

Style Guide

Suburb News is a quarterly publication produced by and for people living in Hampstead Garden Suburb. If you're contributing an article for inclusion in Suburb News, would you kindly read through this guide and keep it safe so you can refer back to it as and when required. If you then apply these recommendations to your text it will enable us to maintain a consistency of grammar and typographical style throughout each issue.

The editors of Suburb News reserve the right to edit and/or précis any article for inclusion in Suburb News to enable conformity to the Style Guide or to fit the space available for the article.

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A

abbreviations and acronyms

Full stops should not be used in abbreviations, or spaces between initials, including those in proper names: RA, HGS Trust, mph, eg, 4am, M&S, No 10, WH Smith, etc.

Use all capitals if an abbreviation is pronounced as the individual letters: BBC, CEO, VAT, etc. If it is an acronym (pronounced as a word) spell out with initial capital, eg Nasa, Nato, Unicef. Note that pdf and plc are lower case.

If an abbreviation or acronym is to be used more than once in a piece, put it in brackets at first mention after the full name: Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) after which it can be used as a standalone. Very familiar abbreviations to Suburb News readers can be used without having to spell out the full name first: HGSRA, HGS Trust etc.

AD & BC replaced with CE and BCE

AD should be replaced with CE (Common Era) and, unlike AD, go after the date (50CE),

BC should be replaced with BCE (Before the Common Era) and also go after the date (300BCE); both go after the century, eg second century CE, fourth century BCE.

adverbs

Never use hyphens after adverbs ending in -ly, eg constantly evolving newspaper, genetically modified food, hotly disputed penalty, wholly owned subsidiary.

For adverbs that do not end in -ly, use hyphens only when there would be a possibility of ambiguity without one, eg an ill-prepared speech.

Phrases such as ever forgiving, near fatal, now defunct, once popular, etc do not need hyphens.

Exceptions: much and well, when used before a noun, eg a much-loved character (but a character who is much loved), a well-founded suspicion (a suspicion that is well founded), etc

ages

Jonathan Ross, 62 (not 'aged 62'); Olivia White, 12.

A 62-year-old man; a 62-year-old; 62 years old.

Numbers ten and under should be spelt out with exceptions (see numbers)

Be clear when referring to age groups, such as the over-80s or under-16s, as sometimes these groupings don't include the people who are actually 80 or 16; if the group does include them, a formulation such as 80 or over, or 16 and above can be clearer for readers. In headlines it is OK to use the shorter description when necessary.

American English

Follow US spellings only for proper nouns, eg Department of Defense, Labor Day, One World Trade Center, Pearl Harbor, World Health Organization etc.

ampersand

Use in names when the organisation does: Marks & Spencer, P&O, etc, but use 'and' in normal text.

apostrophes

used to indicate a missing letter or letters (can't, we'd) or a possessive (David's book).

Examples, each of which means something different:

my sister's friend's books (refers to one sister and her friend).

my sister's friends' books (one sister with lots of friends).

my sisters' friend's books (more than one sister, and their friend).

my sisters' friends' books (more than one sister, and their friends).

The possessive in words and names ending in 's' normally takes an apostrophe followed by a second 's' (Jones's, James's), but be guided by pronunciation and use the plural apostrophe where it helps: Waters', Hedges' rather than Waters's, Hedges's.

Plural nouns that do not end in 's' take an apostrophe and 's' in the possessive: children's games, old folk's home, people's republic, etc.

Phrases such as collector's item, cow's milk, writer's cramp, etc are treated as singular.

Proper names that contain an apostrophe stay the same in the possessive: McDonald's burgers may be delicious but Sainsbury's are just as good.

B

Barnet

The abbreviation 'Barnet' can apply to the borough or the town in Hertfordshire. If referring to the borough use LB Barnet or Barnet Council for clarification.

Barnett Henrietta

Henrietta Barnett: Ensure she is spelt correctly.

brackets

If the sentence is logically and grammatically complete without the information contained within round brackets, the punctuation stays outside the brackets. (A complete sentence that stands alone in brackets starts with a capital letter and ends with a stop.)

"Square brackets," the grammarian said, "are used in direct quotes when an interpolation [a note from the writer or editor, not uttered by the speaker] is added to provide essential information."

bullet points

take a comma after each one and a full stop after the last ie:

- This is the first bullet point,
- This is the second,
- And this is the third and last.

