not an)

**hi-tech** not high-tech

**home-made**

**the Home Office**

**homepage** not home page

**home town**

**homogeneous** having parts all of the same kind

**homogenous** similar owing to common descent

**honorary** member/membership

**House of Commons Trade and Industry Committee**

**House of Lords**

**House of Representatives**

**however** – see **Comma**

**hp** horsepower – but avoid imperial units

**Hubble Space Telescope**

**humorist** not humourist

**hundreds and thousands of** > **hundreds or thousands of**

**hydrolyse** not hydrolyze

## Hyphens

In general, use hyphens as an aid to understanding, and minimize use.

Follow *Chambers Dictionary* for the hyphenation of

**composite nouns** (e.g. school-leaver), **phrasal compounds** (e.g. stick-in-the-mud) and **compound adjectives** (e.g. easy-going).

Use hyphens where doing so avoids **ambiguity** (e.g. deep-blue sea, 8–14-year-olds, four-year-old children, 100-odd people, three-wheeled vehicles, geriatric-ward nurse), but avoid overuse, especially where the relationship between words is clear without hyphenation (e.g. *in situ* experiment – italics make relationship between “in” and “situ” clear).

Don't assume that **similar** words need to be treated consistently (e.g. lifebelt, life-jacket).

Avoid too many **floating hyphens** by rewording or by their omission (e.g. “16th- and 17th-century explorers” could read “explorers of the 16th and 17th centuries”), but retain floating hyphens where they are necessary for clarity (e.g. phosphorus- and sulphur-containing compounds).

Use hyphens for **attributive** adjectives where this avoids ambiguity (e.g. high-quality work, up-to-date technology), but generally not for predicative adjectives (e.g. work of high quality, technology that is up to date).

Don't use a hyphen where an **adverb** is modifying an adjective (e.g. well known fact, fully qualified technician, very fast car – “very” clearly qualifies “fast”, not “car”, so the connection between “very” and “fast” is obvious without having to hyphenate them), unless the meaning is ambiguous (e.g. little-used car).

Use a hyphen to separate **repeated vowels** (e.g. re-enter) or to avoid other awkward or misleading combinations (e.g. radio-iodine, de-adsorb, co-worker).

Don't use a hyphen where part of the compound is a **measurement** (e.g. 3 A fuse), except to avoid ambiguity (e.g. 12 40-W lamps) where it can't be rewritten for clarification. Note that a hyphen is appropriate with a noun that is not strictly a unit of measurement (e.g. 32-bit screen, three-day week).

Hyphenate whole **numbers** and fractions when these are spelled

out (e.g. twenty-five, four-fifths).

Use a hyphen in a word with a **prefix** where this avoids ambiguity (e.g. recreation/re-creation, reform/re-form, resign/re-sign, recover/re-cover).

In print, avoid a hyphen/en rule at the end of more than two consecutive lines.

Don't use an upper-case character after a hyphen unless it is the accepted form of a proper noun (e.g. Institute for Solid-State Technology, Hewlett-Packard, sub-Poisson).

Use a hyphen to join a prefix to a proper noun (e.g. anti-Darwinism).

Hyphenate **centuries** as follows: in the mid-14th century, in the early 14th century, in the late 14th century, a 14th-century explorer.

Don't hyphenate **chemical** names when they are written in full (e.g. sodium hydrogen chloride), except where numbers occur (e.g. 1,2-chloro-3-bromobenzene).

Hyphenate complex **compass** directions (e.g. north-west London, south-south-east).

To denote keyboard keys and key combinations, use upper case initials and link individual keys with hyphens (e.g. Ctrl-Shift-I).

See also **En rules and minus sign**, **Word breaks**

**hypothesizes** not hypothesises

**Hz** (abbrev.) hertz



## I/me

The form stays the same whether or not you add another person:

- I walked to the shops.
- (Sarah and) I walked to the shops.
- I want you to tell me what happened.
- I want you to tell (Sarah and) me what happened.

**ice age** not Ice Age

**ice-cap**

**i.e.**

**ill advised** not ill-advised (except as compound adjective)

**ill prepared** not ill-prepared (except as compound adjective)

**ill suited** not ill-suited (except as compound adjective)

**illusion** false image

**immigrate** arrive in country

**impacted on** use only in physical sense, not metaphorical

**imply** hint

**impostor** not imposter

**inadmissible** not -able

**indestructible** not -able

**index** plural **indexes**

- except in maths where plural is **indices**

**Indigenous** not indigenous

**indispensable** not -ible

**in effect** essentially

**-effectively** with effect

**infer** draw conclusion

**infighting**

**infinite** without limit, not very large

**infrared** not infra-red

**in house** (noun)

**in-house** (adjective)

**innuendo** plural **innuendoes**

**in order to** > **to**

**inquire** investigate

**insignia** is a plural and has no singular

**in situ** not in-situ

**install** not instal

**instalment**

**instil**

**instinct** innate behaviour

**the institute** all institutes other than the IOP after first mention

## Institute of Physics/IOP Publishing

The Institute of Physics is a learned society and charity. It wholly owns IOP Publishing, which is a profit-making company. So in most contexts they are two separate entities, but occasionally they're one and the same.

**the Institute** the Institute of Physics after first mention

**the Institute of Physics** not Institute of Physics

**IOP Publishing** not Institute of Physics Publishing. Restrict use of **IOP Publishing Ltd** to legal text, including copyright lines.

**IOP** not IoP, IOPP, IoPP

This can refer to the Institute or the publisher after first mention, so be sure that it is clear in the text which is intended.

**insure** take out an insurance policy

**International Space Station**

**Internet** not internet

**intranet** not Intranet

**intuition** insight

**Inuk** plural **Inuit**

**invariably** unchanging, not hardly ever changing

**invite** is a verb; do not use as a substitute for **invitation**

**iridescent**

**irresistible** not -able

## -ise/-ize and -yze/-yse

Follow *Chambers Dictionary*. Always use -ize, -izer, -ized, -izing, -ization endings, except for:

advertise                      advise                      affranchise

apprise                      arise                      chastise

circumcise                      comprise                      compromise

concise                      demise                      despise

devise	disenfranchise	disguise
emprise	enfranchise	enterprise
excise	exercise	expertise
franchise	guise	improvise
incise	merchandise	misadvise
misprise	mortise	practise (verb)
precise	premise	prise (open)
promise	reprise	revise
supervise	surmise	seise (legal term)
surprise	televise	treatise

Always use -yse endings:

analyse	catalyse	dialyse
electrolyse	hydrolyse	paralyse

### Italic and bold

Avoid using italic for **emphasis** and never use bold for emphasis.

Use italic (plus upper case initials) for **titles** of published books, journals, magazines, newspapers, plays, films, works of art and long poems.

