

north east **autism** society

Style Bible

2018 - 2019



The purpose of this document is to ensure every publication we author, whether for **internal** or **external** use, uses the same branding, language, style and grammar.

Uniformity in this way helps our 'voice' as an organisation be heard clearly and consistently, and enables everyone, in every area to maintain the same, agreed, high levels of professionalism within communications.

In other words, so we all sing from the same hymn sheet and deliver the same expected standard of excellence.

Communication is not limited to the words we say out loud or commit to paper. What we don't say, or what we don't implement is often as powerful.

We want to make sure everything we do communicates the spirit of who we are as a Society, reflects well on our Chief Executive and Trustees, and helps further the autism agenda in our region and nation.

Who is it for?

Anyone who writes an email, a report, sends a letter, updates the website, who writes and delivers a speech, communicates from inside the Society to outside, anyone communicating to all of us internally, anyone reporting on an incident or delivering training...

Everyone!

As such not all of this will apply, and not all of the words and phrases highlighted will be useful to you. However, it's good for us all to have an understanding of changing language and styles.

What's in it?

The Style Bible will be updated regularly to reflect changes in culture and language, but as a whole you can find in here:

- HR / internal comms language
- Email etiquette
- Preferred phrases and words to avoid
- Our preferred language when speaking about the children, young people and adults in our care or accessing our services
- The language we use when communicating with the people who work for the Society
- Basic grammar and punctuation expectations
- Common words and phrases and our preferred style for those



Before we get started

How should I communicate?

A simple rule of thumb is try and communicate in person as much as possible.

If possible:

face to face (in person)

If not possible then

ear to ear (phone calls)

and if not possible / or if agreed in advance (... drop me an email)

pen to pen (email)

Email etiquette

- Always activate an 'out of the office' when you are not here. We are unintentionally communicating with our teams and people from outside the Society simply by not answering, and what we are saying to them isn't positive.
- Make sure your email signature is the most recent NEAS signature with correct contact information, logos, name, job title and contact information.
- Always check spelling and grammar before sending
- Do not blind copy any one into emails
- Only CC those who need to be involved in that communication
- Usual practice would be to avoid answering or sending email / making phone calls out of your standard working hours – unless you have a genuine occupational requirement to do so or a situation arises where not responding could be dangerous (a situation in a home etc). [Please discuss this protocol further with your line manager].

- You may feel like you're being a valuable asset to the Society by doing work outwith the parameters of your role but you unconsciously say three things:

- 1) I can't get my job done in my allotted hours
- 2) This is the level of work / service required by the Society (thus potentially making our teammates feel less)
- 3) My job is more important than my health – it is not. You will do the best job possible when you are healthy and rested.

** again – this is subject to emergency situations, crises and out-of-the-ordinary occurrences

- If you are a manager – do not encourage the late night or early morning responses to email. A law has just been passed in France making this illegal. Similar legislation is being drafted here.



When we communicate with each other within the Society:

HR / internal communication language

When emailing, writing to, reporting on or communicating with the people who work within the Society we want to always be mindful of what our words (verbally and written) communicate about who we are as a Society.

We value those who we work with

We respect our colleagues

We are inclusive

We care

Do our communications reflect this?

While we recognise that policies and procedures 'kick in' at times we seek always to put **people before process**.

For example:

If someone in your team has been off sick, before we let them know about any processes we now need to go through we make sure they feel valued and cared for.

"Great to have you back, how are you?"

Even official documentation should be warm and personable in its approach.

When we put people before process we go from a fragmented, departmentalised workforce to a united Society.

Practical tips:

- Please do not mark communications with **FAO**; find out the name(s) and address as such
- When **verbally communicating** try to avoid talk of 'staff', 'employees' or 'workforce' preferring 'our people', 'my team', or other phrases and terms which project warmth.

- In **written / digital** communication we can address memos / documents / mail outs to 'staff' or colleagues etc (when appropriate). Never send something saying 'dear our people'!
- In all documents make sure we adhere to the same high standards of excellence we would expect from others.



The phrases we use within the Society

- We speak of autism and, increasingly where possible, neurodiversity.
- Autism is only one of many attributes included in neurodiversity. Neurodiversity would encompass other conditions like ADD, DCD and other developmental conditions. (note – medical professionals may use ‘disorder’ but where we can we will find a more positive descriptor.
- Neurodiversity is the concept and ideology that every human has their own unique brain ‘wiring’ and autism, ADHD, dyspraxia etc are all considered normal variations of human brain wiring. As such we wouldn’t then refer to them as **disorders**.
- According to the most recent research people with an ASC would prefer to be known as **autistic** rather than having autism. I.e. autism is a part of who they are not a condition they carry.
- As a Society we are now following this as our default position. However, it is best practice to ask the person how they wish to be known, i.e. Jane is autistic, or Jane has autism.
- **if you are aware of how the person being referred to prefers to be known**, you should use that terminology.
- Neurodiversity does not require a hyphen.
- Autism and neurodiversity **do not** need to be capitalised unless they form part of a title. For example: We have several people with an autism diagnosis on the books of the North East Autism Society.

NB:

Where possible we choose words and phrasing that highlight the **positive** or neutral aspects of autism and neurodiversity, over those which describe the condition negatively.

For example:

Sensory differences over triad of impairments.

At NEAS we **do not** use the term **impairment** (whether it is a triad or quadra of impairments) or **disorder**.

Neither do we, when speaking as NEAS, use terms like ‘biter’ or ‘flapper’ – however there may be times when capturing someone’s story that we choose to include this ‘raw’ language attributing it to the person or family member saying it. This would apply to ‘kicking off’ etc as a means to describe a behaviour deemed challenging or concerning.

We also avoid **‘suffers from’** with regard to any disability or illness, instead saying they have it or are it.

A behaviour?

Everything any of us does is behaviour, positive or negative. In working with autistic or neurodiverse children, young people and adults, we may see or have to deal with situations where someone is trying to communicate via their behaviour. In a bid to rethink and reframe how we term these incidents when we describe such things rather than say ‘a behaviour’ we will instead describe the behaviour.

For example: *agitated behaviour, excited behaviour, aggressive behaviour, stimulating behaviour, withdrawn behaviour* etc

More core style rules:

- The North East Autism Society **has** not *have* (NEAS has secured funding...)
- NEAS **is** not *are* (NEAS is the leading autism service provider in the north of the UK)
- Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) **not** Autism Spectrum Disorder – but if we can avoid saying condition even

better: an autistic person, or someone who has experience of autism, for example.

- When referring to CEO, John Phillipson, we refer to **our** Chief Exec, or **our** CEO etc, instead of *the* CEO.
- When speaking or communicating about our Board we call them 'board of trustees' or trustees but not directors, although that is the office they hold.

- In internal communication we talk about **our** workplace not the workplace, **our** team not the team etc.
- We make sure our language points to and reinforces ONE Society. i.e. 'here at NEAS we believe in continually pursuing excellence so within our homes we...' rather than 'in care we...'

The people we educate, care for and support:

The heart of everything we do at the North East Autism Society is keeping the main thing the main thing: we exist not to provide services, not to make money, not for the sake of it – we exist to help change the lives of children, young people and adults.

With this in mind let's do all we can to keep it **personal** and **relational**.

For example, unless there is a need to use professional terms let's find a way to say it using words which someone with no knowledge of autism or our sector would understand.

There will be times when the industry terms are required, e.g. writing to a commissioner or providing evidence for Ofsted – these are the exceptions.

A great doctor will be able to explain your diagnosis and how it affects you and your body without the need for latin or medical terminology. Avoiding the professional jargon doesn't mean he is less qualified – it means he is a great communicator.

We can do the same to help raise awareness of neurodiversity and to impart knowledge rather than information.

As a general rule language, particularly in this field, changes frequently. What never changes is the fact we serve children, young people and adults, so that's what we will call them.

Terms like service user and learners are accurate but not warm or personal. We want people to know we treat our 'service users' like the incredible, unique children, young people or adults that they are.

With that in mind:

Child rather than learner

"our children respond really well to such a bespoke environment"

Young adult living with us – rather than residential service user

"The young adults in our home have all grown in confidence and have taken huge strides towards independent living"

Differentiated learning programmes – a timetable personalised for your child according to their needs

"the level of personalisation means we need to really get to know your child and his needs, but the results will be incredible"

Outcomes – the desired end result

"we are aiming high with James – together we've made a plan and we hope that by summer he'll be confident in using public transport"

Destinations – the next steps in life

"there's absolutely no reason at all why Georgia won't go on to further education. This was all part of the plan and she's achieved even more than we had hoped for."

*** Again, please note. In formal papers, professional to professional correspondence terminology and jargon is more acceptable but to unite as one Society internally, and to take down barriers externally we need to simplify and make personable our speech.

thinking concerning autism, which we cannot support.

Imagery and association

You only need to google 'autism' and you will be bombarded by dozens of charities, organisations and imagery. However, despite many of these things being widely seen and used, they aren't always positive, or something we would want to be using.



