

Guidelines for Writing English Language Technical Documentation for an International Audience

Prepared by the

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How the Guidelines Came into Being

In 1999 the member societies of INTECOM recognized there was a need to help technical writers in all countries who have to write English-language technical documentation for products that will be sold worldwide. If they are writing for an audience solely in the UK, the Scandinavian countries, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, then British style is appropriate. Similarly, if they are writing for an audience solely in North and South America, the Philippines, and many Asian countries, then US style is appropriate. But if they have to write a single set of documentation for use in all countries, then a difficult decision has to be made.

From June 1999 to June 2000 I questioned technical writers in many countries to determine which style they felt would be appropriate, and whether they felt standards should be established. Their response was clear: (1) they need help in making decisions; and (2) they want guidelines, *not* standards.

At the INTECOM Annual General Meeting held in London in June 2000, the delegates decided that INTECOM should set up a Study Group to determine preferences, identify words and expressions that pose problems, research which is the most suitable writing style to adopt, and make recommendations.

The study was to examine differences in spelling, usage, and punctuation; it also was to consider cultural differences that influence how one should write. A 12-person Study Group was formed, with members in countries as widespread as Australia, South Africa, Canada, the UK, the US, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

The Study Group's findings have been assembled into this set of guidelines. For the moment they are printed as a paper document, for release on 2 July 2003 at Forum 2003 in Milano, Italy. The objective, however, is to place them on the INTECOM Web site (www.intecom.org), probably in the third quarter of 2003. However, their development will not stop there. We intend that the Guidelines will become a 'living' document, which the Study Group will continue to amend and update as styles change and new words and expressions are drawn to our attention. And this is where **you** come into the picture: if you know of a local expression or a cultural difference that exists where you live, please email details to me (ronb@rgilearning.com). I will circulate your information among the Study Group for discussion and eventual insertion into the Guidelines.

The Study Group members have devoted an immense amount of time to this project. My deepest appreciation goes to all of them, for their dedication and perseverance. Without their input, these Guidelines would not exist.

Ron Blicq

Project Coordinator and Senior Editor

INTECOM International Technical Documentation Study Group

2 July 2003

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Project Objectives

The original objective of INTECOM's International Language Project Group was to identify which spelling and usage we should recommend for documentation that would be written in English and would receive worldwide distribution.

As the Project Group's studies progressed, however, it became clear that, because of the widespread preferences around the world, we would find it extremely difficult to establish definitive guidelines that would be acceptable to everyone. Consequently, we decided to prepare guidelines for three different situations:

1. For English-language documentation that would be read primarily in countries where British-based spelling, terminology and usage are currently prevalent or were part of the country's history.

These would be principally the UK, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada*, many Caribbean countries, India, Pakistan, the Scandinavian countries, and some European countries. For them, we would encourage using British-based spelling and usage.

2. For English-language documentation that would be read primarily in countries where US-based spelling, terminology and usage are prevalent.

These would be principally North and South America, Canada*, the Philippines, and many Asian countries such as Japan, China, and North and South Korea. For them, we would encourage using US-based spelling and usage.

3. For English-language documentation that would be read by users in a much broader range of countries, with some accustomed to British usage and some accustomed to US usage.

For such documentation we would identify what the Project Group felt, based on their research, would be the preferred usage.

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¹ Canada appears in both groups because it is a special case. Historically, Canada has been closer to British (and French) spelling and usage but, because of its proximity to the US and the influence of US media, opinion is divided within Canada as to which is the preferred usage. Either is acceptable.

Introduction to The Guidelines

The guidelines on the following pages list the Project Team’s suggestions for each situation. The guidelines are followed by nine Articles that describe either special cases or the Project Group’s rationale for preferring certain usage or spelling.

What will quickly become apparent is that the Project Group has mostly suggested using US spelling and usage for English-language documentation that will have worldwide use. Our rationale is simply that people who are accustomed to US spelling practices find British spelling to be strange or quaint, or may even think the writer cannot spell correctly. On the other hand, most people who use British spelling and usage have also been exposed to US spelling and usage, so that even though they don’t use it themselves (as, for example, in Great Britain), they recognize it and more readily adapt to it.