- *Chambers English Dictionary*
- *Physics World*
- *Hamlet*
- *The 39 Steps*
- *Picasso's Guernica*
- *Paradise Lost*
- *the New York Times*

Use italics for generic and specific **biological** names (e.g. *Salmonella bongor*, *Homo sapiens*) but not for generic names when they are used in a general sense (e.g. salmonella poisoning).

Use italics for **foreign** words and abbreviations not yet naturalized (e.g. *in vivo*, *in vitro*, *in situ*, *inter alia*, *non sequitur*, *ab initio*, *et al.*), not for those used in everyday English (e.g. *vice versa*, *en route*) and not for proper nouns.

Use italics for the names of one-off or specifically named **vehicles** that carry people.

- *Mallard*
- HMS *Ganges*
- space shuttle *Columbia*

but not for mass-produced vehicles or vehicles that do not carry people.

- Cortina
- Concorde
- Curiosity rover

Use bold for volume numbers of journals in **references**.

- *J. Hydrology* **14** 1212

See also **Foreign words and phrases**, **Newspapers**, **References**

**it's** it is

**its** possessive

## J

**J** (abbrev.) joule

**jail** not gaol

**jejune** naive, not necessarily young

**jet lag**

**job titles** see **Capitalization**

**J-PARC** not JPARC

**judging from** not judging by

**judgement** not judgment

## K

**K** (abbrev.) kelvin

temperatures expressed in kelvin do not take the degree symbol: 273 K (not 273 °K).

**Key Stage 1/2/3 chemistry/pupils etc**

**kick off** verb

**kick-off** noun

**kick-start**

**knot** unit

- knots are nautical miles per hour, so don't refer to "knots per hour".

**know-how**

**knowledgeable** not knowledgable

## L

**L** (abbrev.) litre

**lab** > **laboratory**, except in informal writing when lab is fine

**Large Magellanic Cloud**

**large-scale** (adj.)

**Latin** see **Foreign words and phrases**

**laws of nature** not Laws of Nature

- **Newton's law of gravity**

**lay/laid** transitive

**-lie/lain** intransitive

- he lies on the bed

- she lays the table

**lb** (abbrev.) pound – but avoid imperial units

**lead** present tense/metal

**learned** (adj.) scholarly

**learnt** past tense of "to learn"

**led** past tense

**the Left/Right** political

**lend** verb

### Less/fewer than

"Less" should be applied to things that are measured by **generic** amount or estimate (e.g. in response to the question "How

much?": less courage, less than £200, less money).

“Fewer than” should be applied to things measured as numbers of individual **items** (e.g. in response to the question “How many?”: fewer opportunities, fewer than 100 people, fewer coins).

“Less” and “fewer than” are preferable to “under”.

**licence** noun

**license** verb

**lidar**

**lie** see **lay**

**life-size(d)**

**light bulb** not lightbulb

**light-year**

## Lists

Use vertical lists where the information is better illustrated as a list than as body text or a table.

Be consistent about the **punctuation** used to introduce a vertical list (often a colon, but generally not if the items are complete sentences); to mark the end of each item (nothing or a comma if single words, a semicolon if each is less than a full sentence, a full point if each is one or more full sentences); and to mark the end. The use of a colon to introduce a run-on list depends on the construction of the sentence introducing the list.

- “Discussions will cover the balance of core skills and content; mixed ability teaching and differentiation; and inspection and quality audits” (no need for a colon)
- “Presentations will be given on the following topics: the biosphere, the physics of environmental health, remote sensing and climate change” (colon is necessary)

Be consistent about the **capitalization** of the initial of the first word of each item of a list (upper case if a full sentence or a proper noun, lower case if not).

Make sure that each item in the list is in the same **form** and reads logically – not “Watson applies five stages: analysis of the signal...; removing redundant wavelets...; linking wavelets...; linkage of transients...”; instead, each should either begin with the present participle (analysing, removing, linking) or the noun (analysis, removal, linkage), not a mixture.

Use **bullets** to highlight points in a vertical list, unless numbers are required to allow you to cross-reference items in the list.

Where possible, put items in a list in a meaningful **sequence** (e.g. alphabetical or numerical order).

**lm** (abbrev.) lumen

**loan** noun

**loathe** detest

**lock down** verb

**lockdown** noun

**lock out** verb

**lock-out** noun

**lord** except when giving a full proper name/title

**loth** unwilling

**low Earth orbit** no hyphen

**lx** (abbrev.) lux

## M

**m** (abbrev.) metre

**magnetorheological**

**magnetic North**

**managing director**

**mankind** > **humanity**

**man-made** > **artificial**

**manned** > **crewed**

**manoeuvre, manoeuvring, manoeuvrable**

**manpower** > **staffing** or human resources

**master's** degree

**master-slave** > **primary-secondary**

**masterful** > **imperious**

**masterly** > **skilful**

**mayor** except when giving a full proper name/title

**medieval** not mediaeval

**medium** plural **media**

**medium Earth orbit** (no hyphen) not middle Earth orbit

**mental health** see **Health**

**metre** unit

**meter** measuring instrument

**microamps**

**microanalysis** not micro-analysis

**microarray-based**

**micrometer** measuring instrument

**micrometre** > **micron** or  $\mu\text{m}$

**microscale** not micro-scale

**mid-** mid is not a standalone word

**mid-air** noun and adjective

**Middle Ages**

**midsummer**

**midweek** not mid-week

**midwinter**

## Might/may

Note that the meaning of a sentence will change according to whether “might” or “may” is used (e.g. “no-one called the police, an action that may have saved lives”, i.e. lives were probably saved because no-one called the police/“no-one called the police, an action that might have saved lives”, i.e. if someone had called the police, lives would probably have been saved).

**mile** unit – but avoid imperial units

**mileage** not milage

**militate** influence

**militant** use with caution; “armed group” is less politicized

**the Milky Way** not the milky way or the Milky Way galaxy

**min** (abbrev.) minute

**mini-boom**

**minimum** plural **minima**  
**minister of transport** or **transport minister**

## Minorities

This label is overused and often inaccurate. In most cases, **under-represented** is a better word. Is the group in question actually a minority? Is the point being made that this is a small group or that they are not proportionally represented?

- Women make up 51% of the human population
- 60% of the world population live in Asia
- The population of Africa is roughly equal to Europe and North America combined
- In the US, people of colour (including bi-racial) make up more than half of births and are projected to make up more than half of the population by 2040

**minuscule** not miniscule

**mis-sell**

**misspell/misspelt** not misspelled

**mitigate** lessen an offence

**mol** (abbrev.) mole

**Moon** (ours) or **moon** (of other planets)

## More than/over

Always use “more than” not “over” with whole numbers, eg, “more than 2500 people attended the rally”, not “over 2500...”.

**mortuary** not morgue

**Mother Nature**

**movable** not moveable

**multi-anode**

**multibar**

**multichannel** not multi-channel

**multidisciplinary** not multi-disciplinary

**Mum/mum** see **Capitalization**

**mutual** reciprocal

# N

**N** (abbrev.) newton

## Names

After using a **person’s full name once**, use only the surname thereafter, unless this might be perceived by the reader as offensive (e.g. in personal comments in an obituary).

