



**LE LOUP TRANSLATIONS**  
Spread Your Words!

## British English Style Guide

This style guide is not intended to be exhaustive, rather aiming to promote clarity and preserve consistency across teams of translators and writers. In terms of grammar, this style guide primarily covers areas of ambiguity.

Published by Oxford University Press since 1928—development having begun in 1879—the *Oxford English Dictionary* is widely recognised as the gold standard for British spelling and the English language in general. For words with spelling variations, the version marked *British* is preferred.



## Spelling

Verbs end in *-ise* or *-yse* rather than *-ize* or *-yze*.

*capitalise; utilise; standardise; summarise; analyse; paralyse*

Nouns derived from *-ise* verbs are spelt with *ise*.

*capitalisation; utilisation; standardisation*

In verbs that end in *L*, the letter *L* is doubled when followed by a vowel.

*to fulfil one's duties; he fulfils his duties; he found it fulfilling; his duties were fulfilled*

In verbs that end in *T*, the letter *T* is doubled when followed by a vowel only when the syllable containing the letter *T* is stressed (stressed syllables in the examples are underlined).

*to combat and combatting vs. to benefit and benefiting*

Nouns end in *-our* rather than *-or*.

*labour; honour; colour; favour*

In the past tense, certain verbs end in *-t* rather than *-ed*. This is especially important for adjectives<sup>1</sup>.

*learnt; dreamt; burnt; spelt*

*burnt toast; spilt milk*

*lessons learnt but a learned scholar (pronounced in two syllables, as learn-ed)*

Certain words are spelt differently.

*speciality or specialism not specialty*

*aluminium not aluminum*

*programme not program*

*diarrhoea not diarrhea*

*grey not gray*

There are differences in vocabulary.

*lorry rather than semi*

*bin rather than garbage pail*

*veterinary surgeon rather than veterinarian*

As a matter of standardisation, the verb *help* is followed by *to*.

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<sup>1</sup> The two variants can also be used to distinguish between different usages or shades of meaning of a given verb (e.g. perfective vs. imperfective)



*She helped him to build the house rather than She helped him build the house*

Prefixes that result in doubled letters are hyphenated.

*co-operate; re-emphasise; pre-eminent*

Nouns end in *-re* rather than *-er*.

*centre; fibre*

Verbs end in *-se* rather than *-ce*.

*to practise, to license*

Nouns derived from *-se* verbs end in *-ce*.

*He practises yoga but He makes a practice of stretching every morning*

*She is licensed to drive but She holds a driving licence*

Nouns end in *-ogue* rather than *-og*.

*analogue, dialogue, catalogue*

## Punctuation

### Commas

The final item in a list is preceded by a comma. This makes long or complicated lists easier to understand.

*She carried a pen, a notebook, and a set of keys in her pocket.*

*She carried a pen, a notebook, and a bag of nuts and seeds in her pocket. (The final item in the list is a bag of nuts and seeds)*

Introductory clauses, phrases, and words—even single words—are followed by a comma.

*Never having been able to whistle, I resolved to learn how.*

*This summer, I practised whistling for ten minutes every morning.*

*Yesterday, I whistled for the first time; then, I started learning one of my favourite songs off by heart.*

If a clause that starts with *and* or *but* could be a complete sentence (i.e. it has a subject and a verb), it is preceded by a comma.

*She arrived and saw that he was waiting on the other side of the room.*

*She arrived, and her eyes immediately found his across the room.*

*She arrived but did not see him.*

*She arrived, but he had grown tired of waiting and had already left.*



## Slash Marks

A slash mark has spaces on both sides or no spaces at all. If both terms consist of a single word, there are no spaces; otherwise, there is a space on either side of the slash.

*producers/retailers = producers or retailers*

*fabric producers/retailers = fabric producers or fabric retailers*

*fabric producers / retailers = retailers or fabric producers (the producers make fabric but the retailers do not necessarily sell fabric)*

## Hyphens and Dashes

There are no spaces on either side of hyphens or dashes. Hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes serve different purposes. Please see the resources linked below for a more detailed explanation.

Hyphens (-) are commonly used to:

Create compound adjectives

*sustainable-development policy = policy for sustainable development*

*sustainable development policy = development policy that is sustainable*

*A thirty-year-old woman = a woman who is thirty years old*

En dashes (–) are commonly used to:

Indicate ranges

*pp. 5–8 = pages five through eight*

*the 2020–2021 academic year = the school year starting in the autumn of 2020 and ending in the summer of 2021*

Represent contrast

*the north–south divide = the divide between the Global North and Global South*

*the north-west border = the border in the north-west*

vs.

