UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
STYLE GUIDE

UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Michaelmas term 2014

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
STYLE GUIDE

Contents

Introduction

The Oxford University Style Guide aims to provide a guide to writing and formatting documents written by staff on behalf of the University (or one of its constituent departments etc). It is part of the University's branding toolkit (**www.ox.ac.uk/branding_toolkit**) which enables the University's formal documentation to be presented consistently across all communications.

The style guide is not intended for public or external use, and does not purport to compete with OUP's professional writing guides and dictionaries.

Objectives of the style guide

We have three main objectives in writing this style guide:

- to provide an all-purpose guide to consistent presentation for University staff in written communications
- to review the guide at least once a year, ensuring that it properly reflects modern usage and is fit for purpose, and to update it as required
- as part of the review process, to invite proposals from members of the University who disagree with any existing guidance, and to act as an arbiter on those cases.

How the guide is arranged

The style guide is intended to be read as an interactive PDF, where it can be cross-referenced. However, the PDF can be printed if preferred for ease of reference.

If we update the style guide we will highlight on the main webpage (**www.ox.ac.uk/styleguide**) whether anything has changed as well as changing the term listed on the front cover.

How to use the guide
- search for a specific term (such as *semicolon*)
- browse through a section (such as **Punctuation**)

What is/is not included in the style guide

The guide does not tell you how to write. We aim to help you write correctly, and to encourage consistency across the University's written communications.

Quick reference guide

The general rule
If there are multiple (correct) ways of doing something, choose the one which uses the least space and the least ink. For instance:

- close up spaces and don't use full stops in abbreviations (eg 6pm)
- use lower case wherever possible
- only write out numbers up to ten and use figures for 11 onwards.

University of Oxford or Oxford University?
These terms are interchangeable and can either be alternated for variety or kept the same for consistency.

University branding information
Other information on University branding, including the use of the logo, can be found online at **www.ox.ac.uk/branding_toolkit**.

Queries
If you have any queries about using this guide, please contact:

Public Affairs Directorate
University of Oxford
Wellington Square
Oxford OX1 2JD

gazette@admin.ox.ac.uk

Abbreviations, contractions and acronyms

General rule
Don't use full stops after any abbreviations, contractions or acronyms and close up space between letters.

Abbreviations
These are formed by omitting letters from the end of a word.

✅ Medical Sciences → Med Sci

✅ Doctorate of Philosophy → DPhil

✅ ante meridiem → am

✅ post meridiem → pm

Contractions
These are formed by omitting letters from the middle of a word.

✅ Mister → Mr

✅ Doctor → Dr

✅ The Reverend → The Revd

✅ Saint → St

✅ Street → St

Acronyms
These are formed from the initial letters of words (whether the result is pronounceable as a word or as a series of letters) and should be written as a single string of upper-case letters.

✅ British Broadcasting Corporation → BBC

✅ Master of Arts → MA

✅ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome → AIDS

✅ Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences → MPLS

✅ Planning and Resource Allocation Committee → PRAC

✅ Pro-Vice-Chancellor → PVC

✅ Portable Document Format → PDF

When using an acronym that may be unfamiliar to your readers, spell it out in full the first time it is mentioned, with the acronym following in brackets; thereafter, use the acronym alone.

✅ **The decision was made by the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee (PRAC). There are several meetings of PRAC every term.**

Specific abbreviations

ampersands
Ampersands should only be used if they are part of official titles or names. Otherwise, spell out 'and'.

> ✅ Johnson & Johnson

> ✅ Uehiro Foundation on Ethics and Education

people's initials
Use a space to separate each initial.

> ✅ J R R Tolkien

> ✅ C S Lewis

measurements
When discussing large numbers in text, it is fine to use k/m/bn as shorter ways of spelling out 1,000/1,000,000/1,000,000,000 (or writing out 'one thousand'/'one million'/'one billion'), as long as you are consistent throughout the document. For multiple millions/billions you can use a mixture of words and numbers (eg 7 million, 8bn); again, ensure you are consistent throughout.

names of universities, degrees etc
See **Names and titles** for details.

Latin abbreviations
If you are using Latin abbreviations, make sure you know what they mean and when to use them. Do not use full stops after them and don't italicise them – see the **Highlighting/emphasising text** section for when to italicise.

etc [*et cetera*] – means 'and the rest'; use to indicate the continuation of a list

> ✅ Oxford offers many language courses: Russian, French, Spanish etc
> [the list could continue with the other language courses offered].

eg [*exempli gratia*] – means 'for example' or 'such as'; use with examples which are not exhaustive (and do not follow with a comma)

> ✅ Oxford offers many language courses, eg Russian, French, Spanish
> [those are some, but not all, of the language courses offered].

ie [*id est*] – means 'that is'; use with definitions or lists which are exhaustive (and do not follow with a comma)

> ✅ Catch a Blackbird Leys bus, ie numbers 1, 5 or 12
> [those are the only buses which go to Blackbird Leys].

ibid [*ibidem*] – means 'in the same place'; use when making a subsequent reference/citation to a publication or other source mentioned in the immediately preceding note (ie no references to anything else have appeared in between)

> ✅ For a fuller explanation of telepathy, see Brown [*Speaking with the Mind*, Chicago (1945) p125]; Brown also gives further information on cats and telepathy [ibid, p229].

Capitalisation

General rule

Do **not** use a capital letter unless it is absolutely required.

Specific words

academic terms at Oxford

Capitalise the name but not the word 'term'.

> ✅ The Michaelmas term begins in October.

> ✅ The coldest part of the year usually falls in Hilary term.

> ✅ Finals take place in Trinity term.

If abbreviating term names, use MT, HT and TT.

> ✅ The post is vacant from MT 2014 until TT 2015.

Chancellor

Always capitalise when referring to the Chancellor of the University.

> ✅ Chris Patten is the Chancellor of the University.

> ✅ The University has had 192 Chancellors since 1224.

college

Capitalise only when used as part of the title of a college, not when referring to an institution without using its full name.

> ✅ Exeter College was founded in 1314. The college is one of the oldest in Oxford.

> ❌ Exeter College was founded in 1314. The College is one of the oldest in Oxford.

collegiate University

Capitalise 'University' but not 'collegiate'.

> ✅ We are seeking opinions from all members of the collegiate University.

department

Capitalise only when used as part of the title of a department, not when referring to a department without using its full name.

> ✅ The Department of Computer Science was previously known as the Oxford University Computing Laboratory. Both undergraduates and postgraduates study in this department.

> ✅ The Department for Work and Pensions has to make significant cuts this year, as do many government departments.

division

Capitalise only when used as part of the title of a division, not when referring to a division without using its full name.

> ✅ There are four academic divisions of the University: Humanities, Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences, Medical Sciences and Social Sciences.