Don’t include people’s **titles** in their name (Mr, Mrs, Ms, Miss, Dr, Prof., Sir) except where it is a royal or heraldic title.

For **names of people from China, Korea, Japan** and any other nation where they traditionally write their names surname-first, our default is to use surname-first (“pinyin romanization”). Where possible, check how their name is professionally displayed (for instance if they have a Roman-alphabet faculty

webpage) or, even better, ask their preference. [See also the Asia Media Centre](#)

For **surnames that begin “le”, “van”, “de”**, etc follow the capitalization and spacing that the named person uses. If they have been inconsistent or can’t be asked, default to using lower case, e.g. Graeme le Saux and Pierre van Hooijdonk. Where lower case is used, retain this even when the surnames alone are given, e.g. le Saux and van Hooijdonk. But avoid starting a sentence with something like “van Gogh likes to paint” so as to avoid being forced to begin a sentence with a lower-case letter – rewrite that sentence where possible.

Use fixed **spaces** between someone’s title, initials and surname to prevent them from being split between lines of text.

Spell proper names **according to the country of origin** (e.g. Pearl Harbor, Australian Labor Party, National Tritium Labeling Facility), except where this goes against common UK usage (e.g. Munich not München).

Apply **suffixes to company names** consistently – either all names should include the relevant suffix (e.g. plc, Co, Corp, Inc, Pty) or none of them should (usually the latter). Companies themselves are often inconsistent, so it’s not sufficient to rely on supplied copy.

[See also Abbreviations and contractions, Capitalization](#)

**nanofocusing** not nano-focusing

**nanoprobe** not nano-probe

**nanoscale** not nano-scale

**nanotechnology**

**national curriculum**

**National Health Service** or **NHS** on subsequent mentions

**national insurance**

**NATO**

**naught** nothing

**navy**

- the Royal Navy

**Neanderthal**

(in the) **near term**

- **near-term** adj.

## Neither/nor

“Neither” and “nor” (not “neither” and “or”) should appear together (e.g. he neither liked him nor wished to like him).

The “neither” and “nor” parts of a phrase should be parallel (e.g. “which neither suits him nor me” should read “which suits neither him nor me”).

**neither is** not neither are

**nerve-racking** not nerve-wracking

**newborn** not new-born

**newfound** not new found

## Newspapers

Italicize the names of newspapers. Don't treat "the" as part of their name.

- the *Daily Telegraph*
- the *Guardian*
- the *Independent*
- the *Mirror*
- the *New York Times*
- the *Observer*
- the *Sun*

## Newton's law of gravity

### new year

### New Year's Day

### night-time

**no.** number

**no** plural **noes**

### the Nobel prizes

- Nobel Prize in Physics
- the Nobel Peace Prize

### non-binary

### non-cooperation

### non-cooperative

**nonlinear** not non-linear

### non-numerical

### non-stop

**no-one** not no one

**normality** not normalcy

**north** see **Cardinal/compass points**

**notable** not notable

## Not only/but also

"Not only/but also" phrases should be parallel (e.g. "it involved hard work, not only by the secretary but also by her boss", or "it involved hard work by not only the secretary but also her boss").

**nought** zero

**number plate** not number-plate or licenceplate

## Numbers

In general, **spell out one to nine** and thereafter use figures. But try to avoid mixing digits and words for numbers in the same phrase.

Spell out large, **round numbers that are used imprecisely** (e.g. there were hundreds of people).

Use digits with **units of measurement** (e.g. 2|cm) and dates (e.g. 6 July 1998, 20th century).

Use digits for **cross-references** (e.g. chapter 4, figure 2, p5).

In general, use digits in a **sequence** of numbers, or where many numbers fall in the same paragraph (e.g. 15 transistors, 2 resistors and 4 diodes).

Use **thin spaces** (print) or commas (online) to delineate thousands in long numbers. There must be more than one digit before each thin space, so

- 1000
- 10,000
- 2573,586
- 76,412,987

Don't **start a sentence** with a figure. Either (preferably) rewrite the sentence so that the number falls elsewhere or spell it out.

Use a mixture of digits and words for **approximated large numbers** (e.g. 2.5 million), but use digits for **precise large numbers** (e.g. 76,412,987). Use m and bn for currencies only (e.g. \$12m, £35bn).

Use a hyphen for **whole numbers and fractions** when it is necessary to spell these out (e.g. twenty-five, four-fifths).

Use **decimals** in preference to fractions. Spell out **fractions** (e.g. two-thirds full).

Avoid using numbers to itemize the points in vertical **lists**. Use bullets, unless numbers are required to allow you to cross-reference items in the list.

For **ratios** use a colon not "to" (e.g. a ratio of 3:1).

See also **Ranges and bonds**

# O

**oblivious of** not oblivious to

**obtuse** mentally slow

### Official Secrets Act

**ohm** >  $\Omega$

**oildrum**

**oilfield**

**oil-fired**

**oil platform**

**oilrig**

**omega-3, omega-6**

## On/about

It is better to replace on with about in certain contexts, such as: the latest news on > about

**on** not upon (with exceptions, e.g. row upon row)

**one-time** do not use instead of *former*

**ongoing** > **continuing**

**online** not on line/on-line

## Only/even/just

The meaning of a sentence will usually change according to the position of words like "only" (e.g. only carpets cleaned on Saturday/carpets only cleaned on Saturday/carpets cleaned only on Saturday/carpets cleaned on Saturday only).

**only choice** nothing can be “the only choice”, because having a choice requires at least two options

### optical thinfilm

**oral** of speech or the mouth

**ordinance** direction/decreed

**ordnance** maps

**outside** never “outside of”

**over** > **more than** with whole numbers, eg, “more than 2500 people attended the rally”

**over-determined**

**oz** (abbrev.) ounce but avoid imperial units

## P

**p/pp** see **References**

**Pa** abbrev. **pascal**

**paleo-** not paleo-

**paparazzo** plural **paparazzi**

**paralyse** not paralyze

### Parentheses/brackets

Parentheses should be used for material that can be skipped without changing the meaning of the sentence, such as an afterthought, a by-the-way remark, a definition or a reference.

There should never be a comma directly before an opening parenthesis. There should be a comma after a closing parenthesis only if it would be there in the absence of the parentheses.

There should be a full stop (or other closing punctuation) before a closing parenthesis only if the text inside the parentheses is a complete sentence, e.g. “The experiment was a success (as a result of the student’s hard work).”; “The experiment was a success. (This was the result of the student’s hard work.)”