*the north–west border = the border between a country's northern region and its western region*

*the Spanish–American war = the war between Spain and America*

vs.

*the Spanish-American war = the war in the region called Spanish America*

*the liberal–conservative debate = the debate between liberals and conservatives*

vs.

*the liberal-conservative debate = the debate about or by liberal conservatives, i.e. conservatives who are more moderate*

Create compound adjectives out of a multi-word term



*the award-winning author*

vs.

*the National Book Award–winning author*

*a war-torn country = a country torn by war*

vs.

*a civil war–torn country = a country torn by civil war*

vs.

*a civil war-torn country = a civil (i.e. polite) country that is torn by war*

Em dashes (—) are especially helpful in two cases:

To make nested commas easier to parse (replacing a set of commas)

*The tourist—having spent three days travelling by car, two days by train, and twelve hours in a Czech police cell—was thrilled to finally arrive in Berlin.*

To set off an appositive (replacing commas or parentheses)

*Having spent three days driving cross-country and two days travelling by train—the change in transportation method was due to his car being confiscated by the Czech police—the tourist was thrilled to finally arrive in Berlin.*

*With two friends to visit—one in Spandau and one in Neukölln—and a concert to see at the Philharmonie, he chose a centrally located hotel.*

There is plenty of material on this topic available online, for example:

Hyphens: [www.grammarbook.com/punctuation/hyphens.asp](http://www.grammarbook.com/punctuation/hyphens.asp)

En dashes: [www.thepunctuationguide.com/en-dash.html](http://www.thepunctuationguide.com/en-dash.html)

Em dashes: [www.grammarly.com/blog/why-you-should-love-the-em-dash/](http://www.grammarly.com/blog/why-you-should-love-the-em-dash/)

## Quotations

Single quotation marks are nested within double ones. While more common outside of the UK, this style is also used by some British publications, e.g. The Economist.

*“I heard him yell ‘Put your hands up!’ before I fainted”, reported the terrified tourist.*

All punctuation is placed outside of quotation marks unless part of the quotation.

*“Hello”, she said.*

*“Stop!” she shouted.*

*“Well,” she said, “I don’t know.”*

## Colon

The first word after a colon is only capitalised when followed by a complete sentence.

*The tourist lost all of his valuables: his wallet, his watch, and a brand-new briefcase.*



*He later realised that there was an upside: The items were all insured, and he would never have met the charming police officer otherwise.*

## Line Breaks

By not splitting up words between lines, any potential confusion regarding hyphens and en dashes is avoided, and the text as a whole becomes easier to read.

## Numbers

### Figures

If space permits, numbers from one through twelve are written out in words. Numbers from 13 onwards are written in figures unless part of a compound adjective. If a sentence must begin with a number, it can be helpful to write it out in words.

*The woman was 30 years old.*

*She one dog, four cats, and 17 birds.*

*The thirty-year-old woman had kept snakes in the past, but they had not gotten on well with the other pets.*

*There were 50,000 people crammed into the stadium.*

*vs.*

*Fifty thousand people were crammed into the stadium.*

### Percentages

If space permits, the word *percent* is written out. If the percent sign (%) is used, it is preceded by a non-breaking space, and numbers from one through twelve are written in figures rather than words.

*five percent*

*5 %*

*14 percent*

### Thousands

The thousands place is separated from the hundreds place by a comma.

*1,234 rather than 1234 or 1 234*



## Dates

When written out in words, dates are formulated as *day month year*. Dates written in figures follow the ISO 8601 format (*YYYY-MM-DD*), which is officially recognised throughout the English-speaking world.

*21 July 2020*

*2020-07-21*

## Money

### Currency

For the sake of consistency and clarity, three-digit international currency codes are used instead of symbols. The currency code precedes the amount.

*USD 170*

*EUR 23.40*

### Amounts

When dealing with rounded amounts, the unit in question is written out if space permits (e.g. *thousand*). Otherwise, *million* is abbreviated as *m* and *thousand* as *k*. Neither abbreviation is followed by a dot.

*EUR 23.1 million*

*USD 478 thousand*

*EUR 23.1 m*

*USD 478 k*

## Place Names

It is important to check for spelling/name variations.

*DE: Mossul im Irak or Mossul/Irak*

*EN: Mosul in Iraq or Mosul, Iraq*



## Links

Links are written without the *http://* prefix. If possible, all links in a translation should be redirected to target-language web pages.