At the North East Autism Society we do:

- Trust members of the Autism Alliance UK
- Use the colour 'blue' for our **own** branding
- Listen to UK autism advocates
- Learn from global research

However, we do **not**:

- Support, in any way, **Autism Speaks** (An American autism organisation that advocates for cures, restraining children and can be dangerous in its ideology).
- Have anything to do with '**light it up blue**' because of its association with Autism Speaks. While we have done this in the past it is to represent the blue of NEAS. In future we will be 'going for gold' to represent a celebration of positivity around autism.
- Use Jigsaw pieces to represent autism (the history of this is complex but one suggestion is that children with autism have a 'piece missing'). This emphasises the deficit model of

Basic Grammar and Punctuation

Apostrophes

For possession:

Example; teachers' training (is the training for all the teachers) and teacher's training (is the training of one teacher)

However: It would normally NOT need a final 's' when forming the possessive of proper nouns ending in s, x or z. Example; Chris' students not Chris's students.

For omitted letters:

Example; can't (cannot) you're (you are), it's (it is).

However: There is no apostrophe for its, ours, yours, hers, theirs when used in the possessive of the personal pronoun.

Example; the dog bit its owner; the blame was hers.

Also: you don't need apostrophes in expressions like six months later, and you never use apostrophes in plural abbreviations. Example; we were founded in the 1980s and a group of MPs attended (not 1980's and MP's).

Hyphens

For compounds:

Hyphens should be used when you form adjectival compounds

Example; person-centred keeps the person at the centre, a five-year-old girl is five years old.

However: You don't need a hyphen if the adverb ends in 'ly'

Example; a neatly written report

For splitting double vowels: Use a hyphen when, if it wasn't used, the word would have a double vowel

Example; co-ordinator, anti-inflammatory

Also: Use when the prefix would be joined to a capital letter

Example; anti-British, un-European

However: No one does not need a hyphen

a or an before H?

Use an before a silent H: an heir, an hour, an honest politician, an honorary consul;

Use a before an aspirated H: a hero, a hotel, a historian (but don't change a direct quote if the speaker says, for example, "an historic").

With abbreviations, be guided by pronunciation: e.g. an LSE student

Capitals

jobs all lower case: eg prime minister, US secretary of state, chief rabbi, editor of the Guardian.

titles cap up titles, but not job description, eg President Barack Obama (but the US president, Barack Obama, and Obama on subsequent mention); the Duke of Westminster (the duke at second mention); Pope Francis but the pope.

government departments in English-speaking countries

Initial capitals when full name is used, eg Home Office, Foreign Office, Ministry of Justice (UK), Department of Defense, Department of Homeland Security (US), Department of Immigration and Border Protection (Australia), Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Irish Republic), Ministry of Railways (India).

Lowercase when abbreviated or paraphrased, eg justice ministry, defense department, Australia's immigration department, Canadian fisheries ministry, Indian railway ministry, etc.

Lowercase for translations of government departments in non-English-speaking countries, eg French foreign ministry, Russian ministry of emergency situations, etc.

government agencies, public bodies, quangos initial caps, eg Crown Prosecution Service, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Heritage Lottery Fund, Revenue & Customs.

acts of parliament initial caps (but bills lc), eg Official Secrets Act, Child Poverty Act 2010, local government bill.

airports cap the name but lc the generic part (if necessary at all), eg Newcastle, Gatwick (no need for “airport”), Liverpool John Lennon airport.

artistic and cultural names of institutions, etc, get initial caps, eg Discovery Museum, National Gallery, Royal Albert Hall, Tate Modern. Books, films, music, works of art, etc have initial caps except a, an, and, at, for, from, in, of, the, to (except in initial positions or after a colon), eg There is a Light That Never Goes Out.

bridges initial caps, eg Tyne Bridge, Sydney Harbour Bridge, Waterloo Bridge.

churches, hospitals and schools cap up the proper or placename, lc the rest, eg St Nicolas church, Newbury; Great Ormond Street children’s hospital; Ripon grammar school, Vernon county primary school.

epochs initial caps, eg Anthropocene, Mesolithic, Palaeolithic.

geographical features lc, eg river Thames, Sydney harbour, Monterey peninsula, Bondi beach, Solsbury hill (but Mount Everest).

parliamentary committees, reports and inquiries

all lc, eg trade and industry select committee, royal commission on long-term care for the elderly, Jenkins report.

universities and colleges of further and higher education caps for institution, lc for departments, eg Newcastle University department of medieval and modern history, Oregon State University, Free University of Berlin, University of Queensland school of journalism, London College of Communication.

words and phrases based on proper names that have lost connection with their origins (alsatian dog, cardigan, cheddar cheese, french windows, swiss roll, wellington boots, yorkshire pudding and many others) are lc.

Those that retain a strong link, which may be legally recognised, include Cornish pasty, Melton Mowbray pork pies, Parma ham and Worcestershire sauce, and take initial cap.

Basic style for numbers

When writing numbers use the words for zero-nine and from 10 onwards use digits

- She had two children, a boy age three and a 12-year-old girl

Dates: Our style is 21st of July, 2017 or 21/7/18

Decades: use figures for 60s, roaring 50s etc. NB there is no apostrophe... the 60s are effectively more than one 60 so it’s a plural. Like 20 apples. You wouldn’t write 20 apple’s.

Abbreviations

No need for full stops / points between abbreviations

NEAS not N.E.A.S. etc

However – due to recent headlines highlighting failings of the National Autistic Society (NAS), when at all possible we should refrain from referring to the Society as NEAS and prefer the North East Autism Society instead to avoid being confused with the other organisation.

Mr not Mr.

Avoid acronyms (MOTW) and instead use the full name (Moving on Tyne and Wear) where possible. If it’s going to be used multiple times then use the full name first and follow it with acronym in brackets ie Moving on Tyne and Wear (MOTW).

Ampersand – please do not use ‘&’ in written documents. The notable exceptions are the abbreviations of A&E (although ideally this would be written full out as Accident and

Emergency) and B&Q (or other businesses) because it's a brand.

Cap up single letters in such expressions as C-list, F-word, "the word coffee contains two Fs", etc

Words we don't use (language):

Gotten – use got instead

Whilst, amidst, - while and amid (the st is old English)

Check for rogue Zs appearing in words – we recognise not recognize

Hunt down those extra 'gets' – we don't get registered, we register

Americanisms – beware those rogue words and phrases like:

alphabetize, we sort in alphabetical order

colour is not color

behaviour not behavior

two time or three time – just double or triple will do

wait on – you wait for a train, the mini bus, your friend not *on* them

normalcy – please use normality

A&E – not ER

Aeroplane – airplane is the movie

However, follow US spellings for proper nouns:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Defense, Labor Day, One World Trade Center, Pearl Harbor, World Health Organization

Superfluous words (words we use but don't always have to)

Basically – usually no need to use this. He was basically left to his own devices... the man was left to his own devices

Also – check if this is needed in the sentence

Brand-new – what does that even mean?

State-of-the-art – this is usually used to suggest a new building or piece of equipment is as good as it can be. In actual fact most new things are state-of-the-art and so the term is redundant

Both – the event was for both men and women. So it was for everyone, or just men and women. No need for both

That – he said that he went to the shop and that he bought a drink. 'He said that' is fine because it's indirect speech. 'and that he bought a drink' could have been written as 'he bought a drink.' The 'that' is superfluous

A-Z Some other words and phrases that can trip us up:

(completed in part with thanks to The Evening Gazette, Newcastle Chronicle, Guardian and Observer Newspapers)

A

absorb
but absorption

accents
Use on French, German, Portuguese, Spanish and Irish Gaelic words (but not anglicised French words such as cafe, apart from exposé, lamé, résumé, roué).

People's names, in whatever language, should also be given appropriate accents where known. Thus: "Arsène Wenger visited Rafa Benítez in Newcastle."

access
has been known as contact since the 1989 Children Act

acknowledgment
not acknowledgement

act
uc when using full name, eg Criminal Justice Act 1998, Official Secrets Act; but lc on second reference, eg "the act", and when speaking in more general terms, eg "we need a radical freedom of information act"; bills remain lc until passed into law

AD, BC

AD goes before the date (AD64), BC goes after (300BC); both go after the century, eg second century AD, fourth century BC

addresses

like this: 90 York Way, London N1 9GU

admissible, inadmissible

not -able

admit

Take care – as a reader of the Guardian put it when it referred to Tory MPs who “admitted” being gay: “Admit in modern English is almost exclusively used when conceding or confessing something negative and/or of which one is or should be ashamed. Please be more careful. Language can offend.”

adoption

Mention that children are adopted only when relevant to the story: a reader points out that “explicitly calling attention to adoptions in this way suggests that adoption is not as good, and not as real a relationship, as having a child normally”.