In presenting the guidelines we have used the following approach:

- Where words have different US and British spellings, or are understood to have different meanings, three versions are shown: US, British, and International. For example:

harbor (US); **harbour** (Br); Intl: **harbor**

These are the definitions for the abbreviations used above:

Br – the recommended spelling in documentation intended for users accustomed to British usage.

US – the recommended spelling in documentation intended for users accustomed to US usage.

Intl – the suggested spelling for documentation to be used worldwide (i.e. recommended for international use).

We show the spelling/usage in all three ways to simplify reader access: you simply search for the word and immediately identify its usage for the document you are writing.

- Where a word or expression can be spelled in alternative ways, but we recommend it should be spelled the same way in all documentation, the word is shown as a single entry:

antagonize

- If additional comments apply, such as how the word is expressed as a plural (pl), it appears like this:

addendum pl: **addenda**

If there is a choice of plurals, we recommend (rec) which we consider is preferable:

memorandum pl: **memorandums** (rec) or **memoranda**

- If a word can offer a problem to both native-born English-language writers and those who write English as their second language, it is defined:

personal/personnel *personal* means concerning one person; *personnel* refers to all the members of a group, often employees all in one organization

- Several abbreviations are used throughout the list:

abbr	abbreviation, abbreviated	pl	plural
adj	adjective	pref	prefer, preferred, preference
Br	British, Britain	rec	recommend, recommended
def	definition	SI	International System of Units
Intl	International	US	United States
lc	lower case	v	verb
n	noun		

The most-used abbreviations appear at the foot of each page in the Guidelines.

A

a/an use *a* when the following word starts with a consonant or a vowel that has a firm sound: *a voltmeter, a hotel, a union, a European*; use *an* before a vowel that does not have a firm sound, or before a silent *h*: *an Asian, an octet, an hotel, an hour*

abbreviations for guidelines on how to form abbreviations, see Article 6

abet, abetted, abetting

abhor, abhorred

abridge, abridged, abridging

abridgement (Br); **abridgment** (US); Intl: **abridgment**

abscissa pl: **abscissas** (rec) or **abscissae**

absinthe, absinth **absinthe** rec

abut, abutted, abutting, abutment

ac abbr for alternating current

accouter, accouterment (US); **accoutre, accoutrement** Br; Intl: **accouter, accouterment**

acknowledge, acknowledged, acknowledging, knowledgeable

acknowledgement (Br); **acknowledgment** (US); Intl: **acknowledgement**

actualise (Br); **actualize** (US); Intl: **actualize**

actuator

adapter/adaptor **adaptor** rec

adaption/adaptation **adaption** rec; see Article 3

addendum pl: **addenda**

advertise avoid using *-ize*

advice (n); **advise** (v)

adviser/advisor **adviser** rec

ae/e *ae* is pref in Br for words like *aesthetic, anaemic*; *e* is pref in the US: *esthetic, enemic*; Intl: most often *e* (see individual entries); also see Article 1

aegis/egis **aegis** rec

aeon (Br); **eon** (US); Intl: **eon**

aerate

aerial see antenna

aeroplane (Br); **airplane** (US); Intl: **airplane** or **aircraft**

aesthete, aesthetic (Br); **esthete, esthetic** (US); Intl: **aesthete; aesthetic**

affect/effect use *affect* only as a verb, as in '*the high sound level affected their hearing*'; use *effect* primarily as a noun, as in '*the effect on their hearing was acute*'; use *effect* as a verb when the meaning is 'to have an effect on...', as in '*a contractor was hired to effect a better level of service*'; avoid using *impact on* as a synonym for *affect* or *effect*

afterward (US); **afterwards** (Br); Intl: **afterward**

agenda pl: **agendas**

ageing (Br); **aging** (US); Intl: **aging**

aggrandise (Br); **aggrandize** (US); Intl: **aggrandize**

agonise (Br); **agonize** (US); Intl: **agonize**

airline def: a commercial carrier that provides aviation services

air line def: a line or pipe that carries air

a.k.a. abbr for *also known as*

albumen (US); **albumin** (Br); Intl: **albumen**

alkali pl: **alkalis**

allot, allotted, allotting, allotment

already/all ready def: *already* means 'by this time'; *all ready* means 'everyone (or everything) is ready'

