



The rules of the English language are wonderfully flexible in some respects and what is the right approach for one person is totally the wrong approach for another – also the law, for example, has certain style conventions that are not necessarily appropriate for publication in a magazine or newspaper.

Each publication will have their own style which you can pick up from reading them; some may even have their own style guides which they can send you.

Below are some of the rules that we work to, with a focus on legal style. If you want to take this further, *The Guardian* has its style guide online [here](#), while *The Economist* publishes its well-regarded style guide online [here](#).

### **Acronyms**

An acronym need not be included if it is not actually used again in the text. If the acronym is only to be used once or twice more, then generally try to avoid using it at all.

Certain acronyms are so well known that they can be used without explanation, eg EU, NHS, NATO, USA

### **Capitals**

Keep to a minimum and only for proper names that really require it. If the name of a document has every word capitalised, then only keep the first word capitalised.

Titles are capitalised where the office-holder is named, but otherwise not: Prime Minister David Cameron; the prime minister or (in the legal world) District Judge Smith; the district judge said...

References to the government and the judiciary (and judges collectively) are lower case.

### **Case citations**

- There should be full case citations. The case name goes in italics. Most will look like this: *Smith v Jones* [2010] EWCA Civ 123.
- *Times* law reports are cited thus: *Smith v Jones* [2010] *The Times*, 7 June
- Where the citation includes a volume number that is clearly continues over several years (meaning the volume number is what you need rather than the year, eg 285 BCAC), then the date is in round brackets. Note that All England Reports have volume numbers (eg 2 All ER) but that they start at 1 every year and so you use square brackets.
- Where more than one citation is used for a case, separate them with commas, not semi-colons.
- NB it is *Smith v Jones*, not *Smith v. Jones*.

### **Citing legislation**

- The provision is contained in section 1 of the Citing Legislation Act 2008.
- NB section 29, not s.29 or Section 29 (unless at the start of a sentence, obviously)

## **Civil Procedure Rules**

Spell out in full first time. Parts of the CPR are lower case – eg, CPR part 45.

## **Contractions**

Outside of quotes, we generally replace 'don't' with 'do not' etc, unless the sense demands it being kept in.

## **Courts**

The higher courts are upper case: UK Supreme Court, Court of Appeal (nb but "the appeal court" is lower case), High Court, Crown Court.

The lower courts are lower case: county court, magistrates' court (note the apostrophe), unless you are talking about a specific court, eg Barnet Magistrates' Court.

## **Currency**

If mentioning a foreign currency, convert it to sterling in brackets after the first mention; there is no need to keep doing it.

## **Dates**

1 June 2010, not 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010 or June 1 2010.

## **eg, ie**

We're not a great fan; we prefer 'for example' and 'that is'.

## **Ellipsis**

To denote missing words. Three dots, then a space: He said: "Mr Bloggs had bought... a big television."

## **Fee-earner**

... is hyphenated

## **Footnotes**

Do not use under any circumstances unless it is an academic publication where they are the norm. Include the information in the body of the text if it is really useful, or just delete it altogether.

## **Hyphens**

After-the-event (ATE), before-the-event (BTE), fee-earner

Compound adjectives: high-quality service, low-level worker

## **Judgment/judgement**

A court hands down a judgment. A person shows judgement.

When quoting from a judgment, do not cite the relevant paragraph unless the circumstance demands it.

## **Latin phrases**

Legal doctrines eg. *Res gestae* should be italicised. More common phrases, eg. *inter alia*, should not.

## **Lists**

Unless there is good reason to use numbers or letters, use bullet points. A semi-colon should go at the end of each line, and there should be an 'and' at the end of the penultimate line after the semi-colon.

The first letter of each line is capitalised where each point is largely self-contained, but need not be when it's just effectively a long paragraph broken up into bullet points to be made more readable.

### **Numbers**

- One to nine is spelt out unless it is a percentage or section of an Act; use numbers from 10 onwards.
- Go to one decimal place if the number is less than 10; otherwise round up or down.
- We do not spell out million and billion – thus £1m/£1bn
- Use commas in the thousands, eg 1,234.

### **Percentages**

Use the % symbol.

### **Publications**

The formal name of a publication should go in italics.

### **Quotation marks**

We use double quotes. A quote within a quote is single quote marks.

Where the full sentence is a quote, then the final quotation mark goes outside the full stop; otherwise it is inside.

Where a quote runs over more than one paragraph, each paragraph starts with a double quote, but only the final paragraph has one at the end.

### **Singular and plural**

Bloggs & Co HAS opened a new office, not 'have'.

### **Technology words**

E-mail, online, Internet

### **Value added tax**

VAT