> ✅ The Medical Sciences Division is based mainly in Headington. The division's head is Alastair Buchan.

faculty

Capitalise only when used as part of the title of a faculty, not when referring to a faculty without using its full name.

> ✅ The Faculty of English is based in Manor Road. The faculty's phone number is 271055.

fellow

Capitalise only when used as part of an academic's formal title, not when referring to fellows in general.

> ✅ There are ten Fifty-Pound Fellows at All Souls.

> ✅ At its foundation, provision was made at All Souls for 40 fellows.

> ❌ At its foundation, provision was made at All Souls for 40 Fellows.

government

Never capitalise, whether referring to a specific country's government or the concept of a government.

> ✅ The current British government is a coalition.

names with prefixes

Follow the preference of the individual, if known; if not, use lower case for the prefix. Alphabetise by the prefix.

> ✅ Dick Van Dyke is a star of daytime TV.

> ✅ Jan van Eyck painted in the 15th century.

professor

Capitalise only when used as part of an academic's formal title, not when referring to professors in general.

> ✅ It is common for Oxford professors to publish their works in learned journals.

> ✅ *The Omega Solution* is the latest contribution to research in the field by Professor Stephanie Archibold.

Reverend

Capitalise both 'Reverend' and 'The' (as well as other parts of the title).

> ✅ My tutor is The Reverend John Smith/The Very Reverend John Smith.

small caps

Do not use small caps, even for BC and AD.

> ✅ Egypt's Old Kingdom period began *c*2700 BC.

tutor

Capitalise only when used as part of an academic's formal title, not when referring to tutors in general.

> ✅ The Oxford tutorial system creates strong ties between students and their tutors.

> ✅ Dr Obadiah Braithwaite is the Tutor in Embroidery at Magdalen.

university

Capitalise only when used as part of the title of a university or when referring to the University of Oxford (both when 'University' is used as a noun and when it is used as an adjective).

> ✅ Oxford University is a large employer. The University has ~10,000 staff members.

> ✅ The University has four academic divisions.

> ✅ The event is open to all members of the collegiate University.

> ✅ The largest University division is Medical Sciences.

> ✅ Funding for universities has been cut recently.

> ✅ She attended the University of Liverpool to study English. It's a well-respected university and course.

Titles

People
See **Names and titles** for details.

Books/films/songs/games etc
Capitalise the first word of the title, and all words within the title except articles (a/an/the), prepositions (to/on/for etc) and conjunctions (but/and/or etc). See **Highlighting/emphasising text** for details on italicising and **Punctuation** for quotation mark advice.

> ✅ *The Last Mohican*

> ✅ *Far from the Madding Crowd*

> ✅ *Gone with the Wind*

> ✅ *World of Warcraft*

> ✅ *Grand Theft Auto V*

> ✅ 'Always Look on the Bright Side of Life'

> ❌ 'Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life'

Subtitles

Capitalise subtitles only if the original title is printed in that way.

> ✅ *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers, or The Roly-Poly Pudding*

> ✅ *Dr Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*

Headlines, journal articles, chapter titles and lecture titles

Only capitalise the first word, any proper nouns and the first word following a full stop/question mark/exclamation mark.

> ✅ 'Who speaks for climate? Making sense of media reporting on climate change'

> ✅ Rock rafts could be 'cradle of life'

> ✅ 'Multiplicity of data in trial reports and the reliability of meta-analyses: empirical study'

Webpages

See **Miscellaneous** for advice on capitalisation of URLs, email addresses etc.

Numbers

How to write numbers

Spell out whole-number words for one to ten; use figures for numbers above ten.

> ✅ There were two people in the queue ahead of me, and six behind me.

> ✅ I need to buy Christmas presents for 12 people this year.

Use a combination of a figure and a word for very large round numbers (such as multiple millions/billions etc), or abbreviate it to 'm', 'bn' etc.

> ✅ The population of the earth is now 7 billion people.

> ✅ The population of the earth is now 7bn people.

> ✅ The budget came in at just under £2m.

If there are a lot of figures in a paragraph or text, some above ten and some below, use figures throughout to allow easy comparison by readers.

> ✅ There were 2 people in the queue ahead of me, and 22 behind me. The queues for other advisors had 10, 3 and 12 people.

Spell out words for 'first', 'second' and so on up to and including 'tenth'; use numbers and 'st'/ 'nd'/ 'rd'/ 'th' for larger ordinal numbers. Don't use superscript (to prevent problems with line spacing).

> ✅ She was the first person from her school to get a place at Oxford.

> ✅ He got an upper second, to his relief.

> ❌ She got a 3rd class degree.

> ✅ The 17th president of the United States was Andrew Johnson.

Always use figures and symbols for percentages, measurements and currency. Use commas to punctuate large numbers.

> ✅ Question 12 is worth 10% of the available marks.

> ❌ 20 per cent of commuters use their cars.

> ✅ The average height of a woman in the UK is 1.61m.

> ✅ The cost, at £5.99, was less than their overall budget of £50.

> ✅ The population of New York City is estimated to be 8,008,278.

Times

Use either the 12- or 24-hour clock – not both in the same text. The 12-hour clock uses a full stop between the hours and minutes; the 24-hour clock uses a colon and omits am/pm.

> ✅ The lecture starts at 11.30am and ends at 1pm.

> ✅ The lecture starts at 11:30 and ends at 13:00.

> ❌ The lecture starts at 11.30am and ends at 13:00.

> ❌ The lecture starts at 16:00pm.

Use 'noon' or 'midnight' instead of '12', '12 noon' or '12 midnight'.

> ✅ The closing date for applications is noon on 12 July.

If using the 12-hour clock, don't use additional '.oo' for times on the hour, and close up space between the number and the 'am' or 'pm'.

> ✅ The lecture starts at 9am.

> ✅ The lecture starts at 11.30am and ends at 1pm.

> ❌ The lecture starts at 9.00am.

> ❌ The lecture starts at 9 am.

Dates

Always put the date before the month.

✅ Easter this year is on 13 April.

❌ Easter this year is on April 13.

Don't use 'th' etc with dates – just the number and month – and never precede the number with 'the'.

✅ Easter this year is on 13 April.

❌ 11th November is Armistice Day.

❌ Armistice Day is on the 11 November.

Use days with dates only for emphasis or the avoidance of confusion/ambiguity.

✅ The wedding is on 30 December.

❌ The wedding is on Saturday 20 December.

✅ The Modern Superstitions conference is on Friday 13 April.

Spans of numbers and years

Shorten periods where it is not ambiguous to do so and use the shortest text possible. However, do not elide numbers between 11 and 19, which must always be written in full (as they would be spoken).

✅ The 'short twentieth century' refers to the period 1914–91.

✅ The First World War (1914–18) was shorter than the Second World War (1939–45).

❌ The First World war lasted from 1914–8.