all right def: everything is satisfactory; never use *alright*

alternate/alternative def: *alternate* means by turn and turn about, as in 'Johan and Siegfried alternated as the course instructor' (they took turns); *alternative* means one of several choices, as in 'the preferred alternative was to upgrade the software (there were several possible alternatives)

alternating current abbr: **ac**

alternator

aluminium (Br); **aluminum** (US); Intl: **aluminum**

AM abbr for amplitude modulation

a.m. abbr for *ante meridiem*; def: before noon

ambience; ambient

ambiguous; ambiguity

Americanise (Br); **Americanize** (US); Intl: **Americanize**

amoeba

amok/amuck **amok** rec

among/between use *among* when referring to three or more items; use *between* when referring to only two items

- amount/number** use *amount* to refer to a general quantity: the amount of traffic is heavier than usual; use *number* to refer to items that can be counted: the number of vehicles passing the intersection is 10% higher than usual
- amphitheater** (US); **amphitheatre** (Br); Intl: **amphitheater**
- amplitude modulation** abbr: AM
- ampoule** (Br); **ampule** (US); Intl: **ampoule**
- an** see *a*
- anaemic** (Br); **anemic** (US); Intl: **anemic**; **anemia**
- anaesthesia, anaesthetic** (Br); **anesthesia, anesthetic** (US); Intl: **anesthesia, anesthetic**
- analog** (US); **analogue** (Br); Intl: **analog**
- analogy; analogous**
- analyse, analysed, analyser, analysing** (Br); **analyze, analyzed, analyzer, analyzing** (US); Intl: **analyze, analyzed, analyzer, analyzing**
- and/or** avoid using this expression; use either **and** or **or**
- anemic** see *anaemic*
- anesthesia** see *anaesthesia*
- anneal, annealed, annealing**
- aneurysm**
- annex** (US); **annexe** (Br); Intl: **annex**
- annul, annulled**
- anodise** (Br); **anodize** (US); Intl: **anodize**
- anomie**
- antagonize**
- ante meridiem** def: before noon; abbr: **a.m.**
- antenna** the pl is generally **antennas**, except in geology where it is **antennae**; **antenna** has replaced the older term *aeria*
- anticlockwise** (Br); **counterclockwise** (US); Intl: **counterclockwise**
- anybody; any body** *anybody* means 'any person'; *any body* means 'any object'
- anymore; any more** two words pref
- anyway; any way** *anyway* means 'in any case' or 'in any event'; *any way* means 'in any manner'
- apartment** (US); **flat** (Br); **suite** (US); Intl: **apartment**
- apophthegm** (Br); **apothegm** (US); Intl: **apothegm**
- appal** (Br); **appall** (US); Intl: **appal**; but **appalled** has //
- apparatus** pl: **apparatuses**
- appeal, appealed, appealing**
- appears/seems** use *appears* to describe something you can see: *the tracks appear to be fresh*; use *seems* to describe something you cannot see: *the air pressure seems to be low*
- appendix** pl: **appendices** (Br); **appendixes** (US); Intl: **appendixes**
- appetiser, appetising** (Br); **appetizer, appetizing** (US); Intl: **appetizer, appetizing**
- apprise, apprised, apprising**
- arbor** (US); **arbour** (Br); Intl: **arbor**
- archaeology** (Br); **archeology** (US); Intl: **archeology**
- ardor** (US); **ardour** (Br); Intl: **ardor**
- arise**
- armor** (US); **armour** (Br); Intl: **armor**
- around** (US); **round** (Br) def: enclosed, about, at that place or time; Intl: **around**; also see **round**
- arrestor** (Br); **arrestor** (US); Intl: **arrestor**
- arsenious** (Br); **arsenous** (US); Intl: **arsenous**
- artefact** (Br); **artifact** (US); Intl: **artifact**
- ascendant**
- askance**
- asphalt** rec spelling
- assure** def: to state with confidence, to give support; avoid confusing with *ensure* (to state with confidence and give support) and *insure* (to secure financial protection)
- ataxia**
- atomize**
- attorney** (US); **lawyer** (Br); Intl: **lawyer**
- aubergine** (Br); **eggplant** (US); Intl: **eggplant**
- audiovisual
- aural/oral** *aural* refers to hearing; *oral* refers to speech
- authorise** (Br); **authorize** (US); Intl: **authorize**
- auto-** as a prefix normally combines into one word: autobiography, autoclave, autofocus, autogenic, autoimmune, autoradiograph
- autogiro** (US); **autogyro** (Br) Intl: **autogyro**