See also **Quote marks and quotations**

**parliament**

**partake** > **take part**

**particle physics**

- **particle-physics data**

**part-time** (adj.)

**part time**

**passerby** plural **passersby**

**pedaller** cyclist; not pedaler

**peddler** such as a drug dealer

**pedlar** hawker

**pendant** (noun)

**pendent** (adjective)

**per cent** or % not percent

**persuade** someone to do something

**phase** stage

**PhD** or **doctorate** – a qualification not a person

**phenomenon** plural **phenomena**

**Philippines** country

- **Philippine** adjective

- **Filipino** language, or a male person

- **Filipina** female person

**phosphorous** adjective

**phosphorus** noun, chemical element

**photo-ionization** not photoionization

### Placenames/country names

In general follow the country’s own or the UN-recognized name, but where there is a standard English alternative, use that instead. Always be careful of causing offence or taking a political stand.

**Beijing** not Peking

**Czechia** not Czech Republic (since 2016)

**Florence** not Firenze

**Gothenburg** not Goteborg

**Krakow** not Cracow

**Korea** not South Korea (but this is common usage)

**Kyiv** not Kyev

**Milan** not Milano

**Munich** not München

**Myanmar** not Burma (but note that Myanmar is the chosen name of a dictatorship and some democracy activists prefer Burma, so be politically sensitive about which you use)

**North Korea** not Korea

**Republic of Ireland** not Eire (be careful of just using Ireland, which is the whole island)

**Turin** not Torino

**US** not USA/America **See America**

**plant** in industrial context, this is singular and plural, not plants

**plateau** plural **plateaux**

**play down**

**p.m.**

**postdoctorate**

**postgraduate**

**practice** (noun)

**practise** (verb)

**precede** go before

**precis** plural **precis**

**pre-ionization** not preionization

**premier** (adjective) prime; (noun) chief

**premiere** first night

### Prepositions

Although **leaving out** prepositions is often accepted in some constructions (e.g. “all [of] the examples”, “near [to] the relevant text”, “the last time [that] I saw Paris”), this should be practised with care because it can sometimes cause the reader to falter (e.g. “all the people know” could be “all of the people know” or “all that the people know”). For the sake of avoiding ambiguity and consistency it is generally best to keep them in.

Use **different** “from”, not “to” or “than”. Use **centre** “in” or “on”, not “around” (but revolve around). Use **bored** “with” or “by”, not “of”. And it’s always “in” not “under” **circumstances**.

Note the difference between “**into**” and “in to”, and between

“**onto**” and “on to” (e.g. “drop them into the bag”/“he walked in to see her”, “they walked on to Thame”/“the lorry drove onto the ferry”).

Use “**compare with**” when you are drawing attention to the difference, but “compare to” when you are stressing the similarity (e.g. “She compared the properties of solution A with those of solution B.”; “He compared her voice to that of a lark.”).

Use “**in comparison with**” not “in comparison to”, and “in contrast with” not “in contrast to”.

Use “**provided (that)**” not “providing”.

Use “**try to**” not “try and”, unless you mean two separate actions (e.g. “try to aim high, or you may try and fail”). Similarly, use “help to” not “help and”.

Use “**incorporate into**” not “incorporate in”.

Use “of” with “**consist**” but not “comprise” (e.g. “the menu consists of/comprises three courses”).

Use “**enamoured of**” not “enamoured with” or “enamoured by”.

Use “**fed up with**” not “fed up of”.

Use “**I should have**” not “I should of”.

**prescribe** order

**presently** in a while

**president**

- the US president
- president of the Institute of Physics

**preventive** not preventative

**prior** > **before**

**prime minister of France**

**principal** main/head

**principle** rule

**print out** (verb)

- **print-out** (noun)

**proceed** go on

**prodigal** wasteful/extravagant, not returned wanderer

**professor**

- Prof. – where the title is included, but we usually omit
- emeritus professor of physics
- Sterling professor of science
- Royal Society research professor

**program** computer software, noun only

**programme** any other type of programme

## Pronouns

Be careful to use the correct **pronoun** when referring to a specific person. If they have a webpage or are on social media, they may have pronoun info in their bio. Use gender-neutral pronouns (they/them/their) if you don’t know for certain. Or use passive language to avoid a pronoun altogether.

Use **simple pronouns** (I, me, him, you) instead of myself, himself, yourself, etc (“You can talk to me”, not “You can talk to myself”), except where there is no alternative (“I want to be by myself”).

Do not use **gender-specific** pronouns for a non-specific person (e.g. “An athlete must train hard to reach his peak”). Use they/ them/their if non-gender-specific singular is necessary (e.g. “A guest is entitled to their privacy”).

When a **gerund** (word with -ing ending that acts as a noun) is qualified, it must be preceded by an adjective (e.g. “I don’t like you leaving” should read “I don’t like your leaving”).

Use “it” not “she” for ships, countries and other **inanimate nouns**.

See also **Gender and gender identity: I/me**

**proper nouns** – see **Names**

**prophecy** (noun)

**prophecy** (verb)

**pros and cons**

**proscribe** prohibit

**protégé** (male)

**protégée** (female)

**proven** > **proved**

**provided that** not providing that/providing

**proviso** plural **provisos**

**Ps and Qs**

p/s > /s (abbrev.) per second

**publicly** not publically

# Q

**Q&A**

**queen** except when giving a full proper name/title

## Quote marks and quotations

Use double quote marks for **quoted material** and single quote marks for a quote within a quote.

Use double quote marks for **highlighting words**, but use sparingly.

Use single quote marks in **headlines**.

Place **final punctuation** outside the closing quote mark for an incomplete sentence, but inside where the quote forms a full sentence.

- He described the feature as “a load of old bobbins”.
- The editor replied: “I think the feature is a load of old bobbins.”

Where “**he said**” or similar follows a quote that is a complete sentence, a comma should replace the full point inside the closing quote mark.

- “I have always liked Scotland at this time of the year,” he said.

Where “he said” or similar comes in the middle of a quote, there should be a comma inside the first closing quote mark.

- “Father,” he said, “you’re looking well today.”

Use square brackets for **additions** to quotations.

- “this [experiment] has produced some unusual results”

Use a three-point ellipsis to indicate **omission**, closed up to the adjacent text. An ellipsis is not necessary at the beginning or end of a quotation.

- He told me: “Unaccustomed as I am...I find I cannot.”

For reported speech from a specific event, use the **past tense**, but for attributed views or original quotes use the present tense.

- “This is a major breakthrough,” he said at last week’s conference.
- Alex Martin says “I hope to continue this work in the future.”

Where **double and single quote marks** open or close adjacent to each other, separate them with a thin space.

- “‘Live and let live’ is such a cliché,” she said.

Within reason, apply **house style** to quoted material (e.g. spelling) but don’t change the structure or meaning. Do not apply house style to literary or archaic language.

If the original text contains an **error** you can quote it verbatim but include “[sic]” after the error. But think about whether this is drawing attention to an error that could cause embarrassment.

- “The affect [sic] of this was to speed up the process.”

Where a quote comprises more than one **paragraph**, begin each paragraph with opening quote marks, but use a closing quote mark at the end of the last paragraph only.

Use quote marks for the **titles** of chapters, articles, songs and short poems.