C

capitals

The tendency towards lower case has been accelerated by the explosion of the internet: some web companies, and many email users, have dispensed with capitals altogether. Our style should reflect this.

jobs all lc, eg prime minister, US secretary of state, chief rabbi, editor of Suburb News.

titles cap up titles, but not job description, eg Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (but the UK prime minister, Rishi Sunak, and Sunak on subsequent mention); the Duke of Westminster (the duke at second mention); Pope Francis but the pope.

government departments initial capitals when full name is used, eg Home Office, Foreign Office, Ministry of Justice. Lower case when abbreviated or paraphrased, eg justice ministry.

artistic and cultural names of institutions, etc, get initial caps, eg Proms at St Jude's, British Museum, National Gallery, Royal Albert Hall, Tate Modern. Names of books, films, music, works of art, etc have initial caps except a, an, and, at, for, from, in, of, on, the, to (except in initial positions or after a colon), eg There Is a Light That Never Goes Out.

churches, hospitals and schools cap up, eg, St Jude's Church (but the other church on Central Square is St Jude's); Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital (but the children's hospital on Great Ormond Street); Henrietta Barnett School (referred to as HBS), Archer Academy.

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

Those that retain a strong link, which may be legally recognised, include Cornish pasty, Melton Mowbray pork pies, Parma ham, Jersey Royal potatoes and Worcestershire sauce, and take initial cap. Champagne and scotch are almost universally regarded as lc.

captions

Captions are an opportunity to give readers further information. It is not always necessary to caption a picture.

There is no need to put (left) after one of the names in a caption showing, say, Rozanna Madylus and John Tomlinson or (left-right) in the caption Olga and her two daughters Vlada and Lera.

Whenever possible pictures should be credited. This is often not required with stock shots.

chair

acceptable in place of chairman or chairwoman; if it seems inappropriate for a particular body, use a different construction ('the meeting was chaired by Ian' or 'Kath was in the chair').

collective nouns

Nouns such as committee, family, government, jury, squad and team take a singular verb or pronoun when thought of as a single unit, but a plural verb or pronoun when thought of as a collection of individuals:

The committee gave its unanimous approval to the plans;

The committee enjoyed biscuits with their tea.

The family can trace its history back to the middle ages;

The family were sitting down, scratching their heads.

The squad is looking stronger for several seasons;

The squad are all very confident that they will win promotion this season.

commas

Commas should be used to insert a breathing space into a sentence: "The aftermath of the terrible earthquake in Turkey and Syria has left thousands displaced, many of those after they have already survived another appalling war."

"The editor, Shelley-Anne Salisbury, is a woman of great vision" – commas if there is only one editor.

"The editor Marie-Christine O'Callaghan has a wonderful writing style" – no commas if there is more than one editor.

Usually no comma before and, as in: Emma Howard finds pleasure in cooking, her family and her dog, but sometimes it can help the reader (he ate cereal, kippers, bacon, eggs, toast and marmalade, and drank tea).

A missing comma can sabotage a sentence, as in: "Emma Howard finds pleasure in cooking her family and her dog."

D

dashes

An en dash is a midsize dash (longer than a hyphen). A single en dash can add a touch of drama – like this. But use sparingly.

A pair of en dashes are an alternative to commas or brackets when you want to draw the reader's attention to something surprising or unusual. An example of how not to do it: "Many residents in the block – which sits close to the Heath Extension – were visibly shaken." The block's innocuous location does not need underlining with en dashes. Commas would suffice.

Beware sentences – such as this one – that dash about all over the place – commas (or even, very occasionally, brackets) are often better; semicolons also have their uses.

Dashes should be en dashes rather than hyphens.

dates

Suburb News style is: 21 July 2016 (day month year; no commas).

21 July-6 August, 6-10 August, etc. In the 21st century but 21st-century boy; fourth century BCE; 2007CE, 2500BCE, 10,000BCE.

Use figures for decades: the 1960s, the swinging 60s, etc.

decades

1950s, etc; use figures if you abbreviate: roaring 20s, swinging 60s, a woman in her 70s.

double word space

Double word spacing is often used after a full stop. Single spacing will suffice.

E

email

Not e-mail.

exclamation marks

Use sparingly! (As Scott Fitzgerald said, it is like laughing at your own jokes.)

F

foreign accents

Use accents on French, German, Portuguese, Spanish and Irish Gaelic words – and, if at all possible, on people's names in any language, eg Sven-Göran Eriksson, Béla Bartók, Françoise.

foreign words and phrases

Italicise, with regular type translation in brackets.

fractions

two-thirds, five-eighths, etc, but two and a half, three and three-quarters, etc.

However, use 1/3, 3/4 in tables, recipes, etc.

Do not mix fractions and percentages in the same article.

G

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 and patronising.

So we use actor or comedian for women as well as men; firefighter, not fireman; PC, not WPC (police forces have abandoned the distinction), postal workers, not postmen, etc.

Do not gratuitously describe a woman as a "mother-of-three": family details and marital status are only relevant in stories about families or marriage.

Use humankind or humanity rather than mankind, a word that alienates half the population from their own history.

Never say "his" to cover men and women: use his or her, or a different construction; in sentences such as "a teacher who beats his/her pupils is not fit to do the job", there is usually a way round the problem – in this case, "teachers who beat their pupils ..."