automobile (US); **car** (Br); Intl: **automobile**;
avoid using abbr **auto**

autumn (Br); **fall** (US); Intl: **autumn**

aventurine

AWOL def: absent without leave; no
punctuation

ax (US); **axe** (Br); Intl: **axe**; pl: **axes**

axis the plural also is **axes**

B

baby carriage (US); **pram** (Br); Intl: **baby carriage**

back- as a prefix, combine into one word:
backboard, backlog, backup (n & adj), *back up*
(v)

backpedal, backpedaled, backpedaling (US);
backpedal, backpedalled, backpedalling
(Br); Intl: **backpedaled, backpedaling**

back garden (Br); **back yard** [or yard] (US);
Intl: **back yard**

backward/backwards **backward** rec

bade/bid **bid** rec

baguette

bail/bale use **bail** to describe release money,
cricket wicket, water scoop; use **bale** to
describe a bundle of material (as in *hay bale*)

balk (US); **baulk** (Br); Intl: **balk**

bandolier

bandwidth

banister no 's' at end

banknote (Br); **bill** (US); def: paper currency;
Intl: **banknote**

bath (Br); **bathtub** or **tub** (US); Intl: **bathtub**

banyan

baptize

barbital (US); **barbitone** (Br); Intl: **barbital**

barrel barreled, barreling (US); **barrelled,**
barrelling (Br); Intl: **barreled, barreling**

bases def: pl of both *base* and *basis*

bateau pl: **bateaux**

baulk Br equiv of **balk**

beau pl: **beaux** or **beaus**; **beaus** rec

because/for/since use *because* to describe
cause-and-effect: 'The project was delayed
because the hardware arrived late.'; use *for* to
describe something less tangible: 'The project
was delayed for undisclosed reasons.'; use
since when time is an element: 'There have
been no outages since we installed the new
software.'

behavior (US); **behaviour** (Br); Intl: **behavior**

behave (Br); **behoove** (US); Intl: **behoove**

benefit benefited, benefiting (US);
benefitted, benefitting (Br); Intl:
benefited, benefiting

benzene def: liquid found in coal tar, used as a
solvent and to make plastics

benzine def: mixture of hydrocarbons obtained
from petroleum, used as a solvent or fuel

berm def: a raised, narrow strip of land often
built beside a river or lake to prevent flooding

beside; besides def: *beside* means alongside;
besides means as well as

between use when referring to a connection
between only two items; see among

bevel beveled, beveling (US); **bevelled,**
bevelling (Br); Intl: **beveled, beveling**

bi- as a prefix combines to form one word:
bipolar, bidirectional, bilateral, bimetallic,
bimonthly, bistable, biweekly

bias; biased; biasing

bibliophile

bicolor (US); **bicolour** (Br); Intl: **bicolor**

bill (US); **banknote** (Br) def: paper currency;
Intl: **banknote**

bill (Br); **invoice** (US) def: a document
itemizing products sold or services provided;
Intl: **invoice**

bill, cop, copper (Br); **cop, fuzz, ???** (US)
def: a slang term for 'policeman' or 'the
police'; avoid using in technical writing; use
the **police** or **policeman** (Intl, Br and US)

billboard (US); **hoarding** (Br); Intl: **billboard**

billfold (US); **wallet** (Br); Intl: **wallet**

billion use with care: in US it means 10⁹; in Br
it means 10¹²

biscuit (US); **cracker** (US) def: a savory
baked confection; Intl: **savory biscuit**