So say biological father, biological family rather than “real father”, “real family”, etc

Adrenalin

TM; a brand of adrenaline

adrenaline

hormone that increases heart rate and blood pressure, extracted from animals or synthesised for medical uses

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affect/effect

exhortations in the style bible had no effect (noun) on the number of mistakes; the level of mistakes was not affected (verb) by exhortations in the style guide; we hope to effect (verb) a change in this

all right

has traditionally been regarded as right, and alright as not all right.

all together

as one united body: “We are all in it together”

altogether

completely, totally: “That’s an altogether different matter”

any more

Please do not say “anymore” any more

anti-vaxxer

a person who is opposed to vaccinations

app

an application for, typically, a mobile phone

assisted dying

is preferable to “assisted suicide”

asylum seeker

Someone seeking refugee status or humanitarian protection; there is no such thing as an “illegal asylum seeker”, a term the Press Complaints Commission ruled in breach of its code of practice.

Refugees are people who have fled their home countries in fear for their lives, and may have been granted asylum under the 1951 refugee convention or qualify for humanitarian protection or discretionary leave, or have been granted exceptional leave to remain in Britain.

Someone who is refused asylum should be referred to as a refused asylum seeker, not a “failed asylum seeker”.

An asylum seeker can become an illegal immigrant only if he or she remains in Britain after having failed to respond to a removal notice

B**baccalaureate**

abbreviation bac, but the new English baccalaureate is abbreviated to Ebacc

bailout

noun

bail out

a prisoner, a company or person in financial difficulty; but **bale out** a boat or from an aircraft

bank holiday

bank holiday Monday, etc

Berwick-upon-Tweed

is in England, although Berwick Rangers play football in the Scottish League

Bible

cap up if referring to Old or New Testament, lc in such sentences as “the stylebook is my bible”; the adjective biblical is always lc

birthdays

are for people. Institutions, events etc have anniversaries

black

should be used only as an adjective when referring to race, ie not “blacks” but “black people” or whatever noun is appropriate

BME

black and minority ethnic; BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) is a less widely used but acceptable alternative

Bonfire night

also known as Guy Fawkes night

Britain, UK

These terms are synonymous: Britain is the official short form of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Used as adjectives, therefore, British and UK mean the same. Great Britain, however, refers only to England, Wales and Scotland. Take care not to write Britain when you might mean England and Wales, or just England – for example when referring to the education system.

Bureau

Plural is bureaux (furniture) and bureau (organisations)

burned/burnt

burned is the past tense form (he burned the cakes); burnt is the participle, an “adjectival” form of the verb (“the cakes are burnt”)

burqa

not burka

businessman, businesswoman

for individuals, but say business people or the

business community rather than “businessmen”

C

cabinet, shadow cabinet
but **Cabinet Office**

Cafcass

Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service

cafe

no accent

callous

adjective, meaning hardened, metaphorically or literally; **callus** (plural calluses) noun, meaning hard area of skin.

The correct word to use to mean “covered in calluses” is in fact calloused, from the medical verb, to callous; although callused is often seen

can not, cannot

are not the same: note the difference between “you can not eat if you don’t want to” and “you cannot eat porridge with a knife”

canon

cleric, decree, principle, body of writings, type of music; **cannon** something you fire (plural: cannon, not cannons)

CD, CDs, CD-Rom

a CD is a disc, not a disk

centimetres

abbreviation **cm**, not cms

century

sixth century, 21st century, etc; but sixth-century remains, 21st-century boy, etc

chair

acceptable in place of chairman or chairwoman, being nowadays widely used in the public sector and by organisations such as the Labour party and trade unions (though not the Conservative party, which had a “chairman” in kitten heels); if it seems inappropriate for a particular body, use a

different construction (“the meeting was chaired by Ian” or “Kath was in the chair”)

colon

Use between two sentences, or parts of sentences, where the first introduces a proposition that is resolved by the second, eg Fowler put it like this: to deliver the goods invoiced in the preceding words.

A colon, rather than a comma, should be used to introduce a quotation: “He was an expert on punctuation,” or to precede a list – “He was an expert on the following: the colon, the comma and the full stop.”

Use before quotes when the quote could stand on its own as a sentence. He said: “You’ll never take me alive.”

When a colon is used in a headline, the next word is lowercase, eg Osborne: there is no plan B.

Commons, House of Commons
but **the house**, not the House

Commons committees

lc, home affairs select committee, public accounts committee, etc

complement, compliment, complimentary
to complement is to make complete: “the two strikers complemented each other”; to compliment is to praise; a complimentary copy is free

consortium

plural **consortiums** not consortia

contemptible

deserving contempt

contemptuous

displaying contempt

continual or continuous?

the former refers to things that recur repeatedly but not constantly; the latter indicates an uninterrupted sequence: “My car

continually breaks down because the radiator leaks continuously”

convener

not convenor

copyright

but **copywriter**

councillor or counsellor?

A councillor serves on a local council; a counsellor offers advice.

Just to confuse everyone, a member of the privy council is a privy counsellor

curb

restrain; **kerb** pavement

custody

since the 1989 Children Act the correct term for what used to be known as custody in cases involving care of children is residence

cyberbully, cybercafe, cybercrime, cyberlocker, cybernetics, cyberpunk, cybersecurity, cybersex, cyberspace, cyberterrorism, cyberwar

cyber-army, cyber-attack

D

Dad or dad?

capital D if it’s just Dad, eg “I’ll have to ask Dad”; otherwise lowercase, eg “my dad was a dustman, what does your dad do?” etc

dementia

not “senile dementia”.

We should take care to refer to a person or people with dementia, or living with dementia, not as a “dementia sufferer” or “victims of dementia”.

Dementia is an umbrella term that refers to various conditions. Some of the more common types of dementia include Alzheimer’s disease, vascular dementia, Lewy Body dementia, and fronto-temporal dementia (eg Pick’s disease). Respect people’s choices about how they identify themselves, for example as someone with Alzheimer’s disease rather than dementia

departments of state

British government ministries (but not ministers) take initial caps, as follows:

Cabinet Office (but the cabinet)
Home Office
Foreign Office (abbreviate to FCO – for Foreign and Commonwealth Office – after first mention)
Treasury
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS, formerly the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and incorporating the Department of Energy and Climate Change)
Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
Department for Education (DfE)
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU)
Department for International Development (DfID)
Department for International Trade (DIT)
Department for Transport (DfT)
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
Department of Health (DH)
Ministry of Defence (MoD)
Ministry of Justice (MoJ)
Office of the Leader of the House of Commons
Northern Ireland Office
Scotland Office not Scottish Office
Wales Office not Welsh Office

disabled people

not “the disabled”

We aim to use positive language about disability, avoiding outdated terms that stereotype or stigmatise.

Terms to avoid, with acceptable alternatives in brackets, include victim of, suffering from, afflicted by, crippled by (prefer person who has, person with); wheelchair-bound, in a

wheelchair (uses a wheelchair); person who is less able, invalid (disabled person); mentally handicapped, backward, retarded, slow (person with learning difficulties or disabilities); the disabled, the handicapped, the blind, the deaf (disabled people, blind people, deaf people); deaf and dumb (deaf and speech-impaired, hearing and speech-impaired)

disc

rotating optical disc: CD, CD-Rom, DVD, etc; **disk** rotating magnetic disc: disk drive, floppy disk

discolour

but **discoloration**

disfranchise

not disenfranchise

disoriented

not disorientated

domestic violence/family violence

Both terms are acceptable, but a mention of domestic violence at some point is helpful for clarity. (It is also preferred by some advocacy groups.) Always include helpline numbers

domestic violence victims/survivors

The term victim is used for those in a violent situation or at risk of violence. The term survivor is used for people who have experienced domestic violence in the past. Give priority to the preferences of the person we are writing about

dos and don'ts

Down's syndrome

say (if relevant) a baby with Down's syndrome, not “a Down's syndrome baby” – we wouldn't say “a cerebral palsy baby”. The diagnosis is not the person

drink

past tense **drank**, past participle **drunk**: he drinks too much – last night he drank 10 pints, the least he has drunk on any night this week

driving licence

not driver's licence in British English

Duke and Duchess of Cambridge

(or wherever), first mention; thereafter the duke and duchess.