✅ The professorship was held 1993–5 by Alice Jenkins.

❌ Inner-city flats cost £100–£200,000. [Price could start at £100 or £100,000.]

To refer to an academic or financial year, you can use either the format '2011–12' or '2011/12' – but ensure you are consistent throughout the text.

✅ The Proctors for 2013–14 will be elected in the 2011–12 academic year.

✅ Profits are up year on year: the company did better in 2011/12 than in 2010/11.

If using 'from' with a start date/time, always use 'to' to indicate the end date/time rather than an n-dash; alternatively, just use an n-dash without 'from'.

✅ Michaelmas term runs from October to December.

✅ Michaelmas term runs October–December.

❌ Michaelmas term runs from October–December.

Punctuation

General rule

Use as little punctuation as necessary while retaining the meaning of the sentence.

Apostrophe

to indicate possession

Use **'s** after singular nouns, plural nouns which do not end in **s** and indefinite pronouns.

✅ Frank's book

✅ anybody's guess

✅ The children's play area is next to the men's toilet.

Use just **'** after plural nouns ending in **s**.

✅ Strong tea is sometimes called builders' tea.

If a name already ends in **s** or **z** and would be difficult to pronounce if **'s** were added to the end, consider rearranging the sentence to avoid the difficulty.

✅ Jesus's methods were unpopular with the ruling classes.   OR
The methods of Jesus were unpopular with the ruling classes.

In compound nouns and where multiple nouns are linked to make one concept, place the apostrophe at the end of the final part (and match it to that noun).

✅ the Archbishop of Canterbury's tortoise

✅ my mother-in-law's dog

✅ his step-brothers' cars

✅ Lee and Herring's *Fist of Fun*

Do not use an apostrophe in **its** with the meaning 'belonging to it' (this is analogous with his/hers/theirs): note that **it's** is a contraction of 'it is'.

✅ The cat has been out in the rain and its paws are muddy.

✅ The cat has been out in the rain and it's muddy.

❌ The cat has been out in the rain and it's tail is wet.

Some place names have an apostrophe and some don't – this can't be predicted and must be checked.

✅ All Souls College

✅ Earls Court

✅ St Peter's College

✅ Land's End

✅ University of St Andrews

Some street names have an apostrophe (usually linked to saints' names from nearby churches); these are also idiosyncratic.

✅ There is a famous pub on St Giles'.

❌ St Giles's splits into Woodstock and Banbury Roads.

✅ Christ Church is on St Aldate's.

✅ St Michael's Street is a through road for bicycles.

Use apostrophes with noun phrases denoting periods of time (use an apostrophe if you can replace the apostrophe with 'of').

✅ He took a week's holiday [holiday of a week].

✅ You must give three months' notice [notice of three months].

But do not use an apostrophe in adjectival phrases.

✅ She was eight months pregnant when she went into labour.

Apostrophe (cont)
to indicate that letters have been omitted (contractions)
Use an apostrophe in the position the omitted letters would have occupied, not where the space was between the original words.

✓ I don't like cheese. [=do not]

✗ I do'nt like cheese. [≠do not]

✓ He wouldn't do that.

Do not use an apostrophe before contractions accepted as words in their own right.

✓ He is on the phone.

✓ He had swine flu.

✗ There is no vaccine for all types of 'flu.

Do not use an apostrophe to make a plural, even with a word/phrase that is not usually written in the plural or which appears clunky. All of the following examples take an **s** as normal in English to make their plurals.

✗ Three video's for a tenner.

✗ I trust all the MP's.

✗ Clothes were colourful in the 1970's.

✗ CD's will soon be obsolete.

✗ This is a list of do's and don't's.

To clarify something which will look odd if an **s** is added, consider italicising it or placing it in single quotation marks.

✓ Subtract all the *x*s from the *y*s.

✓ Dot the 'i's and cross the 't's.

Brackets
round brackets ( )
Use in place of a pair of dashes or commas around a non–defining phrase (one which adds extra information, a translation, dates, an explanation or a definition).

✓ The library (which was built in the seventeenth century) needs to be repaired.

✓ It was (as far as I could tell) the only example of its kind.

✓ Magdalen College (founded in 1458) has a herd of deer.

✓ The tactic of *Blitzkrieg* (which means 'lightning war' in German) was used in the invasion of Poland in 1939.

✓ Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C).

using other punctuation with brackets
Include full stops/exclamation marks/question marks/quotation marks before the closing bracket only if the complete sentence/quote is in brackets; otherwise, punctuate after the closing bracket.

✓ The last bus today is at 4.45 (which is earlier than usual).

✓ The last bus today is at 4.45. (That's earlier than usual.)

square brackets [ ]
Use to enclose comments, corrections, references or translations made by a subsequent author or editor.

✓ An article referring to the restrictions placed by some airlines on the appearance of female cabin crew stated that even footwear was proscribed [sic].

✓ I have been responsible in the real sense, that I have had the blame for everything that has gone wrong. [Laughter and cheers.]

✓ This was quoted by Brown [1940, Chicago].

angle brackets < > and curly brackets { }
These are used for technical purposes – only use them in the correct context.

Bullet points

Don't punctuate the end of bullet points which are a list of items.

> ✅ **2014 concert performers:**
> - **Slade**
> - **The Smiths**
> - **Metallica**
> - **the Spice Girls**

If the bullet points form a complete sentence with preceding text, add a full stop to the end of the last point.

> ✅ **We are holding a concert in 2014, at which the following acts will perform:**
> - **Slade**
> - **The Smiths**
> - **Metallica**
> - **the Spice Girls.**

If text inside the bullet point is a complete sentence in its own right, add a semicolon to the end of each point, 'or' or 'and' (depending on the sense of your sentence) to the end of the penultimate point, and a full stop to the end of the last one.

> ✅ **The following will be considered good reasons for missing the final meeting of the year:**
> - **there was a postal strike. This only applies if the postal strike took place before the date of the meeting and if you have not signed up for email alerts;**
> - **you are absent as a result of illness;**
> - **you are unable to attend because of problems with public transport (proof of this will be required);**
> - **there is something more interesting happening elsewhere which you would rather attend; or**
> - **you have obtained a ticket to see the Spice Girls in concert.**

Colon and semicolon

Use a colon to introduce a subclause which follows logically from the text before it, is not a new concept and depends logically on the preceding main clause.

> ✅ **When I was young, I went on two holidays: to the Lake District and to Cornwall.**
>
> ✅ **A new drink was introduced to Britain: tea.**

Do not use a colon if the two parts of the sentence are not logically connected.

> ❌ **I used to be slim: I will try to lose weight.**
>
> ✅ **I would like to be slim: I will try to lose weight.**
>
> ❌ **We were in trouble this time: we'd never been in trouble before.**
>
> ✅ **We were in trouble this time: the lid had come right off.**
>
> ✅ **There are two parts to this sentence: the first part, which precedes the colon, and the second part, which doesn't.**

Use a semicolon to link two related parts of a sentence, neither of which depends logically on the other and each of which could stand alone as a grammatically complete sentence.