biscuit (Br); **cookie** (US) def: a sweet baked
confection; Intl: **sweet biscuit**

biscuit (US); **scone** (Br); def: a yeast-free
baked bun; Intl: **scone**

blamable/blameable **blamable** rec

blur; blurred; blurring; blurry

bogie/bogey def: a *bogie* is a wheeled assembly that swivels; a *bogey* is a golf score or evil spirit

bonnet (Br); hood (US) def: the cover over an automobile engine; in Br, hood refers to the roof over the passengers' heads; Intl: define the meaning (eg, write *the engine-compartment hood* or *the hood over the engine compartment*)

boracic/boric boric pref

braces (Br); suspenders (US) def: elasticized straps that reach over the shoulders and clip onto the top of pants (US) or trousers (Br); Intl: **suspenders**

bracket; bracketed; bracketing

brackets def: a means for enclosing information (as shown here); in UK called brackets; in US called parentheses; see Article 4

briar/brier brier rec, except when referring to a tobacco pipe (in US)

borderline

break- as a prefix in n or adj form, combines into one word: *breakdown, breakup*; as a verb, it is two words: *to break down..., to break up...*

bridge; bridging

brimful only one 'l'

briquet/briquette **briquette** rec

broil (US); grill (Br); def: cooking method; Intl: **grill**

brooch (Br); pin (US) def: a decorative emblem that is pinned to a jacket or dress; Intl: **brooch**

brutalize

bronco pl: **Broncos**

budget; budgeted; budgeting

bug (US); insect (Br); Intl: insect

bullhorn (US); loud-hailer (Br); Intl: bullhorn (but define it on first use in a document)

bumper (Br); fender (US) def: a horizontal bar to prevent damage to the front or back of an automobile; Intl: **fender**

buoy; buoyant pronounced 'boy' in Br, Can., Aus, NZ; pronounced 'boo-ee' in US

bureau pl: **bureaus (US) or bureaux (Br); Intl: bureaus**

burned (US); burnt (Br); Intl: burned

bus; bused; buses when describing a mode of transportation, only one 's'

busy; business; businesslike

by- as a prefix normally combines into one word: *bylaw, bypass, byproduct*

C

cacao def: the seed pod containing the substance from which cocoa and chocolate are made

cadre

Caesarean (Br); Caesarian or Cesarean (US); def: as in a caesarian section; Intl: **Caesarian**

caesium alternative spelling; see **cesium**

caffeine/cafein **caffeine** rec

calamine

calendar/calender/colander def: a *calendar* shows the arrangement of days; *calender* is the finish on paper or cloth; a *colander* is a sieve

caliber (US); calibre (Br); Intl: caliber

caliper (US); calliper (Br); Intl: caliper (note: no 's')

calisthenics (US); callisthenics (Br); Intl: calisthenics

calk/caulk **caulk** rec

calorie; caloric

calorimeter/colorimeter def: a *calorimeter* measures heat; a *colorimeter* measures color

cambium pl: **cambia** (rec) or **cambiums**

cameo pl: **cameos**

camomile (Br); chamomile (US); Intl: camomile

canceled, canceling (US); cancelled, cancelling (Br); Intl: canceled, canceling

candor (US); candour (Br); Intl: candor

candy, candies (US); sweet; sweets (Br); Intl: candy, candies

cantaloupe

canyon

capitalise (Br); capitalize (US); Intl: capitalize; but capitalism and capitalization in both Br and US