Use the following format for quoted **conversation** (e.g. from a play):

**Tim** “How do you know it’s yours?”

**Gareth** “Because it’s got my name on it in Tippex.”

See also **References**

## Quran

# R

## Race and ethnicity

Do not mention race or ethnicity if it is not relevant. If race is mentioned, consider whether mentioning that someone is white

is relevant; do not treat it as the default.

Ask how people self-identify or what their preferred terms are. If this isn’t possible, be factual and specific.

When referring to race/ethnicity use Black and Indigenous with initial capital.

Do not use umbrella terms such as “Black, Asian and minority ethnic” (BAME) when a more precise word or phrase is appropriate. Note that not all minority ethnic groups in a given location will be people of colour, so those terms are not interchangeable.

**Race** is a social construct that describes people with shared physical characteristics; not based on biology; not synonymous with skin colour, ethnicity or nationality.

**Ethnicity** is the social identity and mutual sense of belonging that defines a group of people through common historical or family origins, beliefs and standards of behaviour.

See also **C4DISC guidelines on race and ethnicity**

**rack** with pain  
**rad** (abbrev.) radian  
**radio astronomy**  
**radio frequency**  
**radiographer** takes X-rays  
**radiologist** reads X-rays  
**radio telescope**  
**radius** plural **radii**  
**raise** lift/increase

## Ranges and bonds

In describing **ranges of numbers**, avoid mixing words and en rules. If you can, use an en rule. If you can’t, use “from” and “to”, or “between” and “and”.

- 6–8|mm
- the conference is on 12–17 July
- the conference runs from 12 to 17 July
- from 12 to 18|mg
- a range of 12–18|mg
- in the 12–18|mg range
- between 1914 and 1918
- from 1914 to 1918
- in the years 1914–1918
- 8–14-year-olds

**Don’t elide** ranges of numbers, including dates (apart from academic years, fiscal years and sport seasons).

- pp252–258
- 8–9 November
- 2007/8 school year

Use an en rule as a substitute for “and” or “to” where **movement** or **tension** is implied between two nouns and to represent **equality** for joint authors.

- London–Glasgow railway
- gas–liquid chromatography
- oil–water interface
- Short–Kasparov match
- Watson–Crick model

Rewrite to avoid a clash between an en rule and a **minus sign**, or use “to” instead of an en rule. Omit plus signs where their omission is not ambiguous

- –6 to –4°C
- –3 to 4°C

Use an en rule to indicate a **bond** (e.g. C–H) but don’t use for chemical compounds (e.g. sodium chloride salt).

Don’t use em rules ( — ) or any other kind of dash.

**raze** demolish

**real time** (noun)

- **real-time** (adj.)

**redshift** not red shift

### Redundant words

In this list of common redundancies, that which is not bold can be regarded as superfluous:

- absolute **perfection**
- acute **crisis**
- a distance of
- all-time **record**
- a number of **examples**
- a period of
- **appear** on the scene
- **ascend** up/upwards
- as **compared with**
- as **yet**
- **best** ever
- brand **new**
- broad **daylight**
- **circular** shape
- **collaborate** together
- **connect** together
- **considering** having a
- **consult** with
- **dates back from**
- **depreciate** in value
- **divide** up
- **during** the course of
- ever **since**
- **face** up to
- **first** ever
- **for** a period of
- **for** the purpose of
- **have** got
- has the capability to > **can**
- an ideally suited > **a suitable**
- in order **to**
- **in** the field of
- **in** the city of

- **is** of **metal/clay/etc**
- **joined** together
- **join** up
- **made out of**
- major **breakthrough**
- **may** possibly
- **meet** with
- more **superior**
- needless to say
- over the years
- past history
- quite **perfect**
- radical **transformation**
- **revert** back
- the method of
- the reason **why**
- **this slows** down (**cooling**)
- time **schedule**
- temporary **reprieve**
- **whether** or not
- **whole** of the **country**
- wide **range**
- wide **variety**
- **worst** ever

### re-enter

### References

In *Physics World* we avoid lists of further reading/end references and instead use **in-text references**, preferably in brackets in abbreviated form (Jones *et al.* 1999 *Phys. Rev. Lett.* **186** 722) or (*Nature Phys.* **77** 189). The date and/or author name(s) can be included if relevant to the article, but are not necessary for the reader to be able to look up the paper.

Where the work is **multiauthor**, use *et al.* unless the names of the remaining authors are relevant to the article.

**book:** Alfie Jones 1994 *Manual of Physics* vol. 2 Academic, New York pp34–36 [only include pages or publisher if relevant]

**journal:** Smith 1992 *J. Phys. A.* **38** 14

**magazine:** Bache *et al.* “Electronic communications for students” *Chemistry World* September 1994 pp37–40

**Physics World print:** September 1994 p37  
[or in the same issue] Joe Bloggs “Saving the world” p67

**unpublished information:** H Peterson, private communication  
[or if accepted by a journal] Smith *J. Phys. A.* in press

Where only **part of the reference** is to be included in brackets, stick to the same order as above.

- Alan Jones and colleagues carried out this work (1994 *Nature Photon.* **34** 65).
- The group published these results in *Science* (**53** 219).

Use upper case initials for the main words in the title of a **publication**. However, for foreign language publications, follow the original capitalization. Note that text following a colon in a title does not take a capital initial unless it's a proper noun. A "publication" can be a journal, book, artwork, album, film, TV series, radio programme, computer game, blog or news site.

- *International Cooperation in Space: a Report*
- *Discover* magazine

Use quote marks and sentence case for the title of a **chapter**, **article**, **talk** at a conference, short **poem**, **song** or **episode**.

- "US cuts funding for big-science projects"
- "I'd like to teach the world to sing (in perfect harmony)"

Use abbreviations for **journal titles** if these will be easily recognized by the reader, i.e. major physics publications. Write out in full niche or non-physics titles.

- *Phys. Rev.*
- *Physica Scripta*
- *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*

In **brackets**, use vol. for volume; ed. for editor; eds for editors; edn for edition; 1st, 2nd, etc for first, second, etc (editions); ch. for chapter; and p and pp for pages (except for journal references, where the p/pp is unnecessary).

Use the **original spelling** of titles and names – don't apply house style.

Where **more than one** full reference occurs in a single set of brackets, separate each by a semicolon

- (R Moseley and M Dunn "Lasing turned upside-down" *Physics Today* January 1995 pp30–34; J Z Simon 1994 "The physics of time travel" *Phys. Rev.* **61** 275).

Where **reprint** details are necessary, include them at the end of the reference.

- (Bell 1964 *Physics* **7** 195; reprinted in J S Bell 1987 *Speakable and Unspeakable in Quantum Mechanics* Cambridge University Press pp16–42)

Use the short form of a **publisher's** name (e.g. Addison-Wesley, not Addison-Wesley Publishing Company).

For **religious works** the major work should be in roman, e.g. Bible, Quran. Books within the work should be italicized, with any extra reference notation in roman, e.g. *Genesis* 1:1.