> ✅ **The best job is the one you enjoy; the worst job is the one you hate.**
>
> ✅ **It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to, than I have ever known.**

Use semicolons in place of commas in a complicated list or sentence if it will improve clarity, particularly if list items already include commas.

> ✅ **We plan to review the quality of the research of the department, including its participation in interdepartmental, interdivisional and interdisciplinary activities; its research profile and strategy; and future challenges and opportunities.**
>
> ✅ **I visited the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and the Pencil Museum, Keswick.**

Comma

Use a pair of commas to surround a non-defining clause (one which adds descriptive information but which can be removed without losing the meaning of the sentence) – note that only 'which' or 'who' can be used in this type of clause, not 'that'.

> ✓ The library, which was built in the seventeenth century, needs to be repaired.

> ✓ The man, who climbed the tower without a safety harness, died of old age.

Do not use commas to surround a defining clause (which cannot be removed without losing the meaning of the sentence) – note that 'which' or 'who' can be replaced by 'that' in this type of clause.

> ✓ The library which was built in the seventeenth century needs to be repaired [but the library which was built in the eighteenth century does not].

> ✓ The man that climbed the tower without a safety harness died of old age [but the other man died in a different way].

> ✓ He asked his friend Sam to be his second [not any of his other friends].

Use commas to surround a non-defining word or phrase (which adds information but could be omitted without changing the sense of the sentence), and follow the non-defining word/phrase with a single comma if it is at the start of the sentence.

> ✓ Shakespeare, the prolific playwright, might not have existed.

> ✓ A prolific playwright, Shakespeare might not have existed.

> ✓ He asked Sam, his friend, to be his second [not the Sam who is his barber].

> ✓ The prime minister, David Cameron, is an alumnus of Brasenose.

Do not use a comma where defining information is used at the start of a sentence.

> ✓ The prolific playwright Shakespeare might not have existed.

> ✗ The prolific playwright, Shakespeare might not have existed.

> ✓ His friend Sam was his second.

> ✗ His friend, Sam was his second.

Defining vs non-defining information

Do not use a comma to join two main clauses, or those linked by adverbs or adverbial phrases (eg 'nevertheless', 'therefore', 'however'). This is sometimes referred to as 'comma splicing'. Either use a semicolon or add a coordinating conjunction (eg 'and', 'but', 'so').

> ✓ Shakespeare was popular, and his plays were all profitable.

> ✓ Shakespeare was popular; his plays were all profitable.

> ✗ Shakespeare was popular, his plays were all profitable.

Use a comma after an introductory adverb, adverbial phrase or subordinate clause; or use a pair of commas surrounding it if it is in the middle of a sentence.

> ✓ However, it was too late for that.

> ✓ It was, however, too late for that.

> ✓ With his possessions in a bundle, Dick Whittington walked to London.

> ✓ Dick Whittington, with his possessions in a bundle, walked to London.

Do not use a comma after a time-based adverbial phrase.

> ✓ After playing tennis all day she was tired.

> ✓ Whenever she went to the cinema she ate popcorn.

> ✓ In 2010 the most popular game among children was hopscotch.

Use a comma between multiple qualitative adjectives (those which can be used in the comparative/superlative or modified with 'very', 'quite' etc).

> ✓ He was a big, fat, sweaty man with soft, wet hands.

Do not use a comma between multiple classifying adjectives: absolutes which either are or are not, such as 'unique', 'English', 'black' etc (although note that stylistically these can be modified).

> ✅ **It was an edible German mushroom.**

> ✅ **The eighteenth-century sandstone tower is lit up at night.**

Do not use a comma between classifying and qualitative adjectives.

> ✅ **It was a large German mushroom with hard black edges.**

> ✅ **It was a large, squishy German mushroom with hard, frilly black edges.**

Use a comma between items in a list.

> ✅ **I ate fish, bread, ice cream and spaghetti.**

> ✅ **I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.**

Note that there is no comma between the penultimate item in a list and 'and'/'or', unless required to prevent ambiguity – this is sometimes referred to as the 'Oxford comma'. However, always insert a comma in this position if it would help prevent confusion.

> ❌ **He took French, Spanish, and Maths A-levels.**

> ✅ **I ate fish and chips, bread and jam, and ice cream.**

> ✅ **We studied George III, William and Mary, and Henry VIII.**

> ❌ **She left her money to her parents, Mother Theresa and the pope.**

Dashes and hyphens — – -

m-dash (—)
Do not use; use an n-dash instead.

n-dash (–)
Use in a pair in place of round brackets or commas, surrounded by spaces.

> ✅ **It was – as far as I could tell – the only example of its kind.**

> ✅ **The library – which was built in the seventeenth century – needs to be repaired.**

Use singly and surrounded by spaces to link two parts of a sentence, in place of a colon.

> ✅ **The bus was late today – we nearly missed the lecture.**

Use to link concepts or ranges of numbers, with no spaces either side.

> ✅ **German–Polish non-aggression pact**

> ✅ **The salary for the post is £25,000–£30,000.**

> ✅ **Radio 1 is aimed at the 18–25 age bracket.**

Use between names of joint authors/creators/performers etc to distinguish from hyphenated names of a single person.

> ✅ **Lennon–McCartney compositions**

> ✅ **Superman–Batman crossover comics**

hyphen (–)

When to use a hyphen
In an adjectival phrase before a noun

- ✅ the up-to-date list
- ✅ The value of a first-class degree is indisputable.
- ✅ a hot-air balloon
- ✅ 'Rethinking provincialism in mid-nineteenth-century narrative fiction: Villette from our village'

In an adjectival phrase including a verb participle

- ✅ The jumper was tight-fitting.

With prefixes only if required to avoid confusion/mispronunciation, such as where prefixes themselves or letters are repeated

- ✅ predynastic Egypt
- ✅ gifts of pre-eminent objects and works of art to the nation
- ✅ The animals are re-released into the wild when recovered.
- ✅ A protein precursor can also be called a pro-protein.
- ✅ Procapitalists and anticapitalists clashed in the streets.
- ✅ The email address for the webmaster can be found on the website.

With prefixes before a proper name, number or date

- ✅ anti-Thatcherism
- ✅ pre-2000 politics
- ✅ Hilary term starts in mid-January.

In numbers which are spelt out

- ✅ Twenty-seven is the most popular 'random' number.
- ✅ *The Thirty-Nine Steps*

In compass points (unless used geographically rather than as directions)

- ✅ They're heading south-east.
- ✅ nor'-nor'-east
- ✅ The southwest is a popular holiday destination.