car (Br); automobile (US); Intl: automobile; avoid using abbr **auto**

carbonise/carbonize **carbonize** rec

carburetor/carburettor **carburetor** rec; also **carburetion**

carcase/carcass carcass rec	check- as a prefix combines to form one word: checklist; checkpoint; checkup (n, adj)
carcino- as a prefix, combines to form one word; eg: <i>carcinogen</i>	check/cheque to describe a method of payment, use check for US, cheque for Br; for Intl use cheque to avoid confusion with 'check' (to check something)
carcinoma pl: carcinomas (rec) or carcinomata	checkered/chequered def: patterned, varied; checkered rec
cardamom/cardamon cardomom rec	checkers (US); draughts (Br); def: a board game; Intl: checkers , but offer both terms the first time: <i>the game of checkers (draughts)</i> ...
caretaker (Br); janitor (US); Intl: janitor	checking account (US); current account (Br); Intl: checking account
carrel/carrell carrel rec	chemist's [shop] (Br); drugstore or pharmacy (US); Intl: pharmacy
case- as a prefix usually combines to form one word: casebook, caseharden, caseworker; exceptions are case history, case study	cheque see check
casino pl: casinos	chili/chilli chili rec
casket (US); coffin (Br); Intl: coffin	chimaera/chimera chimera rec; also chimerical, chimerically
caldron (US); cauldron (Br); Intl: cauldron	chips (Br); french fries (US); Intl: french fries
catalog (US); catalogue (Br); Intl: catalogue, catalogued, cataloguing	chisel; chiseled, chiseling (US); chisel, chiselled, chiselling (Br); Intl: chiseled, chiseling
catalyse (Br); catalyze (US); Intl: catalyze	chlorophyl/chlorophyll chlorophyll rec
catalysis pl: catalyses	choral/chorale def: <i>choral</i> means sung; <i>chorale</i> means a type of song
catalyst	choreography
category; categorical; categorise/categorize categorize rec	cicatrice (Br); cicatrix (US); Intl: cicatrix ; pl: cicatrices
catsup (US); ketchup (Br); Intl: ketchup	cider/cyder cider rec
caulk/calk caulk rec	cigaret/cigarette cigarette rec
cauterise (Br); cauterize (US); Intl: cauterize	cinema [building] (Br); movie theater (US); Intl: movie theater
caviar	cipher/cypher cipher rec
cellphone/mobile phone US and Canada refer to a portable phone as a <i>cellphone</i> ; UK and many other countries refer to it as a <i>mobile phone</i> (or simply <i>mobile</i>)	circumcise
census pl: censuses	civilise/civilize civilize rec
center, centered, centering (US); centre, centred, centring (Br); Intl: center, centered, centering	clamor (US); clamour (Br); Intl: clamor ; but clamorous is correct for both US and Br
centimeter (US); centimetre (Br); Intl: centimetre see Article ???	clangor (US); clangour (Br); Intl: clangor ; but clangorous is correct for both US and Br
centralise (Br); centralize (US) Intl: centralize	clarinet; clarinetist
cesium/caesium cesium rec	clerk [in a shop] (US); shop assistant (Br); Intl: use clerk , but clarify it by writing store clerk
chancellery; chancellor	co- as a prefix meaning jointly or together, co- normally combines into one word: coexist, coequal, cooperate, coordinate, coplanar ; an exception is co-worker
changeable	
changeover (n, adj); change over (v)	
channel, channeled, channeling (US); channel, channelled, channelling (Br); Intl: channeled, channeling	
chargeable	
chateau/château château rec; pl: châteaux (US); châteaux (Br); Intl: châteaux	

