



## Editorial Style Guide

---

*Have something to say and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret to style.*

**Matthew Arnold**

### **Introduction**

Economy wants to create a world in which people have the confidence to engage with economics, and where experts understand their responsibility to communicate clearly and without too much jargon. We call it '**understandable economics**'.

That means everything we publish on our website needs to be clear, accessible and engaging. It needs to speak to people's passions, draw on their interests, and be entertaining and fun.

By doing so we hope to reflect people's **identity**, **empower** people to talk and think about the economy, and help develop their **understanding** of economic ideas.

What follows outlines some of the ways we'll try to do this and explains a few stylistic things you'll need to know when writing or making content for us.

## Keep it conversational

It's really important to keep your language friendly, conversational, and accessible, and to stay clear of anything that's too formal or overly academic. Here's a list of the ways we try to do this, including some of the words we use (and some we don't). So, we prefer:

- To call the audience **you**
- To use the short form, so that's **don't** instead of **do not** / **we're**, not **we are**
- **Start**, not **commence**
- **Said**, not **stated**
- **A year**, not **per annum**
- **So**, not **thus** or **therefore**
- **Find out**, not **ascertain**
- **Keep**, not **retain**
- **Explain**, not **explicate**
- To avoid using words like **Nevertheless**, **Moreover**, **Furthermore**, **Notwithstanding**
- **Get**, not **obtain**

## Here's a load more stuff on our house style

### Abbreviations and acronyms

We all love an acronym, right? Write the words in full on first appearance: so that's **World Trade Organization** followed by the shortened form in brackets (**WTO**) - unless it's so familiar that it's used more often than the full form (like **BBC**, **CIA**, **FBI**).

Use all capitals if an abbreviation is pronounced as individual letters (**US**, **VAT**), but if it is pronounced as a word (**Nato**, **Nasa**) then spell out with an initial capital. Oh, and we tend not to put dots between things, so no **U.S.** And the same goes for names, **JK Galbraith**, **WH Smith** etc.

### Apostrophes

Oh no, apostrophes. They're enough to confuse anybody!

Dates don't require apostrophes (eg: **1900s**) - unless the century is omitted (eg: **the England squad of '66**). Neither is an apostrophe generally needed for plurals (eg: **MPs, MBEs, DJs**).

For names, always use the possessive where possible (eg: **Jones's, James's**) but be guided by how the last syllable of the name sounds (eg: **the Hodges' cat**, not **the Hodges's cat**).

## Americanisms

We use American spelling, so that's **labor**, not **labour**; **center**, not **centre**; **color**, not **colour**. We use 'z' not 's' in all the relevant places. **Sneakers** not **trainers**.

There's a really useful list of American British spelling differences here:  
<http://www.tysto.com/uk-us-spelling-list.html>

## Among

Not **amongst**.

## Bad news

Like **good news**, a term **never** to be used unqualified, because it's subjective. A rise in interest rates is bad news for house-buyers, but good news for savers. Just say what's happened - and let readers decide whether it's good or bad.

## Between

Is correctly used when only two parties are involved (eg: 'talks **between** the Greek Government and the ECB'). If there are more than two parties, use 'among' (eg: 'talks **among** finance officials').

## Billion

Means **one thousand million**. Spell the word out, except in headlines, or when using it with currencies (eg: **\$3bn**).

## Book and film titles

Capitalize the first letter of all the words of titles, eg: ***Harry Potter And The Philosopher's Stone***. Use italics for titles of long works. Use quotation marks for short works such as poems or songs, eg: 'The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner' from ***Lyrical Ballads***.

## Capitalization

A few titles are always capped up, whether you name the person or not (eg **the Queen, the Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury**, that kind of thing). But our style is to minimize the use of capital letters.

So, for example, job titles have initial caps only when the title is next to the name, in whatever order.

So: ***"Managing Director of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, said..."*** or ***"Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the IMF, has..."***

but: ***"Christine Lagarde, who has been managing director of the IMF since 2011..."***

Any job mentioned without reference to the job-holder should be in lowercase, eg:  
***"The managing director of the IMF will be visiting the UK for several days..."***

For place names: use upper case for recognised regions, and for vaguer political/geographical areas (eg: **the Middle East, Western Europe**). Otherwise, lower case (eg: **south-west France, east Lancashire**). Also lower case for **south Wales, north Wales, mid-Wales** etc. Avoid ambiguity - say **northern England** rather than just **the North**.