When not to use a hyphen
In noun phrases

- ✅ Labour Party conference
- ✅ The 19th century saw much reform.

To make a new compound noun – if it is a recognisable concept, make it one word; if it isn't, use two words

- ✅ Websites are made up of webpages.
- ✅ Send me an email when you're ready to proceed.
- ❌ Send me an e-mail.

In an adjectival phrase following a noun

- ✅ The list was up to date.
- ✅ His marks just scraped into the first class.
- ❌ She wasn't top-drawer.

In an adjectival phrase before a noun where the first element is an adverb ending in -ly (but note that any other adverbs in adjectival phrases do take a hyphen)

- ✅ She had a finely tuned ear for off-key music.
- ✅ XML documents must be well-formed texts.
- ❌ She was a highly-respected tutor.
- ✅ She was a badly paid apprentice.

Ellipsis…

Use an ellipsis to show that some text is missing, usually from a quotation – do not surround it with spaces.

✅ …we shall fight on the beaches…we shall never surrender…

✅ It is a truth universally acknowledged…

There is no need to add square brackets around an ellipsis.

❌ […]we shall fight on the beaches[…]

Use an ellipsis to indicate a pause for comic or other effect – follow the ellipsis with a space in this case, as it stands in place of a comma or full stop.

✅ You don't have to be mad to work here… but it helps!

Note that, if used either in place of omitted text at the end of a clause/sentence or to indicate a pause for effect, a full stop/comma should not follow the ellipsis. However, an exclamation mark or a question mark can and should follow the ellipsis if required.

✅ Are you…?

✅ Did he say that…?

Use an ellipsis to indicate a trailing off in speech or thought.

✅ We could do this…or maybe that…

Full stop, exclamation mark and question mark

Use one – but only one – of these at the end of every sentence.

✅ What time did you leave last night?

✅ We went home at 5 o'clock.

✅ Go home now!

Do not use a full stop at the end of titles, even if they make a sentence, but, if a title ends with an exclamation mark or question mark, do include it.

✅ *All's Well that Ends Well* is my favourite play.

✅ 'Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?' was a hit for the Shirelles.

✅ 'Help!' was covered by Bananarama in 1989.

Do not use a full stop if it will be followed, or preceded, by an ellipsis.

❌ Behind him stood a figure. …It was ghostly grey.

Use a full stop, not a question mark, at the end of a reported question – only use a question mark for a direct question (whether in quotation marks or not).

✅ He asked if I wanted to go home that morning.

✅ 'Do you want to go home this morning?' he asked.

❌ He asked if I wanted to go home?

Use a full stop, not an exclamation mark, at the end of a reported imperative.

✅ Wait for me! → He asked me to wait for him.

Quotation marks

Use single quotation marks for direct speech or a quote, and double quotation marks for direct speech or a quote within that.

> ✅ 'I have never been to Norway,' he said, 'but I have heard it described as "the Wales of the North".'

Use no quotation marks if the quote is displayed (ie not in line with the rest of the text).

> ✅ as I noted then,
>   Those of us who toil in the Groves of Academe
>   know full well that our research helps inform
>   our teaching...

Use single quotation marks and roman (not italic) type for titles that are not whole publications: eg short poems, short stories, songs, chapters in books, articles in periodicals etc. See also **Highlighting/emphasising text**.

> ✅ *I, Robot* contains nine short stories, of which 'Little Lost Robot' is my favourite.

> ✅ Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody', from the album *Night at the Opera*, reached number one in both 1975 and 1991.

Using other punctuation with quotation marks

If the quote would have required punctuation in its original form, place the punctuation inside the quotation marks. (If it is unclear, try writing the whole sentence out without quotation marks and 'he said' etc, and replicate the resulting punctuation.)

> ✅ Bob likes cheese. → 'Bob', I said, 'likes cheese.'   OR
>   'Bob likes cheese,' I said.

> ✅ Bob, do you like cheese? → 'Bob,' I asked, 'do you like cheese?'

> ✅ Out, damn'd spot! → 'Out,' said Lady Macbeth, 'damn'd spot!'

> ✅ 'You're engaged to Florence?' I yipped, looking at him with a wild surmise.

Place any punctuation which does not belong to the quote outside the quotation marks (except closing punctuation if the end of the quote is also the end of the sentence).

> ✅ After all, tomorrow is another day. → 'After all,' said Scarlett, 'tomorrow is another day.' OR 'After all, tomorrow', said Scarlett, 'is another day.'

> ❌ 'The kitchen,' he said, 'is the heart of the home'.

> ✅ 'The kitchen', he said, 'is the heart of the home.'

Note that American English has different rules about the use of quotation marks.

Names and titles

General titles

Use capitals for titles prefixing names, but not for job descriptions. Note that some job descriptions are never used with names, such as 'prime minister'.

- ✅ **Although being president of the United States is stressful, President Obama was glad to be re-elected.**

- ✅ **The prime minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is the leader of the party that wins the most seats. The Right Honourable David Cameron MP is the current prime minister.**

- ✅ **The current pope, Pope Francis, is Argentine.**

Give people's title, forename and surname when first mentioned. On subsequent mentions, use either surname only or title and surname (unless further information is required to prevent ambiguity), but be consistent with whichever usage you choose.

- ✅ **Dr John Smith was present at the ceremony, as was Professor Susan Jones. Dr Smith had to leave early.**

- ✅ **Dr John Smith and Professor Susan Jones presented their research paper to a large audience. The results will be published in book form, which Smith says will be available in the spring.**

- ❌ **Dr John Smith and Professor Susan Jones debated the topic. Smith recently reviewed Professor Jones's book.**

Note that it can be helpful to your readers to clarify the sex of the person if it is unclear (eg if they have a name given to men and women, or an unusual name).

Oxford-specific titles

Use capitals when referring to the specific person holding a specific position and to their work in this role, but not when referring to any holder of that role unless it is a statutory position (see **Capitalisation** and **Word Usage** sections for further information).

- ✅ **Andrew Hamilton became Vice-Chancellor in 2009.**

- ✅ **There are several Pro-Vice-Chancellors without portfolio.**

- ✅ **The Registrar will always have to attend these meetings.**

- ✅ **He invited Wadham's Head of House, Lord Macdonald, to attend the event. Other heads of house were not invited.**

- ✅ **I wonder who the Senior Proctor will be next year...**

- ✅ **Candidates will be required to undertake practical work, as specified by the Head of the Department of Experimental Psychology.**

- ✅ **Recruiting new academic staff is vital to all departments; heads of department often personally oversee the procedure.**

Other titles

members of the peerage

When referring to or writing to people entitled to call themselves Sir/Dame/Lord/Lady etc, make sure that you know the correct form of address for that individual. The examples below are not definitive – if in doubt, consult Debrett's (for general advice and examples: **www.debretts.com/forms-address/titles**) or Who's Who (for specific individuals: **www.ukwhoswho.com**).