## Abbreviations

Avoiding abbreviations can make a text easier to read.

e.g. by translating the German abbreviation *mntl.* with *monthly* or *per month*

## Acronyms/Initialisms

Acronyms and initialisms are defined the first time they are used in each document. In longer documents, they can be redefined in each section.

*The United Nations (UN) is headquartered in New York. The UN has 193 member states.*

## Capitalisation

### Headings

Following the AP style, the first and last words of a heading are capitalised, as are all other words except for articles, coordinating conjunctions, and prepositions that are three letters or fewer in length.

*A Style Guide for Translations Into English*

### Professional and Official Titles

Generally speaking, titles are only capitalised if they precede the holder's name directly (i.e. not separated by a comma like in the second example below).

*This morning, Chancellor Angela Merkel returned to Berlin.*

vs.

*The chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, returned to Berlin this morning.*

vs.

*Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany, returned to Berlin this morning.*

A title may be capitalised in apposition to a name, e.g. as part of a caption or list, but not in a sentence.

*Signatories:*





- Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany

- Marlehn Thieme, President of Welthungerhilfe

vs.

*The document was signed by Angela Merkel, chancellor of Germany, and Marlehn Thieme, president of Welthungerhilfe.*

vs.

*The document was signed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Welthungerhilfe President Marlehn Thieme.*

A title may be capitalised if a document uses a title instead of a name throughout, meaning that the name of the person holding the title is never mentioned.

*The President of Welthungerhilfe began by discussing the particulars of the problem. The President went on to say that the issue was well in hand.*

vs.

*Welthungerhilfe President Marlehn Thieme began by discussing the particulars of the problem. As the president of Welthungerhilfe, she was qualified to say that the issue was well in hand.*

vs.

*Marlehn Thieme, president of Welthungerhilfe, began by discussing the particulars of the problem. Ms. Thieme went on to say that the issue was well in hand.*

## Organisational Bodies

The type of organisational body is only capitalised when part of its specific name (e.g. it precedes the name and is in the singular, as demonstrated in the first two examples below).

*the Department of Agriculture*

*the departments of Agriculture and Finance = the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Finance*

vs.

*the Departments of Agriculture and Finance = an organisation called "Departments of Agriculture and Finance"*

*the Finance committee = the committee called "Finance"*

vs.

*the finance committee = a committee that deals with financial matters but may have a different official name*

*the Personnel department = the department called "Personnel"*

vs.

*the personnel department = the department that is in charge of personnel but is officially called the "Human Resources department", for example*

*report compiled by Marketing staff = the report was put together by staff from the Marketing department*

vs.



*report compiled by marketing staff = the report was put together by staff with expertise in marketing, perhaps from a variety of departments*

Boards, committees, and the like may be capitalised only if there is no reference to any other organisational body with the same name. To limit the potential for confusion, this type of capitalisation should be restricted to specialised internal documents and to documents with a limited scope (e.g. a press release by a company’s executive board, where only one company and one type of board are mentioned).

*The Executive Board met on Monday. Tuesday morning, the Board issued the following statement. (In this entire document, the only board of any kind mentioned is the executive board of this particular company.)*

*The Executive Board met on Monday. Tuesday morning, the Executive Board issued the following statement. (In this entire document, the only executive board mentioned is the executive board of this particular company.)*

*The Executive Board and the Supervisory Board met on Monday. Tuesday morning, the boards issued a joint statement. (In this entire document, only one executive board and only one supervisory board are mentioned.)*

*The executive board of Company A and the executive board of Company B met on Monday. The executive board of Company A issued a statement on Tuesday morning, while the executive board of Company B did not issue a statement until Wednesday. (Because there are two different executive boards, neither one can be capitalised.)*

*The executive boards of Company A and Company B met on Monday. Tuesday morning, the supervisory board of Company B heard a presentation by a team of visiting experts, following which the board issued a brief statement. The executive board of Company A reconvened on Wednesday to hear the same presentation. (The various boards are all in the lower case because there are multiple boards and multiple companies involved. In the second sentence, “the board” refers to the supervisory board of Company B. In the third sentence, both the company and the type of board are specified in order to avoid confusion.)*

## Tables

The title of a table is capitalised as a normal header (i.e. like any other title). In all other cells, only the first word is capitalised.

### ***Tea Consumption in the Workplace (First Quarter)***

<i>Type of tea</i>	<i>Marketing department (total cups)</i>	<i>Research department (total cups)</i>
<i>Black</i>	<i>1,453</i>	<i>18,669</i>
<i>Green</i>	<i>4,590</i>	<i>2,334</i>
<i>Herbal</i>	<i>12,007</i>	<i>34</i>



## Bulleted Lists

There are three ways to write a list.