## Century/century

Use lowercase (and digits) when you are labelling a century with a number (eg: **20th century**). Otherwise, lower case (eg: "The treasure had lain undiscovered for **centuries**").

## Colons

In headlines, captions and subheadings, follow with an initial capital. Elsewhere, by lower case.

## Company names

Follow their preferred style, eg: **PricewaterhouseCoopers, NatWest, YouTube, eBay**.

## Currencies

We use **US dollars** in all cases, followed by the conversion in brackets when referring to currency of another country.

## Dates

Should be written in this format: **1 October 2015**.

## Days

Our readers live in various time zones, so avoid references to **yesterday**, **this morning**, **today**, **tonight**, **tomorrow** etc.

Instead, days should be referred to by name (eg: "Voting begins on **Monday**").

## Decades

Use digits, without apostrophes (eg: **1960s** or **the 60s**; Henry Hyde is now in his **mid-40s**). The exception is where an adjective is attached - in which case, the decade is written with an apostrophe (eg: **the Swinging '60s**).

## Distances

We prefer metric measures as standard.

The words **metre**, **kilometre** etc. are not written out in full, even at first reference. Just use the abbreviations **m**, **km**, etc. - with no space and no 's' in the plural.

## Ellipsis

Where part of a quote is omitted, put three dots immediately after the last word used, followed by a space (eg: "**Prices have not merely risen... they've soared**"). It's important not to start with a space, because this could mean a new line beginning with the dots. If the quote is a complete sentence, there's no need for an ellipsis.

## Fewer/less

Use **fewer** when you can count something, as in “The board wants to have **fewer** meetings next year:.. If you cannot count it, use **less**, as in “Shareholders are calling for **less** bureaucracy”.

## Government

Use lower case, whether for **the government** (in general) or for a specific government eg: **The Italian government**).

## Headlines

Keep short, factual and salient. Headlines should not be capped up or have capital letters at the beginning of each word. Only cap words that would ordinarily require it.

## Hyphens

Use when employing compound adjectives that describe a noun, eg: a **well-written article**, but not when the first word ends in ‘ly’, eg: an **expertly written article**.

## Numbers

- 1-9 should be spelt out.
- 10 and above should appear as numerals.
- 1,000 or 2,450
- 2.4m but two million
- At the beginning of a sentence, all numbers should be spelt out (eg: ‘One hundred people...’)

## Percentages

At the beginning of a sentence, always spell it out. For example, ‘Nineteen per cent...’ Within a sentence, use %.

## Punctuation

The University of Sussex has a brilliant guide to the use of punctuation:  
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/informatics/punctuation/toc>

## Quotations

Use double quotation marks when quoting verbatim what people have said (eg: **Sally Woodward** said: “The film tells how the story of **Butch and Sundance** became a legend...”)

## Seasons

Use lowercase (**spring, summer, autumn, winter**). But references to the seasons should be kept to a minimum because many of our readers live outside the UK. We should not say eg “**An election will be held in the spring**”, but “**An election will be held in five months’ time**”, or similar.

## Semicolons

Use a semicolon when you want to connect two statements within a sentence, typically when they are related to or contrast with one another, eg: “**It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.**” Semicolons should be preceded by a complete sentence and followed by a complete sentence. They’re tricky, so use sparingly, use thoughtfully, or don’t use at all.

## Short words

Use them. They’re easy to spell and easy to understand. So prefer **about** to **approximately**, **after** to **following**, **but** to **however**, **enough** to **sufficient**, **let** to **permit**, **make** to **manufacture**, **show** to **demonstrate**, **spending** to **expenditure**, **take part** to **participate**, **use** to **utilise**, and so on.

## Time

- 9.00pm, 7.00am
- ‘Between 9.00 and 10.00pm’ or ‘from 6.00 to 9.00am’ or ‘6.00-9.00am’
- Midnight and noon (rather than 12 midnight or 12 noon)

## Titles

**HM The Queen** or **Her Majesty The Queen** (subsequently, refer to her as **Queen Elizabeth II** or **the Queen**)

**HRH The Prince of Wales**. Subsequent referrals: **Prince Charles**

**HRH The Duke of Edinburgh** or **HRH The Prince Philip**. Subsequent referrals: **Prince Philip**  
**Dr Smith**, not **Dr. Smith**