For **music** references use the following forms:

- J S Bach's Triple Concerto in A minor, BWV 1044
- Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4 in F minor, Op. 36

See also **Cross-references, Italic and bold, Quote marks and quotations**

**referendum** plural **referendums**

**with regard to/regarding** not as regards

## Religion and spirituality

Unless contextually relevant and essential for communicating meaning, specifying people's religious affiliation or beliefs is unnecessary.

If the reference group includes nonreligious people, say "religions and beliefs" or "religions and worldviews".

Avoid "fundamentalist" or "born-again" unless self-described.

See also **C4DISC guidelines on religion, atheism and spirituality**

**reorganize**

**repellant** (noun)

**repellent** (adjective)

## Repetition

All forms of repetition should be avoided where this is possible without misleading the reader or where there isn't a **good reason** for it (such as there being a specific term that cannot be described precisely enough in any other way).

Repetition includes not only reuse of the same word or phrase, but also repetition of the same point using different words, i.e. **redundancy**. For example:

- You no longer have a single testing phase anymore – "no longer" and "anymore" are performing the same function.
- Although FGD technology has been criticized as a partial solution that fails to address the problem of growing energy consumption, nevertheless FGD is set to reduce significantly the UK's SO<sub>2</sub> emissions – "although" and "nevertheless" are performing the same function.
- These include, among others: calibration, loop verification, troubleshooting, repairs, down-time and failures, etc – "include", "among others" and "etc" are all performing the same function.

See also **Redundant words**

**Republic of Ireland** not Eire

**reuse** not re-use

the **Right/Left** (political)

**Revd** not Rev/Reverend

**Richter scale**

**right-hand side**

**road map** not roadmap/road-map

**roofs** not rooves

**round** usually circular/cyclical, e.g. winter came round, drinks all round, sleep the clock round, I ran round, turn round

– **around** on every side/ scattered, e.g. around and about, all around us, looking around you, standing around

**rpm** not RPM

**Rt Hon.**

# S

**s** (abbrev.) second

**S** (abbrev.) siemen

**salutary** not salutory

**salvo** plural **salvoes**

**sanatorium** plural **sanatoriums**; not sanatarium (US)

**scalable**

## Scandinavian or Nordic?

The countries of **Scandinavia** are Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Finland is not a Scandinavian country, though it is a Nordic country.

The **Nordic** countries include Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland.

**sea bed**

**sea change**

**sea floor**

**second hand** (noun) pointer on a watch or clock

- **second-hand** (adj.) previously owned or used by someone else

**Second World War** not World War II or WWII

**secretary of state**

**trade and industry select committee**

**seize** not sieze

**Sellotape** > **sticky tape** or **adhesive tape**

## Semicolon

Use instead of a full point to separate two statements that could stand as separate sentences but are closely connected in sense.

- To err is human; to forgive is divine.

Use instead of a comma to separate phrases that would not stand as sentences but would be confusing if only separated by commas.

- The strikers agreed to resume work immediately if a tribunal were formed to investigate their grievances; if an undertaking were given that there would not, either now or in the future, be any victimization; and if their recommendations were put into force immediately.

See also **Lists**

**semiconductor**

**serviceable**

**set-up** (noun)

- **set up** (verb)

## Sexual orientation

Seek explicit permission from sources before publishing details about their sexual orientation, especially if they may be harmed by doing so.

Use the full abbreviation **LGBTQIA+** in general and where the complete range is intended. Use the specific term (e.g. lesbian) if

only that is meant.

Use with caution language that is or has historically been considered derogatory even if it has been reclaimed by some.

See also **C4DISC guidelines on gender, gender identity and sexual orientation**

**short term** (noun)

- **short-term** (adj.)

**Siamese twins** > **conjoined twins**

**shut down** verb

**shutdown** noun

**side-effects**

**signal-to-noise ratio**

**single-photon avalanche diodes** (SPADs)

## Singular/plural

Treat **collective nouns** as singular, unless the noun is clearly being used to refer to separate individuals rather than to a united body. Note that music groups (but not orchestras) and sports teams are usually treated as plural.

- The government/group/range/company is featured.
- The cabinet is reconvening.
- The cabinet are resuming their places round the table.
- The family was shocked.
- The family were scratching their heads.

Treat **whereabouts** as plural.

- Her whereabouts are not known.

Treat **either**, **every** and **each** as singular

- Either is sufficient.
- Every one is available.
- Each is suitable.

Treat **none**, **neither** and **number** as singular where used alone.

- None is correct in this context.
- Neither is allowed.
- The number is increasing daily.

Treat **none**, **neither** and **number** as plural where referring to more than one listed item.

- None of the relatives are willing to discuss it further.
- Neither the Danes nor the Saxons were victorious.
- A number of theories are being put forward.

For nouns with the ending “-ics”, treat according to context.

- Acoustics is fascinating. [i.e. the subject of acoustics is fascinating]
- The acoustics of the hall are appalling.

If the **subject and complement** are different, the verb should generally agree with the subject (e.g. “Our only guide was the stars.”; “The stars were our only guide.”), but note exceptions (e.g. “Six months was the time allowed.” (i.e. a period of six months was allowed); “Fish and chips is a popular meal.”; “He is one of the most famous writers who have ever lived.”).

A **compound subject** should be treated as plural, but don't be swayed by a parenthetical clause following the subject.

- The president and his advisers are to make a visit.
- The president, together with his advisers, is to make a visit.

See also **Collective nouns, That/which/who**

**sizeable** not sizable

**socialism**

**solar system** not Solar System

**some time** at some time or other

**sometime** formerly

**south** see **Cardinal/compass points**

**space-time** en dash not hyphen

**specially** for a special purpose

**specialty** (US) > **speciality**

## Socioeconomic status

Avoid stereotypes or overgeneralizations based on socioeconomic status, location, caste or class. Exercise caution when choosing imagery to illustrate articles on this topic.

## Spelling

Follow the first spelling preference given in *Chambers Dictionary of Science and Technology* or *Chambers Dictionary*.

Spell **proper names** according to the country of origin (e.g. Pearl Harbor, Australian Labor Party), unless this goes against common UK usage (e.g. Munich not München, Turin not Torino).

See also **-ize/-ise, Names, Place names/country names**

## Split infinitives

There is **no need to avoid** split infinitives. Use whichever form reads most naturally.

- to fully co-operate with the committee
- to further understand this issue

**spoil** not spoiled

**spokesperson** not spokesman/woman

**Standard Model of particle physics**

## Standfirst

Long-form articles in print and web formats should have a short standfirst to introduce the article. This should include the author(s) or interviewee's name in bold. The standfirst does not end in a full stop.

**state of the art** (noun)

- **state-of-the-art** (adj.)