Variations on “Prince William and Kate” or “Kate and William” are fine for headlines. “Princess Kate” is wrong

Duke of York

first mention; thereafter Prince Andrew or the prince

dwarves

plural of dwarf (not dwarfs); but the verb is to dwarf, eg the Shard dwarfs the surrounding buildings

E**Earth**

when talking about the planet, but earth in such idioms as down to earth, what on earth? Etc

Easter

The day between Good Friday and Easter Day is Holy Saturday, not Easter Saturday, which falls a week later

Ebacc

English baccalaureate

eBay

but Ebay if you cannot avoid starting a sentence or headline with it

ebook, email

but **e-cigarette**, **e-commerce**, **e-learning**, **e-petition**, **e-reader**

ecclesiastical titles

Most Rev (archbishop), Right Rev (bishop), Very Rev (dean or provost), the Ven (archdeacon), the Rev John (or Joan) Smith – not “Rev John Smith”, “Rev Smith”, “the Revs Smith and Jones”. Surname only on subsequent mentions, except in leading articles

educationist

not educationalist

Eid al-Adha

(Festival of Sacrifice) Muslim festival laid

down in Islamic law, celebrates the end of the hajj. Note that eid means festival, so it is tautologous to describe it as the “Eid festival”

Eid al-Fitr

Muslim festival of thanksgiving laid down in Islamic law, celebrates the end of Ramadan (al-fitr means the breaking of the fast)

eid mubarak

not a festival but a greeting (mubarak means “may it be blessed”)

eke out**elderly people**

or older people, not “the elderly”; do not use to describe anyone under 75

electrocution

death by electric shock, so don’t say survivors of torture were “electrocuted” during their ordeal – rather that they were given electric shocks

elegy

poem of mourning; **eulogy** speech of praise.

emigrate

leave a country; **immigrate** arrive in one. Hence emigrant and immigrant, emigration and immigration

empathic

not empathetic

employment tribunal

not industrial tribunal

enormity

It might sound a bit like “enormous”, but enormity refers to something monstrous or wicked, such as a massacre, and is not just another word for “big

enquiry

use inquiry

enrol, enrolling, enrolment**en route**

not on route

en suite

two words, whatever estate agents might claim

ensure

make certain; **insure** against risk; but you can assure someone's life by taking out an insurance policy

epilepsy

A person with epilepsy might have a seizure, rather than a fit.

Seizures are epileptic, people are not – we do not define people by their medical condition; so say (if relevant) “Joe Bloggs, who has epilepsy” not “Joe Bloggs, an epileptic”

erupt

burst out; **irrupt** burst

especially or specially?

The former means particularly (“he was especially fond of crab”) or in particular (“this policy is aimed at Ukip voters, especially those in marginal seats”).

The latter means for a special reason (“she made crab sandwiches specially for him”). If a company claims a product has been designed “especially for you”, it hasn't

ethnic

never say ethnic when you mean ethnic minority, which leads to such nonsense as “the constituency has a small ethnic population”

every day

adverb meaning daily: it happens every day

everyday

adjective meaning commonplace: an everyday mistake

evoke or invoke?

If you invoke the spirit of Picasso, you're trying to summon his soul up from the grave; if your paintings evoke the spirit of Picasso, it means their style reminds viewers of that artist's work

F**family-size, fun-size**

not family-sized, fun-sized

far away

adverb; faraway adjective: she moved to a faraway place, and now lives far away

Farsi

language spoken by the majority of Iranians (not Persian)

fast track

noun; **fast-track** verb

fatal

deadly; **fateful** momentous
“The fateful game arrived. It was to prove fatal for Wednesday's hopes of promotion”

Father's Day**fatwa**

an edict, not necessarily a death sentence

fazed

overwhelmed; **phased** stage
“Everything seemed to faze him, but it was just a phase”

fed up with

not fed up of

female genital mutilation

not “female circumcision”

fewer or less?

fewer means smaller in number, eg fewer coins; less means smaller in quantity, eg less money

fiance

male, **fiancee** female; but note divorcee is both male and female

filmgoer, film-maker, film star**first name, forename, given name**

not Christian name.

foetus

not fetus

foot-and-mouth disease**Foreign Office**

abbreviated to FCO not FO, as its official name is Foreign and Commonwealth Office

forever

continually: he is forever changing his mind

for ever

for always: I will love you for ever

for free

avoid: we said police recruits might be forced to work “for free”; it would have been more elegant to say “for nothing”

forgo

go without; past tense forwent, past participle forgone

forego

go before; forego, past tense forewent, past participle foregone (as in “foregone conclusion”)

Former Soviet republics (included in case we receive students / residents from families of origin)

These are:

Armenia adjective **Armenian**

Azerbaijan adjective **Azerbaijani** (though there are ethnic Azeris in, eg, Armenia)

Belarus adjective **Belarusian**

Estonia adjective **Estonian** (Estonia did not join the Commonwealth of Independent States)

Georgia adjective **Georgian**

Kazakhstan adjective **Kazakh**

Kyrgyzstan adjective **Kyrgyz**

Latvia adjective **Latvian** (not in the commonwealth)

Lithuania adjective **Lithuanian** (not in the commonwealth)

Moldova adjective **Moldovan**

Russia adjective **Russian**

Tajikistan adjective **Tajik**

Turkmenistan adjective **Turkmen** (its citizens are Turkmen, singular Turkman)

Ukraine adjective **Ukrainian** (not “the Ukraine”)

Uzbekistan adjective **Uzbek**

freedom of information

But Freedom of Information Act. FoI when abbreviated

free schools

Free schools are outside local authority oversight, not “local authority control”. No schools are directly under local authority control, although local authorities oversee admissions and standards at some schools

fuchsia

a word frequently misspelt (in the Guardian and elsewhere) as “fuschia”; it may help to note that it is named after a botanist called Fuchs

“full-time mother”

(or for that matter “full-time father”) should be avoided, as it implies that parents who go to work aren’t full-time parents

fundraiser, fundraising**G****gaff**

hook or spar, also slang for house; **blow the gaff** give away a secret

gaffe

blunder

gases

plural of gas, but the verb is gasses

gender issues

Our use of language reflects our values, as well as changes in society. Phrases such as career girl or career woman, for example, are outdated (more women have careers than men) and patronising (there is no male equivalent).

So we use actor or comedian for women as well as men, not actress or comedienne (but waiter and waitress are acceptable – at least for the moment); firefighter, not fireman; PC, not WPC (police forces have abandoned the distinction), postal workers, not postmen, etc.

Avoid terms such as businessmen, housewives, male nurse, woman driver, woman (lady!) doctor, etc, which reinforce outdated stereotypes. If you need to use an adjective, it is female and not “woman” in such phrases as female bishops, female MPs, female president.

Use humankind or humanity rather than mankind, a word that, as one of our readers points out, “alienates half the population from their own history”.

Never say “his” to cover men and women: use his or her, or a different construction

gender reassignment
rather than “sex change”

general election

girl
female under 18

glamour
but **glamorous**

gobbledegook
not gobbledygook

godchild, godfather, godmother,
godparents, godson, goddaughter

goody bag, goody-goody, oh goody!
but **goodies**
Google
takes initial cap, even when used as a verb (“I Googled myself”); named after googol, the number 1 followed by 100 zeros

government
lc in all contexts and all countries; not “Lord Browne fended off accusations of being too close to government” – it should be the government.

Like other collective nouns, government can be singular or plural, depending on context

grandad
but granddaughter

Guinness World Records
formerly the Guinness Book of Records

Gypsies
are recognised as an ethnic group under the Race Relations Act, as are Irish Travellers, hence capped up

H

hairbrush, haircut, hairdresser, hairdryer, hairstyle
all one word

hajj
pilgrimage to Mecca; **hajji** Muslim who has made such a pilgrimage

half
No hyphen when used adverbially: you look half dead; half wine, half water; his trousers were at half mast; the scores were level at half time.

Hyphen when used adjectivally: a half-eaten sandwich; a half-cut subeditor; half-time oranges. The boy is six and a half but a six-and-a-half-year-old boy

half-term

Halloween
no apostrophe

handicapped
should not be used to refer to people with disabilities or learning difficulties

Hanukah

hat-trick

hay fever

headed or heading?
The former is most commonly used as past tense (“we headed for the exit”) and the latter as present participle (“we are heading in the right direction”); try not to mix them up – “we are headed in the right direction” is wrong

headteacher
one word, not headmaster, headmistress; but National Association of Head Teachers

hear, hear
exclamation of approval that we have misspelt as “here, here” on more than one occasion

heartbroken, heartfelt, heartsearching, heartwarming
but heart-rending, heart-throb

hiccup
not hiccough

hijab

covering for the head and face worn by some Muslim women

Hindi

language; **Hindu** religion

HIV

a virus, not a disease, but do not call HIV “the Aids virus” or an HIV test an “Aids test”; an HIV-positive man (hyphen) is HIV positive (no hyphen)

homemade**homepage****“honour” killings**

always in quotes to denote the lack of honour

humanity, humankind

not man, mankind

hyperthermia

hot; **hypothermia** cold

I**iMac, iPad, iPhone, iPod, iTunes****immigrate**

to arrive in a country; **emigrate** to leave one
Hence immigrant, immigration, emigrant, emigration

Immigration and Nationality Directorate

may be called “the immigration service”

immune to

not immune from

impinge, impinging**imply or infer?**

To imply is to suggest; to infer is to conclude.

in or on?

in the team (UK), on the team (US).

inadmissible

not -able

incidence

amount, eg a high incidence of incidents

income support, income tax

lowercase

Independent Police Complaints Commission

replaced the Police Complaints Authority

index

plural **indexes**, except for scientific and economic **indices**

indispensable

not indispensable

industrial tribunals

have not existed since 1998, when they became employment tribunals

infer or imply?

to infer is to deduce something from evidence; to imply is to hint at something (and wait for someone to infer it)

inflammable

means the same as **flammable**, which we prefer; the negative is non-flammable

inflammatory

speeches, etc

initials

no spaces or points, whether businesses or individuals, eg WH Smith, AJ Strauss

injunction

the verb is **enjoin**, not “injunct”

Inland Revenue**inner city**

noun two words, adjective hyphenated: inner-city blues

innuendo

plural **innuendoes**

inquiry

not enquiry

inshallah

means “God willing” in Arabic

insidious or invidious?