If an individual has expressed a wish to be addressed in a particular way, even if it is technically incorrect, use their preferred style.

Take particular care with people from countries where family names precede given names.

For more advice on addressing people with titles, see the helpful guide compiled by the University Development Office at: **www.advancingoxford.ox.ac.uk/file/Correct-Form-Booklet-for-Onscreen-Viewing.pdf**.

knights/dames

Always use first names with these titles, whether or not you are using surnames as well.

> ✅ **'Are you going to hear Sir John Smith's speech? Sir John is always a good public speaker.'**

> ✅ **Dame Jane Jones is the chair of this committee.**

If you are writing to a knight or a dame, use 'title first name surname' on envelopes then just 'title first name' in the salutation.

> ✅ **To: Dame Jane Jones, 14 Bluebird Way, Oxford OX1 1AB**

> ✅ **Dear Sir John...**

lords/ladies

Check the exact status of anyone verbally addressed as Lord X or Lady Y as these titles may be used by many types of peer (eg earls, barons, viscounts, sons of dukes etc) whose titles in writing are different.

Life peers are formally barons/baronesses but are addressed informally as Lord/Lady followed by the name they chose when ennobled.

> ✅ **Helena Kennedy (Baroness Kennedy of the Shaws) should be addressed as Lady Kennedy of the Shaws.**

> ✅ **Baron Patten of Barnes is Chancellor of the University. Lord Patten was formerly Chairman of the BBC Trust.**

> ❌ **Have you met Lord Chris Patten?**

> ✅ **Lord Sugar's full title is Baron Sugar of Clapham.**

> ✅ **Lady Benjamin was the best *Playschool* presenter.**

promotion within an order of chivalry

If someone is promoted within an order of chivalry (eg from MBE to OBE), the higher honour replaces the lower; don't list all of them.

> ✅ **Mrs Tanni Grey-Thompson was appointed MBE in 1993.**

> ✅ **Mrs Tanni Grey-Thompson was appointed OBE in 2000.**

> ✅ **Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson was appointed DBE in 2005.**

If someone receives an honour in a different order of chivalry, or is made a life peer, they are entitled to use both honours but not both titles.

> ❌ **Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson, OBE MBE DBE, is a fellow of Hertford.**

> ✅ **Baroness Grey-Thompson, DBE, was made a life peer in 2010.**

> ❌ **Baroness Dame Grey-Thompson**

Combining titles

For someone entitled to a styling such as Sir/Dame as well as an academic title, the academic title always precedes the Sir/Dame if both are used.

✅ **Professor Sir John Smith**

✅ **Professor Dame Susan Jones**

❌ **Sir Professor John Smith**

For Reverends, Right Reverends, Very Reverends etc, the religious title precedes the academic title. Always use a capitalised 'The' before the title.

✅ **The Revd Dr Giles Fraser resigned from St Paul's.**

✅ **The Revd Professor Andrew Linzey is a member of the Faculty of Theology.**

❌ **Dr Revd Giles Fraser spoke to the press about his decision to resign.**

If someone who has been ordained in the clergy of the Church of England is subsequently honoured, they do not use Sir/Dame as a title but can use the appropriate postnominal letters.

✅ **Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch, Kt, is a Deacon of the Church of England.**

In a shortened subsequent mention, use either Sir/Dame/The Revd or the academic title, not both – consider which title is more appropriate for the context (academic titles are often better for University purposes). Note that non-academic titles should not be used with surnames only and that 'The Revd' should not be used with surnames alone; revert to Dr/Mr/Miss/Mrs as appropriate.

✅ **Sir John**

✅ **Professor Jones**

✅ **Dr Fraser**

❌ **The Revd Fraser**

❌ **Revd Professor Linzey**

✅ **Professor Sir John Baggins will attend the lecture to be given by The Revd Dr Peter Precise in the Examination Schools on Thursday. Dr Precise and Sir John are both senior members of the Oxford University Tiddlywinks Club, and Dr Precise is the author of the bestselling *Pedantry and Hypothetical Names*. He is not to be confused with his colleague, The Revd Bona-Exempla Familyname. Miss Familyname will give her lecture next week.**

Postnominals

Remember that you do not need to list all awards, degrees, memberships etc held by an individual – only those items relevant to your writing.

The order for postnominals is:
- civil honours
- military honours
- QC
- degrees, in the order
  - bachelors'
  - masters'
  - doctorates
  - postdoctoral
- diplomas
- certificates
- membership of academic or professional bodies.

Do not include a BA for Oxford/Cambridge graduates if they also have the MA.

academic qualifications

In order of academic precedence; masters' degrees with * are equal to an MA for this purpose

- **DD** (Doctor of Divinity)
- **DCL** (Doctor of Civil Law)
- **DM** (Doctor of Medicine)
- **DLitt** (Doctor of Letters)
- **DSc** (Doctor of Science)
- **DMus** (Doctor of Music)
- **DPhil** (Doctor of Philosophy)
- **DClinPsych** (Doctor of Clinical Psychology)
- **DEng** (Doctor of Engineering)
- **MCh** (Master of Surgery)
- **MSc** (Master of Science)
- **MLitt** (Master of Letters)
- **MPhil** (Master of Philosophy)
- **MSt** (Master of Studies)
- **MTh** (Master of Theology)
- **MBA** (Master of Business Administration)

- **MFA** (Master of Fine Art)
- **MPP** (Master of Public Policy)
- **MA** (Master of Arts)
- **MBioChem** (Master of Biochemistry)*
- **MChem** (Master of Chemistry)*
- **MCompSci** (Master of Computer Science)*
- **MCompPhil** (Master of Computer Science and Philosophy)*
- **MEarthSci** (Master of Earth Sciences)*
- **MEng** (Master of Engineering)*
- **MMath** (Master of Mathematics or Mathematics and Statistics)*
- **MMathCompSci** (Master of Mathematics and Computer Science)*
- **MMathPhil** (Master of Mathematics and Philosophy)*
- **MPhys** (Master of Physics)*
- **MPhysPhil** (Master of Physics and Philosophy)*
- **BD** (Bachelor of Divinity)
- **BCL** (Bachelor of Civil Law)
- **MJur** (Magister Juris)
- **BM BCh** (Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery)
- **BLitt** (Bachelor of Letters)
- **BSc** (Bachelor of Science)
- **BMus** (Bachelor of Music)
- **BPhil** (Bachelor of Philosophy)
- **BA** (Bachelor of Arts)
- **BFA** (Bachelor of Fine Art)
- **BTh** (Bachelor of Theology)

Consider giving the name of the awarding university (using a shortened form if required and if easily recognisable (Oxf, Camb, UCL, MIT etc) if academic qualifications are relevant.