**stationary** still

**stationery** paper, etc

**stimulus** plural **stimuli**

**storey** floor of a building; plural **storeys**

**strait-laced**

**stratum** plural **strata**

**subcommittee**

## Subjunctive

Use the subjunctive when proposing a hypothesis contrary to fact (e.g. "If pigs were able to fly, bacon would be a lot more expensive"), but not if the hypothesis may be true (e.g. "If these results are wrong, we will be glad we didn't publish them."). Also use the subjunctive when "would" or "should" occurs in the main clause (e.g. "If I were to win the lottery, I should be very happy.").

## Suicide

When dealing with suicide:

- Avoid mentioning the method of suicide.
- Do not say "committed suicide". Instead use "died by suicide".
- Avoid assigning a "reason" for the suicide.

See also **Samaritans media guidelines for reporting suicide**

**Sun** (ours) but sun for others

**super B-factory**

**Supreme Court**

**Sv** (abbrev.) sievert

**swath** a strip of land or crops; plural **swaths**; can be metaphorical

**swathe** a wrapping cloth; plural **swathes**; can also be a verb

**swingeing** huge, e.g. cuts

**swinging** e.g. pendulum

**symmetrical** not symmetric

**synopsis** plural **synopses**

# T

**T** (abbrev.) tesla

## Tables

Ensure that all columns in a table have a heading and that no cells are empty, unless an empty cell indicates absence in a presence/absence table.

Use an en rule in a table to represent none – except when this might look like a minus sign and cause confusion.

Line numbers up by their decimal points.

Where the numbers 10 000 and above occur, leave out the thin space so that they align neatly.

If a table has just one column, make it into a vertical list instead.

If all items in a column are values of the same unit of measurement, put the unit in the column heading rather than repeating for every item.

Use upper case initials for column headings and lower case initials for other entries, unless they are whole sentences.

Use entries that are consistent in style (e.g. same tense, full sentences or not, active or passive).

Treat sources of table data as you would picture credits (e.g. Department of Transport) or in-text references (e.g. B Crystal 1992 Road and Rail 45–48).

Where possible, put table entries in a meaningful sequence (e.g. alphabetical, date or numerical order).

**tactics** plural **tactics**

**take off** (verb)

- **take-off** (noun)

## Tense

Ensure that your text doesn't wander between tenses. For example, "in pre-industrial times, carbon deposits show..." – "pre-industrial times" (past) conflicts with "show" (present).

When something that was said in the present tense remains true when it is reported, there is no need for the tense to change (e.g. direct speech: "Most wild animals avoid man," the gamekeeper told him; reported speech: "He told me that most wild animals avoid man"). If it no longer remains true then the tense changes (e.g. direct speech: "Our table is ready," she said; reported speech: "She told me that the table was ready").

See also [Quote marks and quotations](#)

## That/which/who

Use **that** in a defining relative clause (e.g. "he stopped the car that was driven by a woman" – i.e. he didn't stop just any car, only the one driven by a woman). Use **which** (following a comma) in a non-defining relative clause (e.g. "he stopped the car, which was driven by a woman" – i.e. he stopped a car, and, incidentally, it was driven by a woman). "That" defines (e.g. This is the house that Jack built) and "which" informs (e.g. This house, which Jack built, is falling down").

If the subject is a person (or people) instead of a thing, then "that" or "which" should be replaced by **who** (e.g. "he spoke to the man who was wearing a red rose", i.e. he didn't speak to just any man, only the one wearing a rose/"he spoke to the man, who was wearing a red rose", i.e. he spoke to the man, and, incidentally, the man was wearing a rose).

Do not use "who" for anything other than human beings.

If the subject is a collective noun that comprises people, "that", "which" or "who" can be used, depending on whether the noun is being treated as singular or plural.

- The orchestra, who were clapping loudly, stood up on the conductor's arrival.
- The battalion, which was founded in the 19th century, still exists today.
- The team that won came from Derby.

## The

- the Netherlands, the UK, the US when used in full sentence, not when in an address or list

- the Thistle, the Marriot, the Hilton
- the *Chicago Times* – see [Newspapers](#)

**theorist** not theoretician

**thermoelectric**

**thermonuclear**

**Third World** see [Geopolitics](#)

**thinfilm**

**threshold**

**thus far** > **so far**

**time bomb**

**timescale**

**together with** > **with**

**tonne** not ton see [Units of measurement](#)

**torr** unit, non-standard

**towards** not toward

## Transitive/intransitive verbs

A transitive verb takes a direct object: it shows action on something, (e.g. "He hit the ball"). An intransitive verb takes no direct object: it needs only a subject to make sense (e.g. "He slept"). Be careful not to use a transitive verb as if it were intransitive. For example, "He reduced the price" and "The price was reduced" are correct, but "The price reduced" is not, because "reduce" is transitive, while "He decreased the price", "The price was decreased" and "The price decreased" are all correct, because "decrease" can be transitive or intransitive.

the **treasury**

**tropic of cancer**

**tropic of capricorn**

**T-shirt** not tee-shirt

**tunable** not tuneable

**turnover** (noun)

- **turn over** (verb)

# U

## UK

Remember we have an international readership (e.g. instead of "this country" or "our" use "UK"). And don't forget that the IOP membership covers the UK and Ireland.

Take care to use the correct geographic regions.

**Great Britain:** large island comprising most of England, Wales and Scotland

**United Kingdom:** sovereign country comprising Great Britain, Northern Ireland and many smaller islands

**Crown Dependencies** are not part of the UK: Isle of Man, Guernsey, Jersey (which governs the smaller Channel Islands)

**British Overseas Territories** are not part of the UK: Gibraltar; Falkland Islands; parts of Cyprus; part of Antarctica; several islands in the Caribbean, Atlantic and Pacific including the Cayman Islands and Bermuda

## Ultra

If it's measurable, it has no hyphen. If it's abstract, it has a hyphen. Therefore:

**ultracold, ultrafast, ultrahigh, ultrashort**

but:

**ultra-modern**

## ultraviolet

**UN** no need to write out United Nations in full

**uncooperative**

**uncoordinated**

**under way** not underway

**unique** means one of a kind, not unusual or different, so it should not be modified (i.e. nothing can be “very unique”)

**United Kingdom** > **UK**

**United States** > **US**

## Units of measurement

**Use SI** units. If imperial is the accepted form (e.g. 3½ inch disk, Fahrenheit for furnace temperatures), use it but if appropriate add the SI equivalent in brackets.

Where used as an **approximate** value or in discussion of the unit itself, write out in full.

- several kilometres
- a terahertz laser
- at a micron scale

Where used with a **specific** value, abbreviate units according to the International System of Units.

Å (angstrom)

A (amp)

atm (atmosphere)

bar

bit

byte

Bq (becquerel)

C (coulomb)

°C (degrees Celsius)

cal (calorie)

cd (candela)

cm (centimetre)

eV (electron volt)

F (farad)

flop

g (gram)

h (hour)

H (henry)

hp (horsepower)

Hz (hertz)

inch – but avoid this where possible

J (joule)

K (kelvin)

knot

L (litre)

lm (lumen)

lx (lux)

m (metre)

mile – but avoid this where possible

min (minute)

mol (mole)

month

N (newton)

Ω (ohm)

Pa (pascal)

rad (radian)

s (second)

S (siemen)

Sv (sievert)

tonne

T (tesla)

Torr (torr)

V (volt)

W (watt)

year

The most up-to-date list of SI units and definitions is [on the BIPM website](#).

