

# Writing style guide

**About:** Not around

**Ages/numbers:** One to nine written in full, 10 upwards in figures. A three-year-old girl, a woman, 90, not ninety-years-old. Boy, youth, man have become our standard labels but try to avoid so many of them, by using teenager, pensioner, etc. However, it is boy up to 15, youth up to 18, girl up to 18. Beyond that it's man/woman. All numbers at the start of a sentence should be written in full.

**Almost:** Not nearly

**am and pm:** No need to say '4am in the morning' or '4pm this afternoon'; the am and pm already give that away.

**Apostrophes:** Two uses: to denote a missing letter, such as can't (cannot) and to indicate possessive, as in St Michael's Church (singular) and All Saints' Church (plural). When a word ends in s, write the possessive as it is pronounced, Iris's letter, St James's Park, etc.

**Armed Forces:** Say the Army, the Royal Navy (Navy for short), the RAF, but an army, naval or RAF officer.

**burglar, robber or thief:** A burglar trespasses in order to steal, a robber uses violence or the threat of violence to steal, and a thief just steals.

**Cancel:** Only if it's called off completely. Do not confuse it with postpone, which means to delay to a later date.

**Century:** Lower case c. It was destroyed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. But, the 15<sup>th</sup>-century church was destroyed (with hyphen).

**Dates:** July 8, 2007 for editorial and adverts. 1960s not 60s. July 2007. No need to write 'yesterday (Thursday)' or 'today (Friday)', etc, for online stories.

**Decades:** The 1980s or Eighties, never 80s which is for temperatures and a person's age, eg: He was in his 80s.

**Diseases:** Cap up first letter if a name: Hodgkin's, Parkinson's, but German measles, mumps.

**Dual:** Twofold. **Duel:** Fight.

**Effect:** As a noun, not to be confused with affect, which is a verb. If people affect something, they produce an effect.

**Enquire/Enquiry:** Always inquiry.

**Everyday:** One word as in everyday life but two words as in it happens every day.

**Fewer:** Say fewer in number but less in quantity, eg: fewer cars, less coal.

**Figures:** Spell out one to nine. Use numerals from 10 onwards; £1 million rather than £1,000,000.

**Fundraise/Raiser/Raising:** No hyphen.

**General election:** Lower case.

**Geography:** east Kent, north Kent, west Kent, mid Kent etc.

**Gypsy/gypsies.** We no longer use the i spelling. Many prefer to be called travellers. **goers.** Use a hyphen eg: theatre-goers, film-goers.

**Government:** Lower case at every reference.

**Grade II Listed:** Not Grade 2 listed.

**High Street:** When talking about a town's High Street it takes caps, but use lower case for high street banks, when meant in the general sense.

**Lady:** Say woman unless Lady is her title.

**Licence/License:** Licence is the noun: He has a shotgun licence. License is the verb: The Red Fort is a licensed restaurant.

**More Than:** Say more than – not over or above – except when writing about height.

**No One:** Two words, no hyphen.

**Participated:** Say took part.

**Police Ranks:** Use two-letter abbreviation where possible, i.e. DI Jones, DC Smith, PC etc. One-word ranks are an exception, so use Sgt and Insp. DS, which could mean detective sergeant or detective superintendent, must be styled Det Sgt or Det Supt, not D Sgt or D Supt. The rank WPC no longer exists. Chief Inspector is not CI, however, but Ch Insp.

**Practice/Practise:** Practice is the noun, as in a doctor's practice. Practise is the verb, as in the doctor began to practise.

**Programme/Program:** Programme as in a theatre or TV programme, but program as in computer.

**Pupils/Students:** Pupils up to age 16. Students for those in sixth form and above.

**Seasons:** Spring, summer, autumn, winter are all lower case.

**Singular/Plural Agreement:** The titles of companies, councils, organisations, and words like everyone, everybody, someone, nobody, none, each, a group etc take singular verbs (e.g. the council is). Exceptions: sports teams, the police, the public, a family, a couple and groups in entertainment.

**Targeted:** Not targeted.

**Time:** Use 10.15am, 3pm. Never say 3.00pm, or 5am in the morning. Avoid 24-hour clock times apart from specialised features such as the tide table. Better to say the 5.21pm commuter train from Victoria than the 17.21 train. Noon or midnight stand on their own – do not write 12am or 12pm.

**Twitter:** Twitter is capped; tweet lower case.

**Wars:** First World War, Second World War, the Falklands War, the Gulf War etc. Not World War One, World War 2, etc.

**Year 4:** Style for all school years, with cap Y.