The former means subtly or gradually harmful (“an insidious disease”); easily confused with the latter, which means likely to arouse resentment (“she put herself in an invidious position”)

install, instalment

instil, instilled, instilling

insure

against risk; **assure** life; **ensure** make certain

intense

extreme; **intensive** thorough

interned

imprisoned; **interred** buried

Internet of Things

abbreviation IoT; also known, but less widely, as Internet of Everything

Interpol

International Criminal Police Organisation

interpreter

works with the spoken word; often confused with **translator**, who works with the written word

into or in to?

If you go into a room or look into something, it's one word; if you call in to complain, listen in to someone's conversation, or go in to see them, it's two.

On to is two words

introducing people

Do not use the following construction to introduce a speaker or a subject: "Prime minister Teresa May said ..." Use the definite article and commas to separate the job from the name, like this: "Teresa May, the prime minister ..." (there is only one person with this specific post).

introductory words

at the start of a sentence such as "However", "Nonetheless", "Instead", should be followed by a comma

Inuit

not Eskimos; an individual is an **Inuk**

invalid

means not valid or of no worth; do not use to refer to disabled or ill people

invariable, invariably

unchanging; often used wrongly to mean hardly ever changing

inveigh

attack; **inveigle** coax

invitation

noun

invite

verb; so you do not send someone an "invite"

Ireland, Irish Republic

not Éire or "Southern Ireland"

iridescent

one R

Irish Travellers

initial caps, as they are recognised as a distinct ethnic group under race relations legislation

Is

as in dotting the Is and crossing the Ts

-ise

not -ize at end of word, eg maximise, synthesise (exception: capsizе)

Islam

means "submission to the will of God".

Muslims should never be referred to as "Mohammedans", as 19th-century writers did. It causes serious offence because they worship God, not the prophet Muhammad.

"Allah" is Arabic for "God". Both words refer to the same concept: there is no major difference between God in the Old Testament and Allah in Islam. Therefore it makes sense to talk about "God" in an Islamic context and to use "Allah" in quotations or for literary effect.

The holy book of Islam is the Qur'an (not Koran)

Islamic

a synonym for the Muslim religion when used as an adjective eg Islamic art. It should not be used to describe people.

Islamic State

at first mention, thereafter Isis. The abbreviation stands for Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant ("al-Sham"), which is why

some people call it Isil. The group was originally al-Qaida in Iraq

Islamist

A person who believes in Islamism, ie, the organisation of government and society in accordance with laws prescribed by Islam. For example, the Justice and Development party (AKP) in Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt are Islamist parties; Islamic State and al-Qaida are Islamist groups, and their members are Islamist militants/fighters/terrorists.

Islamophobia

it's

shortened form of it is or has: it's a big dog, it's been ages since I saw her

its

possessive form of it: the dog is eating its bone

J

Jargon – please avoid where at all possible
Originally jargon was “the inarticulate utterance of birds, or a vocal sound resembling it; twittering, chattering”.

The modern sense – defined as “mode of speech abounding in unfamiliar terms, or peculiar to a particular set of persons, as the language of scholars or philosophers, the terminology of a science or art, or the cant of a class, sect, trade, or profession” (OED) – dates from the 17th century.

Bill Bryson describes jargon thus: “The practice of never calling a spade a spade when you might instead call it a manual earth-restructuring implement”

Jeep
TM

Jehovah's Witness

jewellery

in British English, not jewelry

jibe

(not gibe) taunt

jihad

Used by Muslims to describe three different kinds of struggle: an individual's internal struggle to live out the Muslim faith as well as possible; the struggle to build a good Muslim society; and the struggle to defend Islam, with force if necessary

jihadi

noun (plural jihadis) and adjective

jihadist

noun and adjective

A person who believes in jihadism (not a jihadi), ie, the fundamentalist pursuit of violent jihads to defend the Islamic faith. Use this term when referring to individuals who are not formal members of any organisation, such as Islamic State or al-Qaida. For example, the Charlie Hebdo killers or Woolwich murderers would be referred to as jihadist terrorists.

jobcentres

are run by Jobcentre Plus

jobseeker's allowance

job titles

are all lower case

jokey

not joky

judges

“Judge John Smith said” or “the judge, John Smith, said”
are both fine; “judge John Smith” is wrong.

Note that UK supreme court judges (or justices as they style themselves) are Lord This or Lady That – hence Lady Hale, not “Lady Justice Hale”.

To call her Lady Justice Hale is to demote her to a court of appeal judge – who are (confusingly) Lord Justice This or Lady Justice That, eg Lady Justice Hallett

junior

abbreviate to **Jr** not Jun or Jnr, eg Sammy Davis Jr

juvenile

the Criminal Justice Act 1991 replaced this term with “youth”, and raised the age at which you cease to be one from 17 to 18

K

Ka’bah

cube-shaped shrine in the centre of the great mosque in Mecca towards which all Muslims face in prayer; the shrine is not worshipped but used as the focal point of the worship of God

Kashmir

adjective **Kashmiri**; but **cashmere** fabric

key stage 1, 2

etc (education)

keywords

kibbutz

plural **kibbutzim**

kick-off

noun; **kick off** verb

kickstart

noun or verb

kilograms, kilojoules, kilometres, kilowatts

abbreviate as **kg**, **kJ**, **km**, **kW**

knockout

noun; **knock out** verb

knots

measure of nautical miles per hour; do not say knots per hour

knowhow

knowledgable

Ku Klux Klan

kung fu

L

Labour party

laid-back

He is laid-back, she is a laid-back boss

Lailat al-Miraj

Islamic holy day; **Lailat al-Qadr** Islamic holy day, time for study and prayer

Lake District

or **the Lakes** or **Lakeland**. Note that, with the exception of Bassenthwaite Lake, bodies of water in the Lake District do not have “lake” in their names (eg Buttermere, Derwent Water, Ullswater, Windermere)

last rites

are given, not “read” (although someone might read you your rights if you were being arrested)

layby

plural **laybys**

lay off

does not mean to sack or make redundant, but to send workers home on part pay because of a temporary lack of demand for their product

lay waste

a hurricane can lay waste an island, or lay an island waste, but it does not lay it to waste or lay waste to it (the word comes from the same root as devastate)

leach or leech?

leach (verb): percolate, remove with a percolating liquid
leech (noun): a bloodsucking worm

learned

not learnt

least bad

is the least bad option, rather than “least worst”

led or lead?

In all but the present tense, the verb form is led.

left field, left-field

two words as a noun: “this idea comes out of left field” hyphenated as an adjective: “a left-field idea”

legal highs

are now illegal in the UK, which makes them **novel psychoactive substances (NPSs)**, or for variation you could call them formerly legal highs

legal terms

In England and Wales, in camera is now known as in secret and in chambers in private; a writ is a claim form and a plaintiff a claimant; leave to appeal is permission to appeal. Since the Children Act 1989, access has been known as contact and custody is known as residence; do not use the older terms

lent

past tense of lend; we sometimes misspell it as “leant”

less or fewer?

less means smaller in quantity, eg less money; fewer means smaller in number, eg fewer coins.

letdown, letup

nouns

let down, let up

verbs

LGBT

abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual; it is not normally necessary to spell it out. Other abbreviations exist, including LGBTI (intersex) and LGBTQ (queer), but LGBT is preferred

licence or license?

In British English, licence is the noun and license the verb. So you need a licence to run a licensed bar, or you may need to visit the off-licence

lie

(tell an untruth), past tense lied.
lie (down), past tense lay: he lay there for an hour.
lay (a table, an egg, put something down), past tense laid

lifeguard, lifejacket, lifelong, lifesize**lightening or lightning?**

Your hair may be lightening in colour, but that electrical stuff in the sky is lightning

likable

not likeable

linchpin

not lynchpin

LinkedIn**live stream**

noun; **livestream** verb

loan

noun; the verb is lend

lock-in, lockout

nouns; **lock in, lock out** verbs

logbook, logjam**log in, log on, log out, log off**

verbs

login, logon

nouns (“I’ve forgotten my login/logon”)

longlist, shortlist**longsighted, shortsighted****longstanding, longsuffering****longtime**

adjective, as in longtime companion

look to

is used too often in place of hope to or expect to

looking-glass**loophole**

An unintended ambiguity or inadequacy in a set of rules that is later exploited. Do not use to describe provisions that were intentionally put into legislation

Lords, House of Lords

but **the house**, not the House; **their lordships**

lottery, national lottery

but Lotto and National Lottery Commission

lovable

not loveable

M

mackem

refers both to a person from Sunderland and their accent

magistrates court

no apostrophe

makeover, makeup

(nouns) one word; (verbs) two words: making up is hard to do

manifesto

plural **manifestos**

mankind

humankind or humanity are preferable

manoeuvre, manoeuvring

margarita

cocktail

margherita

pizza

marquis

not marquess, except where it is the correct formal title, eg Marquess of Blandford

mass

lc; mass is celebrated or said, not read

masterful or masterly?