In technical text you can use the form  $\text{mm|s}^{-1}$  in preference to  $\text{mm/s}$ , but either way be consistent within an article.

Use the same abbreviated form for singular and plural (e.g. 65 cm, not 65 cms).

Use a **space** (thin space in print) between digits and units of measurement, and between the elements of a compound unit, but not for percentages and compass degrees.

- 24|mg, 20|°C
- $\text{mm|s}^{-1}$ , kW|h
- 29% and 20°N

Use % in preference to “per cent” (never percent).

Use **m<sup>2</sup>** not sq. m.

Use “**tonne**” not “ton”. The metric tonne is 1000 kg (2204.62 lb), the British ton is 2240 lb and the US ton is 2000 lb, so usually there is no need to convert.

Don't use a **hyphen** where part of the compound is a measurement (e.g. 3 A fuse), except to avoid ambiguity (e.g. 12 40-W lamps) where it can't be rewritten for clarification. Note that a hyphen is appropriate with a noun that is not strictly a unit of measurement (e.g. 32-bit screen, three-day week).

Use “m” and “bn” for “million” and “billion” only for amounts of **money** (e.g. £12m, \$33bn) but use “trillion” and “thousand” rather than an abbreviation. For other values use the terms in full (e.g. 3<sup>^</sup>billion units).

For **two or more** values of the same unit of measurement quoted together you should use the unit once (e.g. 4 and 7 mm widths, between 30 and 40%).

Use the following **prefixes**:

d	deci	10 <sup>-1</sup>	T	tera	10 <sup>12</sup>
c	centi	10 <sup>-2</sup>	G	giga	10 <sup>9</sup>
m	milli	10 <sup>-3</sup>	M	mega	10 <sup>6</sup>
μ	micro	10 <sup>-6</sup>	k	kilo	10 <sup>3</sup>
n	nano	10 <sup>-9</sup>	h	hecto	10 <sup>2</sup>
p	pico	10 <sup>-12</sup>	da	deda	10 <sup>1</sup>
f	femto	10 <sup>-15</sup>			
a	atto	10 <sup>-18</sup>			

See also **Abbreviations and contractions, En rules and minus sign, Hyphens, Numbers**

**universe** not Universe

**university** not University (unless giving a full proper name)

**unmanned** > **uncrewed**

**unused** not yet used

**upfront** not up-front

**upon** > **on**

**URLs** see **Websites**

**USA** > **US**

**username** not user name

**USSR** > **the former Soviet Union**

**utilise** > **use**

**Utopia**

**utopian**

## V

**V** (abbrev.) volt

**valence** as in valency

**Velcro** trademarked product

**verbal** of words, written or spoken

**versus**/**vs** not v./vs.

**vice-president**

**vocal cords** not vocal chords

**Voodoo** > **Vodou**. Do not use as a general reference to witchcraft or other practices

**vortex** plural **vortexes**

## W

**W** (abbrev.) watt

**wavefunction**

**W boson**

**Web/web** > **the Internet**

### Websites

Online, **hyperlink** text rather than displaying URLs to the reader.

In print, remove the http:// or https:// from URLs unless the address doesn't work without – always check.

Web addresses should be given in **lower case**, unless it is a link to a PDF or image, in which case the linked filename might contain capitals.

Website names should normally be given capital letters. If the website is deemed a publication then it should also be italicized.

- Facebook
- Twitter
- *Slate*
- *GeekDad*

**west** see **Cardinal/compass points**

**while** not whilst

**whiskey** US, Irish

**whisky** Scottish, Canadian or any origin other than US/Ireland

**whitelist** > **allow list** or include list

**white paper**

### Who/whom

“Who” should be used for the subject, “whom” for the object. As a quick check, in most cases you should be able to substitute “he/she/they” for “who” and “him/her/them” for “whom”.

- Who brought David?
- Whom have you brought?
- He knew who he was.
- She kissed the children whom she knew.
- who did it/?he did it?; you gave it to whom?/you gave it to him?
- Blair was attacked for criticizing Hague, whom he despised.
- Blair criticized Hague, who he thought was wrong.

Do not personify inanimate objects with “who/whose”.

- the first laser whose colour was... > the first laser for which the colour was...

### Whose/of which

The use of “whose” with inanimate objects should be avoided where possible, unless to incorporate “of which” or similar into the sentence is clumsy (e.g. change “the device, whose scale was marked in milligrams, was ideal” to “the device, the scale of which was marked in milligrams, was ideal”).

**wide range** > **range**

**WiFi**

### Will/shall

The choice between “will” and “shall” (or “would” and “should”) depends on whether or not the subject is first person and whether the context is a statement or a prediction (e.g. “They will be home soon.”; “I shall be 30 next year.”), or whether it is an expression of intention or obligation (e.g. “I will do no such thing.”; “They shall keep quiet while I am working.”).

**withhold** not withhold

### Word breaks

On the web, there should be no word breaks. You should use a non-breaking space to keep numbers and units together.

In print, follow *Chambers Dictionary of Spelling and Word Division*.

Words can be split according to etymology (e.g. tele-phone, atmo-sphere), pronunciation (e.g. illus-trate, chil-dren) and to avoid misleading the reader (e.g. exact-ing, not ex-acting).

In general, split between two consonants (e.g. neut-rino, with-hold), but not when they form a single sound (e.g. calm-est).

If possible, split compound words at the point of union (e.g. fire-fighter, custom-made).

Don't divide -able, -ible, -cial, -cian, -cious, -ing, -sion, -tial, -tion or -tious.

Avoid a hyphen/en rule at the end of more than two consecutive lines.

Avoid a word break in a word or compound that already contains a hyphen.

Avoid a word break across pages, especially from a right to a left.

Don't split a number and its units, mathematical expressions, equations, initials or abbreviations.

Where possible, don't split a word so as to leave only two of its letters at the beginning or end of a line.

Avoid breaks in people's names.

Only break URLs where punctuation already exists, e.g. a full stop or slash, to avoid confusion.

Never break words in headings.

See also **En rules and minus sign, Hyphens**

**worldwide** not world wide/world-wide

**World Wide Web** > **Internet**

**wrack** seaweed

**wreaked** not wrought (havoc)

**WWI** > **First World War** not the Great War

**WWII** > **Second World War**

**year** do not abbreviate

- **year 9**

- **year-9 pupils** or **head of year 10**

# Z

**zero** (noun) plural **zeros**

- **zero** (verb) plural **zeroes**

# X

**X-ray** not x-ray/x ray/X ray

# Y