With gendered language you should use the pronouns any individual chooses to identify with, eg she/her, he/him, they/them. Don't identify someone as trans unless it's relevant.

H

hyphens

Suburb News style is to use one word wherever possible. Hyphens tend to clutter up text. A hyphen (-) is a punctuation mark that's used to join words or parts of words. It's not interchangeable with other types of dashes.

A hyphen should be used for multiple-word adjectives (compound modifiers) – two or more words that join together to function like one adjective. Eg, We're looking for a dog-friendly hotel.

Generally, you need the hyphen only if the two or more words are functioning together as an adjective before the noun they're describing. If the noun comes first, leave the hyphen out. Eg, Is this hotel dog friendly?

With regards to adverbial phrases, see adverbs.

Hyphenated compound words are the ones (obviously) with a hyphen between the words. Over time, many hyphenated compounds become closed compounds – teen-ager became teenager for instance. Check a dictionary if you're not sure whether to use a hyphen or not.

Examples of hyphenated compound words: mother-in-law, editor-in-Chief, ten-year-old.

Examples of closed compound words: notebook, waistcoat, bookstore.

Examples of open compound words: living room, real estate, coffee mug.

I

initials (see abbreviations and acronyms)

No spaces or points, whether businesses or individuals, eg WH Smith, HGS Trust, HG Wells.

introductory words

At the start of a sentence such as 'However', 'Nonetheless', 'Instead', should be followed by a comma.

italics

Use regular type for titles of books, films, musical compositions and references etc. Use italics for foreign words and phrases (with translation in regular type in brackets) and scientific/latin names. Never use italics in headlines.

L

lyrics and poetry

As with poetry, run song lyrics line by line if space permits:

Do you really want to hurt me?

Do you really want to make me cry?

If you don't have room to do this, separate the lines with spaces and an oblique (slash):

Sex and drugs and rock'n'roll / Is all my brain and body need. / Sex and drugs and rock'n'roll / Are very good indeed.

Italics are acceptable, though not essential.

N

numbers

Spell out from one to ten; numerals from 11 to 999,999. Numbers from one to ten should also usually be written as figures when they come alongside a unit of measurement, for example 5 miles, 3kg, but use discretion if a figure would look oddly precise, for example in a phrase such as: "He drank one pint and left."

P

parentheses (see brackets)

poetry (see lyrics and poetry)

Q

quotation marks

Use double quotes at the start and end of a quoted section, with single quotes for quoted words within that section. Place full points and commas inside the quotes for a complete quoted sentence; otherwise the point comes outside – "Marjorie said: 'Your style guide needs updating,' and I said: 'I agree.'" but: "Marjorie said updating the guide was 'a difficult and time-consuming task'."

When beginning a quote with a sentence fragment that is followed by a full sentence, punctuate according to the final part of the quote, eg The minister called the allegations "blatant lies. But in a position such as mine, it is only to be expected."

Use single quotation marks for words that aren't actually quotations, for example: These are the people who put the 'style' in style guide.

R

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.

S

s or z?

The Suburb News house style is to use the letter 's' rather than 'z' in words such as: summarise, organise, finalise, authorise, etc.

semicolon

Used correctly, the semicolon is a very elegant compromise between a full stop (too much) and a comma (not enough). This sentence illustrates beautifully how it's done: "Some contributors were brilliant; others were less so." A semicolon is a partial pause, a different way of pausing, without using a full stop.

T

thousands, millions and billions

thousand in any circumstances can be expressed as figures eg, 9,500 or as 9.5k, whichever seems appropriate, but should be consistent throughout the article. Can also sometimes read better if expressed in words eg, seventy thousand people attended the Women's World Cup Final.

million one thousand thousands: in copy use m for sums of money: £10m, to save using six zeros; otherwise spell out million as m can be misunderstood in certain circumstances eg, as an abbreviation of metres. Use m in headlines as long as it is not confusing. Do not use the capital letter M as it is the Roman numeral for a thousand; use the lowercase letter to avoid confusion.

billion one thousand millions: in copy use bn for sums of money, quantities or inanimate objects: £10bn, 1bn litres of water; otherwise billion: six billion people, etc; use bn in headlines.

titles

Do not italicise or put in quotes titles of books, films, TV programmes, paintings, songs, albums etc.

Words in titles take initial caps except for a, and, at, for, from, in, of, on, the, to (except in initial position or after a colon): A Tale of Two Cities, Happy End of the World, Shakespeare in Love, Superman: The Early Years, I'm in Love With the Girl on a Certain Manchester Megastore Checkout Desk, etc.

W

websites

Website addresses can be broken at a sensible point within the name if you need to turn a line. It is not necessary to include https://www at the start of a web address. If the web address is excessively long, you can shorten it by going to tinyurl.com. If the web address falls at the end of a sentence, it is important to complete the sentence with a full point.

wifi

Not Wi-Fi.