The former means wilful or domineering; the latter means highly competent: "He gave a masterly demonstration of good grammar"

master's

as in "I did my master's at UCL"

mat

floor covering; **matt** non-shiny, as in matt finish; **matte** used to combine images in films

matinee

no accent

mayday

distress signal (from the French "m'aidez!")

May Day

1 May

May, Theresa

with an H; **Mother Teresa** with no H

Mecca

holy city in Saudi Arabia; **mecca** as in "Ashton-under-Lyne is a mecca for tripe-eaters"

medals

British Empire Medal, George Cross, Medal of Honor, Victoria Cross, etc; but Fields medal (official name: International Medal for Outstanding Discoveries in Mathematics)

media

The media, including social media, are plural, so television might be your favourite medium of all the media. A convention of spiritualists, however, would be attended by mediums

medieval

not mediaeval

memento

plural mementoes

memorandum

plural memorandums, not memoranda

mental handicap, mentally handicapped, mentally retarded

do not use: say a person with learning disabilities

mental health

Take care using language about mental health issues. In addition to such clearly offensive and unacceptable expressions as loony, maniac, nutter, psycho and schizo, terms to avoid - because they stereotype and stigmatise - include victim of, suffering from, and afflicted by; "a person with" is clear, accurate and preferable to "a person suffering from".

Terms such as schizophrenic and psychotic should be used only in a medical context: for example never use schizophrenic to mean "in two minds".

Avoid writing "the mentally ill" - say mentally ill people, mental health patients or people with mental health problems

metalwork

metres

should be written out in full, to avoid confusion with million (an obvious exception would be athletics, eg she won the 400m)

mid-60s, mid-90s, etc

Middlesbrough, Teesside

not Middlesborough, Teeside

Middlesbrough, Teesside

not Middlesborough, Teeside

militate or mitigate?

To militate against something is to influence it (his record militated against his early release); to mitigate means to lessen an offence (in mitigation, her counsel argued that she came from a broken home)

millennium development goals

abbreviation MDGs

Morrisons

for the stores (not Morrison or Morrison's), Morrisons Supermarket plc is the name of the company (formerly Wm Morrison); just to make it more confusing, Morrison is a support services company owned by AWG plc (Anglian Water)

Muhammad

Muslims consider Muhammad to be the last of God's prophets, who delivered God's final message. They recognise Moses and Jesus as prophets also.

The above transliteration is our style for the prophet's name and for most Muhammads living in Arab countries, though where someone's preferred spelling is known we respect it, eg Mohamed Al Fayed, Mohamed ElBaradei.

The spelling Mohammed (or variants) is considered archaic by most British Muslims today

multicultural, multimedia, multimillion, multinational, multiparty
but **multi-ethnic**

Mum or mum?

capital M if it's just Mum, eg "Mum was a lovely person"; otherwise lowercase, eg "my mum was a lovely person", "how is your mum?", "she's a hard-working mum", etc

N

naive, naively, naivety

no accent

national curriculum

National Health Service

but **NHS** or **health service** is normally sufficient

National Offender Management Service

formed in 2004 from a merger between the prison and probation services, it moved from the Home Office to the Ministry of Justice in 2007; Noms after first mention (but note that in the US, Noms stands for national outcomes measurement system)

naught

nothing; **nought** the figure 0

nearby one word, whether adjective or adverb: the nearby pub; the pub nearby

nearsighted

negligent

careless; **negligible** slight

nerve-racking

new-build

Newcastle-under-Lyme

hyphens

Newcastle upon Tyne

no hyphens

newspaper titles

the Guardian, the Observer, the New York Times, etc, do not write "the Sun newspaper", etc: people know what you mean

new year

lc; but **New Year's Day, New Year's Eve**

New Year honours list, New Year resolutions

next door

she lives next door (adverb)

nextdoor

she's my nextdoor neighbour (adjective)

Nigerian names

surnames do not exist in the north of Nigeria: a typical name would be Isa Sani Sokoto (Isa the son of Sani who comes from the town of Sokoto); so best to write in full

nightcap, nightdress, nightfall, nightgown, nightshirt

but **night-time**

Nissan

cars; **Nissen** hut

No 10

Downing Street

no doubt that, no question that

are opposites: “There was no doubt that he was lying” means he was lying; “There was no question that he was lying” means he wasn’t; the two are routinely confused

“northern powerhouse”

use in quotes at first mention, then northern powerhouse at subsequent mentions

notebook, notepaper

not-for-profit

as an adjective, as in “not-for-profit organisation”

O

obliged

not “obligated”

obtuse

means “mentally slow or emotionally insensitive” (Collins); often confused with abstruse (hard to understand) or obscure

occurred

two Rs

off-licence

Oh not O

except in phrases of invocation or hymn titles, eg O God, Our Help

online

on to not onto

oriented, disoriented

not orientated, disorientated

outgrow, outgun, outmanoeuvre

outpatient

P

palate, palette or pallet?

The palate is the roof of the mouth or sense of taste; an artist mixes paint on a palette; a pallet is one of those wooden frames you see on a forklift truck

panelled, panelling, panellist

two Ls

papier-mache

no accents

parallel, paralleled

Paralympic Games

or just Paralympics, or the Games

paraphernalia

takes a singular verb: I save all the paraphernalia that accompanies every box set

parent-teacher association

abbreviation PTA

parents

Partners have children with, not by, a woman ie Joe Bloggs has three children with his wife, Jo, not three children by Jo

parliamentary Labour party

PLP after first mention

partially or partly?

Use partial or partially to mean the opposite of impartial; otherwise partly is generally preferable: “I may be being partial, but booking me to stay in a partly built hotel merits a refund”

patients

are discharged from hospital, not released

payback, paycheck, payday, payoff, payout, payslip, paywall

PhD

pixelated

an image divided into pixels, the basic unit of representation on a television or computer screen, or to display a person or object in pixels to disguise their identity

planets

take initial cap: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune (note that Pluto is now classified as a dwarf planet, along with Ceres and Eris); the sun and the Earth's moon are lc, but named moons are capped up,: Europa, Io, etc

playwright

although they write

Play-Doh

TM but you can say play-dough

play down

although “downplay” is becoming increasingly popular

pleaded

not pled

police ranks

Use abbreviation at first mention, then just surname, eg DCI Jane Tennison, thereafter Tennison.

Other abbreviations: PC (for both male and female police constables), Sgt, DS (Detective Sergeant), Insp, DI, Ch Insp, DCI, Supt, Ch Supt, Det Supt (Detective Superintendent), DCS.

Do not abbreviate commissioner, commander, etc

pore or pour?

You might pore over the style guide after pouring a cup of coffee

Portakabin, Portaloo

TM; say portable building, portable toilets, or you are certain to receive a letter from the Portakabin lawyers pointing out the error of your ways

postal workers

not postmen

postcode**postgraduate****Post Office**

cap up the organisation, but you buy stamps in a post office or sub-post office

pound

in text, symbol £ only when figures are used (Britain saves the pound; Oliver saved £1; pound (weight) abbreviates to lb, eg 2lb

practice

noun; **practise** verb

precede

go before; **proceed** go ahead

precipitate

sudden; **precipitous** steep

prevaricate or procrastinate?

The former, which means speaking or acting with intent to deceive, is often confused with the latter, which means putting something off.

principal or principle? The former is the first in order of importance, or the leader of an organisation: Nicola is the school principal etc. The latter is a fundamental truth: ‘the principle of the thing...’

pros and cons**protester**

not protestor

psychopathic/psychotic

A psychopath is a person with a personality disorder characterised by a tendency to commit antisocial and sometimes violent acts, and an inability to feel guilty about them; a person with psychosis has a mental disorder in which their contact with reality is highly distorted

publicly

not publically

purposely

on purpose; **purposefully** with determination

pyjamas

not pajamas

Q

quango

plural quangos; short for quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation, but no need to spell out

Queen, the

if it is necessary to say so, she is Her Majesty or HM, never HRH

Queen's birthday honours list

Queen's speech

queueing

not queuing

quite

"I'm quite tired" means "I'm fairly tired."