A space is used to separate degrees from the same institution, and a comma is used to separate sets of degrees from different institutions; if the same level degree has been awarded by more than one institution, list them in alphabetical order of institution.

> ✅ **Professor Xavier Postlethwaite, QC, BEng PhD UCL, MA PhD Camb, MA DPhil Oxf, PhD Manc, FRS**

> ✅ **Sir Charles Overlord, VC, BA S'ton**

See **www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/calendar** for further detail if required.

Highlighting/emphasising text

Bold

Use bold sparingly to emphasise the part of your text you wish to stand out. This could be someone's name, a deadline date or another key piece of information.

Punctuation which follows bold text should not itself be bold (unless the whole sentence is in bold type).

If you are transcribing a speech, you might want to use bold text (or italic text) to emphasise words in writing on which the speaker placed particular emphasis in speech.

> ✅ The Man Booker Prize for 2012 was awarded to **Hilary Mantel**; this was the second time that she has won.

> ✅ Applications can either be made online or emailed to sample@email.com. The deadline for submissions is **noon on 2 April** and any applications received later than this will not be considered.

Italic

Use italics to flag part of your text which is different from that surrounding it.

Titles of books, journals, plays, films, musical works etc should be given in italics if they are a complete published work; if you are referring to an individual short story, song, article etc within a larger publication, use single quotation marks (see also **Quotation marks** under **Punctuation**).

> ✅ *I, Robot* contains nine short stories, of which 'Little Lost Robot' is my favourite.

> ✅ The number-one single in the hit parade this week is 'Candy' by Robbie Williams, from the album *Take The Crown*.

If the title includes 'The' or 'A' as the start of the title, italicise that as well.

> ✅ *A Tale of Two Cities* has perhaps the most famous opening sentence in English literature.

Use italics for foreign words and phrases embedded within your text, including species and genera names in Latin.

> ✅ There are nine *ex officio* members of Council.

> ✅ When producing its annual report, the committee shall consider, *inter alia*, any relevant HEFCE evalutions.

> ✅ A seven-sisters rose bush (*Rosa multiflora*) can be either white or pink.

> ✅ Dante tells us that above the entrance to the Inferno is inscribed *Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'entrate*.

Plurals, past tenses or other grammatical changes to italicised titles or phrases should only be italicised up to the end of the title or phrase – do not italicise the **s**, **ed** etc – and punctuation should only be italicised if it is part of the title, quote etc. Note that it is not always easy to tell whether a full stop/comma is in italic.

> ✅ The remaining *Gazette*s of Michaelmas term are published on 22 and 29 November and 6 December.

> ✅ Changes to regulations need to be *Gazette*d at least eight weeks before they are due to take effect.

Underlining

Avoid using underlining for emphasis; this generally suggests hyperlinks, especially on webpages.

Word usage and spelling

Common confusions in word usage

Confused words	How they differ	Example
among vs between	• Among is used for undifferentiated items. • Between is used with individual, named items.	• She couldn't decide among all the colleges. • She couldn't decide between Magdalen or St Hilda's.
mutual vs reciprocal	• Mutual is used when more than one person has the same feeling/opinion as another towards a third party/object/concept etc. • Reciprocal is used when two or more people feel, think or act in the same way about or to one another.	• 'I disagree with the government's policy on carrots.' 'So do I. The feeling's mutual.' • 'I won't steal your cheese.' 'I won't steal your cheese either. We have a reciprocal arrangement.'
less vs fewer	• Less is used with nouns which are not countable objects: if you could use **much** to describe having a lot of the noun, use **less**. • Fewer is used with countable objects: if you could use **many** to describe having a lot of the noun, use **fewer**.	• 'I can't eat that much cheese: please give me less.' • 'I can't eat that many sprouts: please give me fewer.'
effect vs affect (verb)	• Effect as a verb means to bring about, or to have the result that. • Affect as a verb means to have an impact on or to change something; it also means to simulate something which is untrue.	• A glass of brandy may effect his recovery [bring his recovery about]. • A glass of brandy may affect his recovery [have an impact on whether he recovers]. • He affected to have drunk only one glass of brandy [when he had actually drunk more than one glass].
effect vs affect (noun)	• Effect as a noun means the impact something causes. • Affect as a noun means somone's outward appearance of their psychological state.	• The storm had wide-reaching effects. • His affect was one of cheerful indifference.
infer vs imply	• Infer is to read a meaning into a statement which has not been explicitly stated: to read between the lines. • Imply is to suggest something without explicity stating it: to hint at something (usually something negative).	• He told me that these one-size-fits-all gloves fit most people's hands. I inferred that he thought my hands were too big, and resented what he was implying.
compared to vs compared with	• Comparing something **to** another thing highlights a (perhaps metaphorical) similarity • Comparing something **with** another thing highlights the differences between them	• Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? • Price comparison websites allow you to compare one company's prices and policies with those of their competitors.

Spelling

General guidelines

Use suffix **–ise/-yse/-isation** not **-ize/-yze/-ization**. Note that this is different from OUP's choice, because OUP prefers to reflect the Greek roots of some such words. We prefer '–ise' as it is more common in British usage and requires fewer exceptions.

✅ **Derren Brown hypnotised his subject live on TV.**

✅ **They didn't receive authorisation to take the trip.**

❌ **She wished she had organized her books alphabetically.**

Retain **–e** where required for pronunciation: ageing/acknowledgement.

Contractions: use of 'hasn't' rather than 'has not' etc is fine in the majority of cases, especially informally.

Foreign spellings

Just use 'e' spellings, not *ae* or *æ*, where in common British usage.

✅ **encyclopedia**

✅ **medieval**

Technical words retain the ligature.

✅ **archæology**

✅ **hæmatology**

✅ **orthopædics**

Use accents and different letters in foreign words (ø, ç, capitalisation for German nouns etc) only when:
- a word is still considered foreign and has not (yet) been absorbed into English
- they are required to differentiate from another word (in English or the source language)
- they are required as part of the name of a person, place, book etc.

Don't use accents on capital letters.

Plurals

Use appropriate foreign (particularly ancient Greek and Latin) plural forms where still in common usage (also see **alumna/ae/i/us** below).

✅ **nucleus → nuclei**

✅ **stratum → strata**

✅ **genus → genera**

✅ **analysis → analyses**

✅ **basis → bases**

✅ **crisis → crises**

✅ **phenomenon → phenomena**

✅ **bacterium → bacteria**

✅ **millennium → millennia**

Note that more than one plural form is sometimes in use for different meanings of a word.

✅ **formula → formulas but formulae in maths/chemistry**

✅ **index → indices for maths but indexes for books**

✅ **appendix → appendices for books but appendixes in anatomy**

✅ **medium → media but mediums for spiritualists**

✅ **datum → data in technical cases but points of data in everyday use**

Proper names ending in –y do not change to –ies if pluralised.