If the items in the list form a single, cohesive, and complete sentence, each item begins with a lower-case letter, each item besides the last ends with a semicolon, and the second-last item is followed by an *and*. The last item ends with a period.

*The unlucky tourist presented the police with a litany of complaints, including that:*

- *he had lost his passport;*
- *his stolen wallet had contained all of his credit cards;*
- *the briefcase shop had sold out of his preferred model; and*
- *the wind was much stronger than it had seemed in the pictures.*

If each item forms a complete sentence, it is punctuated and capitalised as such.

*The unlucky tourist presented the police with a litany of complaints:*

- *He had lost his passport.*
- *His stolen wallet had contained all of his credit cards.*
- *The briefcase shop had sold out of his preferred model.*
- *The wind was much stronger than it had seemed in the pictures.*

If neither of the above options applies to the entire list, the first word of each item is capitalised and the last word of each item is not followed by any punctuation whatsoever.

*The unlucky tourist presented the police with a litany of complaints, including:*

- *A lost passport*
- *A stolen wallet, which had contained all of his credit cards*
- *The briefcase shop having sold out of his preferred model, which meant he could not easily replace the stolen one, even with insurance. He was particularly vexed at this*
- *The strong wind, which had not appeared in any advertisements*



# Sources and References

## Spelling

Published by Oxford University Press since 1928—development having begun in 1879—the *Oxford English Dictionary* is widely recognised as the gold standard for British spelling and the English language in general. For words with spelling variations, the version marked *British* is preferred.

While a subscription is required to access the *Oxford English Dictionary* directly, a free-to-use version is available via LEXICO, which is a collaboration between Dictionary.com and Oxford University Press.

### Online resources:

Oxford English Dictionary (subscription required): [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)

Oxford English Dictionary via LEXICO (free): [www.lexico.com/definition](http://www.lexico.com/definition)

History of the Oxford English Dictionary: [public.oed.com/history](http://public.oed.com/history)

## Grammar

### Online resources:

LEXICO, a collaboration between Oxford University Press and Dictionary.com:  
[www.lexico.com/grammar](http://www.lexico.com/grammar)

The Guide to Grammar and Writing, sponsored by the non-profit Capital Community College Foundation: [www.guidetogrammar.org](http://www.guidetogrammar.org)

The Grammarly blog, for example with this article on the em dash:  
[www.grammarly.com/blog/why-you-should-love-the-em-dash/](http://www.grammarly.com/blog/why-you-should-love-the-em-dash/)

The Grammar Girl blog, for example with this article on capitalising names of diseases:  
[www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/do-you-capitalize-disease-names-like-coronavirus](http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/do-you-capitalize-disease-names-like-coronavirus)

## Style

The resources below may be helpful in addressing details not covered here. The preferred supplementary resource is *The Economist Style Guide*, which can be purchased in e-book format at a reasonable price.

### Primary resources:

*The Economist Style Guide* is an excellent resource. In its twelfth edition at the time of writing, it is available for purchase at [economist.com](http://economist.com), including in an inexpensive e-book format.

The Economist. *The Economist Style Guide*. 12<sup>th</sup> ed., Profile Books Limited, 2018.



Link to e-book purchase page (costing GBP 6.99 as of 2021-03-28):

[ukshop.economist.com/products/the-economist-style-guide-12th-edition-e-book](https://ukshop.economist.com/products/the-economist-style-guide-12th-edition-e-book)

*The Chicago Manual of Style* is available for purchase or for subscription online. Now in its 17<sup>th</sup> edition, it is a well-organised resource with a user-friendly layout.

The University of Chicago. *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 17<sup>th</sup> ed., University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Table of contents to the 16<sup>th</sup> edition: [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/contents.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/contents.html)

The Q&A section, which functions like the Chicago Manual's blog:

[www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/latest.html)

The *New Oxford Style Manual* is available for purchase from Oxford University Press at [oup.com](http://oup.com).

Oxford University Press. *New Oxford Style Manual*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., OUP, 2016.

Resources in the public domain:

While more recent editions are available, the 1920 edition of Strunk's *Elements of Style* is still a valuable resource. It is available in full through Project Gutenberg at the link below.

Strunk, William. *The Elements of Style*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920.

Link to free edition online (accessed 2021-03-28): [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/37134](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/37134)