"Have you quite finished?" means "have you completely finished?" and comes with a built-in note of irritation.

"Quite!" means "I agree!"

Qur'an

holy book of Islam (not Koran); regarded as the word of God, having been recited by the prophet Muhammad, so in the eyes of Muslims it is wrong to suggest that the prophet "wrote" the Qur'an

R

racial terminology

A person's race should only be included if relevant to the story. The words black and Asian should not be used as nouns, but as adjectives: black people rather than "blacks", an Asian woman rather than "an Asian", etc.

Say African-Caribbean rather than Afro-Caribbean.

Use the word "immigrant" with great care, not only because it is often incorrectly used to describe people who were born in Britain, but also because it has been used negatively for so many years. If relevant, say people are "children of immigrants", not "second-generation immigrants"

rack or wrack?

You rack your brains, face rack and ruin, and are racked with guilt, shame or pain; wrack is seaweed

rackets

not racquets, except in club titles

rack or wrack?

You rack your brains, face rack and ruin, and are racked with guilt, shame or pain; wrack is seaweed

rackets

not racquets, except in club titles

raft

something Huck Finn and Jim were on when they floated down the river; do not say "a raft of measures"

Rainbows

for girls from five (four in Northern Ireland) to seven, at which point they may become Brownies

raincoat, rainfall, rainproof, rainwater but **rain check**

Ramadan

month of fasting for Muslims

rarefy, rarefied

rateable

re/re-

Use re- (with hyphen) when followed by the vowels e or u (not pronounced as "yu"): eg re-entry, re-examine, re-urge.

Use re (no hyphen) when followed by the vowels a, i, o or u (pronounced as "yu"), or any consonant: eg rearm, rearrange, reassemble, reiterate, reorder, reread, reuse, rebuild, reconsider, retweet.

Exceptions (where confusion with another word would arise): re-cover/recover, re-creation/recreation, re-form/reform, re-sent/resent, re-sign/resign

rebut, refute or repudiate?

To rebut is to contest or deny something; to refute is to prove that it's wrong. So when a politician claims to have refuted an allegation, what they mean is rebut. To repudiate someone is to disown them.

recourse, resource or resort?

You might have recourse to your mother to comfort you when your hamster dies. She would, therefore, be a resource you could turn to. As a last resort, you might resort to your brother as well

recur

not reoccur

redundancy

Strictly (and in legal terms) jobs, rather than people, are made redundant.

referendum

plural referendums, not referenda

re-form

to form again

reform

to change for the better.

refugee

According to the Refugee Council, a refugee is defined as “a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”.

The Refugee convention of 1951 is the key legal document in defining who is a refugee, their rights and the legal obligations of states towards refugees

register office

not registry office

regrettably

unfortunately; **regretfully** with regret

reign or rein?

A ruler reigns, but a horse is reined in

repellant

noun, **repellent** adjective: you fight repellent insects with an insect repellent

reported speech

When a comment in the present tense is reported, use past tense: “She said: ‘I **like** chocolate’” (present tense) becomes in reported speech “she said she **liked** chocolate”.

When a comment in the past tense is reported, use “had” (past perfect tense): “She said: ‘I **ate** too much chocolate’” (past tense) becomes in reported speech “she said she **had eaten** too much chocolate” (not “she said she ate too much chocolate”).

Once it has been established who is speaking, there is no need to keep attributing, so long as you stick to the past tense: “Alex said he would vote Labour. There was no alternative. It was the only truly progressive party,” etc

Respite not rest bite**reticent**

unwilling to speak; do not confuse with reluctant,

the Rev

at first mention, thereafter use courtesy title: eg the Rev Joan Smith, subsequently Ms Smith if honorific is needed; never say “Reverend Smith”, “the Reverend Smith” or “Rev Smith”

Revenue & Customs

or **HMRC**: either is acceptable shorthand for HM Revenue and Customs, formed in 2005 from a merger of the Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise

ricochet, ricocheted, ricocheting**ridden, riddled or raddled?**

crime-ridden, disease-ridden; riddled with errors, riddled with bullets; a raddled appearance

riffle

to flick through a book, newspaper or magazine; often confused with **rifle**, to search or ransack and steal from, eg rifle goods from a shop

ringfence, ringtone

rob

you rob a person or a bank, using force or the threat of violence; but you **steal** a car or a bag of money

roofs

plural of roof (not rooves)

roundtable

(adjective); **round table** (noun): you might hold roundtable discussions at a round table

round up

verb; **roundup** noun

routeing or routing?

They are routeing buses through the city centre after the routing of the protesters

Royal Courts of Justice**royal family****Royal Mail**

for the company, not “the Royal Mail”

run off, run up

verbs

runoff, run-up

nouns

S**saccharin**

noun; **saccharine** adjective

sacrilegious

not sacreligious

St James’ Park

home of Newcastle United

St John Ambulance

not St John’s and no longer “Brigade”

Samaritans

the organisation has dropped “the” from its name

same-sex marriage

or **equal marriage rights** rather than “gay marriage”

sanction

To sanction (verb) something is to approve it; to impose sanctions (noun) is to stop something you disapprove of. So politicians might sanction (permit) the use of sanctions (forbidding) trade with a country they don’t, for the moment, happen to like very much.

Definitions of “sanction” as a verb include ratify, confirm, permit, authorise and encourage. Hence expressions such as “sanctioned by common sense” and “sanctioned by usage”.

The Department for Work and Pensions, confusingly, says it “sanctions” people to mean it imposes sanctions on or penalises them. We should not use it in this sense

Satan

but **satanist, satanism**

satnav**Sats**

standard assessment tasks

SATs

scholastic aptitude tests (in the US, where they are pronounced as individual letters)

Satan

but **satanist, satanism**

satnav**Sats**

standard assessment tasks

SATs

scholastic aptitude tests (in the US, where they are pronounced as individual letters)

schoolboy, schoolchildren, schoolgirl, schoolroom, schoolteacher

schools

if in full, like this: Thornhill Park school, Sunderland; Aycliffe school, Newton Aycliffe, Thornbeck college, etc;

school years

year 2, year 10, key stage 1, etc

Scotland Office

not Scottish Office

Scottish government

Scottish parliament

its members are MSPs

Scouts

not “Boy Scouts” (in the UK, at least); the organisation is the Scout Association

scratchcard, smartcard, swipecard

sea level, sea sickness

but **seaplane, seaport, seashore, seaside, seaweed**

search engine optimisation (SEO)

How to increase traffic to your website by ensuring that your content shows up prominently in Google and other online search engines, for example by including in headlines key terms that people are most likely to search for. To help, you can monitor such things as hot topics on Google and what is trending on Twitter

seasons

spring, summer, autumn, winter are lowercase

seatbelt

second hand

on a watch; but **secondhand** goods

sell-off, sellout

noun

sell off, sell out

verb

Sellotape

TM; call it sticky tape

semicolon

Used correctly (which occasionally we do), the semicolon is a very elegant compromise between a full stop (too much) and a comma (not enough). This sentence, from a column by David McKie, illustrates beautifully how it's done: “Some reporters were brilliant; others were less so.”

sections, schedules, subsections

to acts of parliament thus: section 10 (3), schedule 7, etc. An act is divided into numbered sections, which sometimes introduced a schedule placed at the end of the act.

Note that schedules have paragraphs and sub-paragraphs, not sections and sub-sections

Serious Organised Crime Agency

Soca after first mention

serves to

adds nothing to a phrase such as “serves to underline”; replace with “underlines”

sex offender register

abbreviation, normally sufficient, of the Violent and Sex Offender Register (Visor), a database set up by the Sexual Offences Act 2003

sexual abuse

unwanted sexual behaviour, or molestation. Do not use ‘sex abuse’ as the term ‘sex’ can imply consent

sexual orientation

is generally more accurate and appropriate than “sexual preference”

shall or will?

In practice, there is very little difference these days. Use the former for emphasis (“you *shall* go to the ball”) and don't worry too much. They seem to get by quite happily in the United States hardly bothering with “shall” at all

side-effects

signoff

noun; **sign off** verb

Sikh names

Singh means a lion and Kaur a princess. Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave Singh as a last name to all Sikh men and Kaur to all Sikh women to eliminate discrimination based on family name, which denoted which caste someone belonged to.

Over time, many Sikh families have reverted to using their family name, but have maintained Singh and Kaur as middle names; in such cases, include the full name at first mention, thereafter surname only

silicon

computer chips; **silicone** breast implants – we have been known to confuse the two, as in “Silicone Valley”

shrank, shrunk

shrank, not shrunk, is the past tense of shrink, except in the film title Honey, I Shrunk the Kids (and perhaps the occasional piece of wordplay based on it); shrunk is the past participle (the kids had shrunk) or what is sometimes known as the present perfect form (Honey, I've shrunk the kids)

ski, skis, skier, skied, skiing

smuggling or trafficking?

There are three key differences between people smuggling and trafficking.