✅ **One of the most popular stories in *Bunty* was 'The Four Marys'.**

With compound words formed by a noun and an adjective, or two nouns connected by a preposition, pluralise the (more important) noun.

✅ **Attorney General → Attorneys General**

✅ **brother-in-law → brothers-in-law**

✅ **passer-by → passers-by**

✅ **gin and tonic → gins and tonic**

Tricky words

- accommodation
- alumna – female former member (of college etc)
- alumnae – plural form for female-only former members (of college etc)
- alumni – plural form for either male-only or mixed-gender former members (of college etc)
- alumnus – male former member (of college etc)
- benefited
- biased
- comprise (not comprise of)
- co-operation (hyphenated)
- dependant (noun)/dependent (adjective)
- email (lower case and no hyphen)
- enquire/enquiry (preferred to inquire/inquiry)
- focused
- fundraising
- instalment
- internet (lower case)
- judgement (moral, academic etc)
- judgment (legal decision only)
- liaise/liaison
- manoeuvre
- no-one (hyphenated)
- paralleled
- postdoctoral (no hyphen)
- postgraduate (no hyphen, whether as noun or adjective)
- postholder (no hyphen and lower case)
- principal (noun or adjective: chief, main, head)
- principle (noun only: ethical standpoint)
- program (computer applications only)
- programme (schedule of events)
- riveting
- stationary (not moving)
- stationery (paper, pens etc)
- supersede
- till (not 'til: not an abbreviation of until)
- website/webpage (no hyphen and lower case)

Words usually spelt differently in American English

These are given for information only – do not use the US spelling unless you are quoting an American speaker or from American text (in which case the original should be kept).

British	American	Examples
-our	-or	colour/color
-ise	-ize	organise/organize
-yse	-yze	analyse/analyze
-re	-er	centre/center
-lling	-ling	travelling/traveling
-lled	-led	travelled/traveled
-ller	-ler	traveller/traveler

The following words are spelt differently in British English depending on whether they are nouns or verbs, whereas American English uses only the British verb form or the spelling for both senses.

UK noun	UK verb	US noun	US verb
defence	defend	defense	defend
licence	license	license	license
offence	offend	offense	offend
practice	practise	practice	practise
pretence	pretend	pretense	pretend

Miscellaneous

Personal pronouns

I is always the subject of the verb and **me** is always the object.

> ✅ I cooked lunch.

> ✅ He cooked lunch for me.

This doesn't change if there is more than one subject or object in a sentence.

> ✅ Pete and I cooked lunch.

> ✅ He cooked lunch for Pete and me.

If you are unsure whether to use **I** or **me** in this kind of sentence, try it without the other person's name and it will be clear which to use.

> ✅ He gave top marks to Serena, Keith and me. → He gave top marks to me.

> ❌ He gave top marks to Serena, Keith and I. → He gave top marks to I.

Myself, yourself etc

All pronouns ending in **–self** or **–selves** are reflexive pronouns and are used only to refer back to the subject of the sentence. They can never be subjects of a sentence themselves.

> ✅ I treated myself to a new set of speakers.

> ✅ Mordecai takes himself very seriously.

> ✅ Where do you see yourself in ten years' time?

> ✅ Theresa and I googled ourselves and didn't like what we found.

> ❌ Cassandra and myself crossed the road.

Never use any of these pronouns as a more polite or formal way of addressing people, or if the subject of the sentence is different from the reflexive object (eg **I** must always be paired with **myself**).

> ❌ If you have any questions, please contact Professor Plantaganet or myself.

Plural or singular?

Use singular verbs for describing faculties, teams, groups etc.

> ✅ The faculty has voted to keep the building open.

> ✅ The Oxford Quidditch team has won the first British Quidditch Cup.

To disambiguate when talking about the individuals who make up a group, use 'the members of' or 'each member of'.

> ✅ The members of the faculty are mostly absent during vacations.

> ✅ Each member of the faculty has an email address.

Addresses, phone numbers, websites etc

URLs

Omit **http://** unless the URL does not begin with **www** and omit any trailing slash at the end of the URL, unless the URL does not work without it – check before you omit (but ensure that any links in online documents retain the **http://** so that they point to the correct place).

For secure websites, include the **https://**

> ✅ www.ox.ac.uk/gazette

> ✅ https://www1.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/committees

> ❌ www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/

Referring to webpages

Only capitalise the first word (and any proper nouns), but consider instead using the actual URL for disambiguation in print or hyperlinking the descriptive text. **Never** change the capitalisation within a URL as it may cease to work.

> ✅ For the cost of placing an advert, see the *Gazette* website's *Classified advertising* page.

> ✅ For the cost of placing an advert, see www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/ classifiedadvertising.

> ❌ For the cost of placing an advert, see www.ox.ac.uk/gazette/ Classifiedadvertising.

email addresses

These are case sensitive in the part before the **@**: *Gazette@admin.ox.ac.uk* is not the same as *gazette@admin.ox.ac.uk*. In practice, the majority of ISPs ignore this distinction, but consider carefully whether to use upper case if required to avoid ambiguity (eg between lower-case l and number 1).

phone numbers

Use spacing between parts of numbers (international code, area code, phone number) to make it easier to read.

Include full area code (eg 01865) for national publications.

> ✅ To contact us, ring Bill on 01865 778899.

Include international code for international publications (eg +44 1865).

> ✅ To contact us, ring Bill on +44 1865 778899.

Mobile numbers follow the same format as above.

> ✅ To contact us, ring Bill on 07777 778899.

> ✅ To contact us, ring Bill on +44 7777 778899.

For local/internal publications, give extension numbers and include in brackets the number to dial from outside the University phone network.

> ✅ To contact us, ring Bill on (2)78899.

street addresses

Give full address, including postcode, when writing to a primarily non-Oxford audience (postcodes allow people to find buildings more easily online).

> ✅ The event takes place at the Church of St John the Evangelist, 109A Iffley Road, Oxford, OX4 1EH.

If writing for a local audience (eg advertising a concert), the name of a well-known building is enough on its own.

> ✅ The event takes place at the Sheldonian Theatre at 8pm on 12 October.

Acknowledgement and thanks

Our grateful thanks go to:

- Dr Serenhedd James, St Stephen's House, for advice on ecclesiastical matters, general proofreading and the splendid example at the end of p19.
- Linda Loder for giving such engaging presentations of such dry subject matter.
- Joanna Bason and Andrea Roger for writing such a helpful guide to addressing titled individuals and allowing us to use it and refer others to it.
- Nadja Guggi for designing and typesetting the guide so patiently.
- All the members of the style guide review panel, past and present.

If you have any queries about using this guide,
please contact:

Public Affairs Directorate
University of Oxford
Wellington Square
Oxford OX1 2JD

gazette@admin.ox.ac.uk