1 Exploitation: smugglers are paid by people to take them across borders, after which the transaction ends; traffickers bring them into a situation of exploitation and profit from their abuse in the form of forced labour or prostitution.

2 Consent: migrants usually consent to be smuggled; a trafficked person does not (or their “consent” is meaningless because they have been coerced).

3 Borders: smuggling always takes place across international borders; trafficking does not (you can be trafficked, say, from Rochdale to Rotherham)

socialism, socialist

lc unless name of a party, eg Socialist Workers party

social media

are plural

social security benefits

all lc, income support, working tax credit, etc

span of years

2010-12 or from 2010-12; but between 2010 and 2012, not “between 2010-12”

spastic

the Spastics Society, which supports disabled people and in particular those with cerebral palsy, changed its name to Scope in 1994

spellchecker

if you use one, read through your work afterwards: a graphic on a paper's front page was rendered nonsensical when a spellcheck turned the species *Aquila adalberti* into “alleyway adalberti”, while *Prunella modularis* became “pronely modularise”; also note that most use American English spellings

spelled or spelt?

spelled is the past tense, spelt is the past participle; she spelled it out for him: “the word is spelt like this”

spicy

not spicey

spilled or spilt?

spilled is the past tense, spilt is the past participle; she spilled the beans: the beans were all spilt

spoiled or spoilt?

spoiled is the past tense, spoilt is the past participle; she spoiled her son: in fact he was a spoilt brat

spokesman, spokeswoman

a quote may be attributed to the organisation, eg “The AA said ...”, but if necessary say spokesman or spokeswoman rather than spokesperson (assuming they have actually spoken to you)

sprang or sprung?

sprang is the past tense of spring; sprung is the past participle.

square brackets

are used for interpolated words in quotations, eg David Cameron said: “Theresa [May] has my full support.”

stadium

plural **stadiums**, not stadia

staff are plural – but we prefer you to say ‘people’ or ‘dear all’ for warmth and personalisation

standoff

standout, standup

adjectives, as in a standup comedian performing a standout standup routine; nouns, as in one standout was a standup performing standup

start up

verb; **startup** noun (as in business startup); **star tup** top-performing ram

stationary

motionless; **stationery** writing materials; also used by some signwriters to mean stationary

stepfamily, stepfather, stepmother etc, but **step-parents**.

storey

plural storeys (buildings); **story** plural stories (tales)

straight away, straightforward, home straight, final straight

straitjacket, strait-laced, Dire Straits

suicide

Say that someone killed him or herself rather than “committed suicide”; suicide has not been a crime in the UK for many years and this old-fashioned term can cause unnecessary further distress to families who have been bereaved in this way.

Suicide is acceptable if analysing suicide rates among young adults with autism, etc.

supersede

not supercede

systematic

methodical

systemic

relating to a system

T

takeoff

noun; **take off** verb

take-up

noun; **take up** verb

tax avoidance

is legal; tax evasion is illegal

taxi, taxiing

of aircraft

taxpayer

but **council tax payer**

teabag, teacup, teapot, teaspoon

all one word

teaching excellence framework (Tef)

Likewise, research excellence framework (Ref)

team-mate

Teesside

terrace houses

not terraced

that or which?

The traditional definition is that “that” defines and “which” informs (gives extra information), as in:

“This is the house that Jack built; but this house, which John built, is falling down.”

their, there and they’re

their is the possessive case of the pronoun **they**, as in: **they** left **their** mobile phones at home.”

There is also used as a pronoun introducing a sentence or clause: **there** is still hope.

Or could be to indicate a location: over **there**.

they’re is a contraction of the words **they** and are, as in: **they’re** mastering the differences between their, there and they’re.

theirs and there’s

theirs has no apostrophe and means belonging to more than one person: that car is theirs.

There’s is a contracted form of there is: there’s a place for us

then

no hyphen in such phrases as “the then chief executive ”

thinktank

one word

throw, throes

You might make a last throw of the dice, but if you are in your last throes, your situation is considerably more serious

tipoff

one word as a noun

titillate

mildly excite; **titivate** tidy up.

to-ing and fro-ing**tomato**

plural tomatoes

tonne

not ton (but note the above): the metric tonne is 1,000kg (2,204.62lb), the British ton is 2,240lb, and the US ton is 2,000lb; usually there is no need to convert.

to, too and two

To is a preposition with meaning toward and until, and conveys the reason for which something can happen:

Go over there to do your work, we’re open from 5 to 10pm.

too is an adverb that can mean excessively or also / as well as.

He’s coming tonight too but is too tired to stay until the end.

two is pronounced the same as **to** and **too**, but it can't be used instead of either of them because it's a number.

Torah, the**tornado**

plural tornadoes (storm); **Tornado** plural Tornados (aircraft)

tortuous or torturous?

A long and winding road is tortuous. An experience involving pain or suffering might be described as torturous

Tory party**Tourette syndrome****transgender, trans**

Where relevant, use transgender at first mention, thereafter trans, and only as an adjective: transgender person, trans person; never “transgendered person” or “a transgender”

translator

works with the written word; often confused with **interpreter**, who works with the spoken word

Travellers

capped: they are recognised as an ethnic group under the Race Relations Act; note new age travellers (l/c)

Treasury, the

(officially HM Treasury)

troubleshooter, troubleshooting**T-shirt**

not tee-shirt

21st century

but hyphenate if adjectival: newspapers of the 21st century, 21st-century newspapers

Twitter

users, also known as tweeters (and sometimes twitterers, but not tweeps, please), spend much of their time sending tweets, also known as tweeting or twittering

twofold**U****uber**

no accent if you are saying something like uber-hip (although uber in this sense is uber-used); use the umlaut if you are quoting German

Uber

app-based taxi company

Ucas

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

Unicef

United Nations Children's Fund

unbiased**uncharted**

not unchartered

unchristian**uncooperative****under-**

prefixes are normally one word, eg underachieve, underact, underage, undercover, underdeveloped, undermanned, underprivileged, undersea, undersecretary, undersigned, undervalue, underweight

under way**unfollow, unfriend**

is what you do to people you don't like on, respectively, Twitter and Facebook

uninterested

means not taking an interest; not synonymous with **disinterested**, which means unbiased, objective

unmistakable

upbeat, upfront, upgrade, upstage, uptight but **upside down**

up to date
but in an up-to-date fashion

usable
not useable

used
He used to do something, not he did use to do something and certainly not he did used to do something (double imperfect);

U-turn

V**V**

for versus, not vs: England v Australia, Rochdale v Sheffield Wednesday, etc

vagina or vulva?

The vagina is an internal organ, the muscular tubular organ that connects the genitals to the uterus; not the same thing as the vulva, the female genitals.

Valentine's Day**vapour**

but vaporise

venal

open to bribery

venial

easily forgiven

venerable

worthy of reverence, not just old

verdicts

recorded by coroners, returned by inquest juries

veto, vetoes, vetoed, vetoing**vicar**

a cleric of the Anglican church (which also has rectors and curates, etc), not of any other denomination.

vice versa**voiceover****W****waiver or waver?**

To waive is to relinquish a claim or right, as in the much used headline "Britannia waives the rules". The associated noun is waiver, which can lead to confusion with waver, meaning to hesitate (or a person waving).

Wales Office

not Welsh Office

war crime, war dance, war game, war zone but **warhead, warhorse, warlord, warpath, warship, wartime**

washout

noun; **wash out** verb

wastewater, rainwater

but flood water, flood waters

watchdog, watchmaker, watchword

watercolour, watercourse, watermark, waterproof, waterskiing, waterworks

weave (fabric)

past tense wove, past participle woven.

Also applies to things like speeches - his words were woven throughout

weave (from side to side)

past tense weaved, past participle weaved, as in "Cameron dodged and weaved"

web, webpage, website, world wide web

wellbeing

West Lothian question

asks why MPs from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are able to vote on policies that will apply in England but, because of devolution, will not apply in their own constituencies

whence

means "where from", so don't write "from whence"

whereabouts

singular: her whereabouts is not known

while

not whilst

whisky, whiskey

scotch whisky, or simply scotch, plural whiskies

Irish and American whiskey, plural whiskeys

whistleblower

white paper

wifi

not Wi-Fi

winter, wintry

wipeout noun; **wipe out** verb

witchcraft

but **witch-doctor, witch-hunt**

woman, women

are nouns, not adjectives, so say female president, female MPs etc rather than "woman president", "women MPs"

worldview

worldwide

X

Xbox

xenophobe, xenophobia, xenophobic

Xerox

TM; say photocopy

Xmas

Use Christmas instead

x-ray

Y

yearbook

yesses and noes

yoghurt

yours

no apostrophe

Z

-ze

endings: use -se, even if this upsets your (American) spellchecker, eg emphasise, realise; but capsize

zero

plural zeros; but zeroes in on

zero-hours contracts

zigzag

no hyphen

north east
autism society

North East Autism Society

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