coaxial; coaxially	coordinate also see co-
cocoa def: roasted cacao seeds from which chocolate and a chocolate drink are made	cornflour (Br); cornstarch (US); Intl: cornflour
cocoanut/coconut coconut rec	corollary
coerce; coercion	corrigendum pl: corrigenda
coffin (Br); casket (US); Intl: coffin	cortege/cortège cortege rec
cognisance/cognizance cognizance rec	cosy/cozy cozy rec
colander def: a sieve; also see calendar	coterminous
coliseum	cotillion/cotillon cotillion rec
collectable (Br); collectible (US); Intl: collectible	council/counsel def: a <i>council</i> (n) is a body of people, often administrative; <i>to counsel</i> (v) means to give advice
collect call (US); reverse charge (Br); Intl: collect call	councillor (Br); councilor (US); Intl: councillor
colon def: punctuation mark; see Article 5 for usage guidelines	counter- as a prefix combines to form one word: counteract , counterbalance , counterflow , counterweight
colonise/colonize colonize rec	counterclockwise (US); anticlockwise (Br); Intl: counterclockwise
color (US); colour (Br); Intl: color , colored , coloring , colorimeter	courgette (Br); zucchini (US); Intl: zucchini
comma see Article 5 for usage guidelines	covet; coveted; coveting
commercialise (Br); commercialize (US); Intl: commercialize ; but commercialism and commercialization are both Br and US	coxswain
commit; committal, committed, committing	cozy/cosy cozy rec
compatible; compatibility	crampon
comprise; comprised; comprising avoid inserting 'of' after 'comprised'	crematorium/crematory crematorium rec; pl: crematoriums (rec) or crematoria
compromise; compromised	crisps (Br); potato chips (US); Intl: potato chips
concession [price] (Br); senior's discount (US); Intl: senior's discount	criterion pl: criteria
concur; concurred; concurrent; concurring	criticise (Br); criticize (US); Intl: criticize
condenser	crosswalk (US); pedestrian crossing (Br); Intl: crosswalk
conductor	cultivable/cultivable cultivable rec
confer; conferred; conferring; conferee	cumin
connection/connexion connection rec	cupboard (Br); closet (US); Intl: cupboard
conterminous/coterminous def: having the same boundaries; coterminous rec	curb (US); kerb (Br); def: sidewalk edge (US) or pavement edge (Br); Intl: curb ; <i>curb</i> also is used as a v meaning to restrain or as a n meaning a restraint
continual/continuous def: use continual to mean happens frequently but not all the time; use continuous to mean happens without interruption	curet/curette curette rec
control; controlled; controller; controlling	current account (Br); checking account (US); Intl: checking account
convener/convener convener rec	curriculum pl: curricula (Br); curriculums (US); Intl: curriculum
converter/convertor converter rec; also convertible	curriculum vitae def: a formal resume; pl: curriculum vitae
conveyer/conveyor conveyor rec	cursed/curst cursed rec
cooperate also see co-	

curser/cursor cursor rec

customise/customize customize rec

curtains (Br); **drapes** (US); def: a cloth window covering; Intl: **curtains**

D

data although *data* is a plural noun, it can be treated as singular; it's acceptable to write 'the data is comparable to...', 'the data corroborates...'; 'the data has been examined'.

database

dateline

dates see Article 8 for guidelines for writing dates

de- as a prefix, normally combines into one word: deaccentuate, deactivate, decode, deemphasize, deenergize; exceptions: de-ice, de-ionize

debris/débris debris rec

decentralise (Br); **decentralize** (US); Intl: **decentralize**

decimate def: reduce to one-tenth; often wrongly used to mean destroy completely

decimeter (US); decimetre (Br); Intl: decimetre

decor/décor decor rec

defence (Br); **defense** (US); Intl: **defense**; but **defensive** is correct for Br and US

defer; deferred; deferring; deferrable

definite/definitive def: *definite* means exact, precise; *definitive* means conclusive, fully evolved

deflection/deflexion deflection rec

deforest/disforest deforest rec

defuse/defuze defuse rec

demarcation

demeanor (US); **demeanour** (Br); Intl: **demeanor**

demilitarise (Br); **demilitarize** (US); Intl: **demilitarize**

demineralise (Br); **demineralize** (US); Intl: **demineralize**

demonstrate; demonstrable (not *demonstratable*)

demoralise (Br); **demoralize** (US); Intl: **demoralize**

denouement/dénouement denouement rec

deodorise (Br); **deodorize** (US); Intl: **deodorize**

deoxidise (Br); **deoxidize** (US); Intl: **deoxidize**

dependant/dependent in Br, **dependent** is an adj and **dependant** is a n; in US, **dependent** tends to be used as both adj and n; Intl: **dependent** for adj and n

depolarise Br); **depolarize** (US); Intl: **depolarize**

deprecate/depreciate def: *deprecate* means to disapprove of; *depreciate* means to reduce the value of (usually a financial expression)

desensitise (Br); **desensitize** (US); Intl: desensitize

desiccant def: a drying agent

desktop

despatch see dispatch

deter; deterred; deterring; deterrent

device (n); **devise** (v)

dextrous/dexterous dexterous rec

diaeresis/dieresis diaeresis rec

diagram, diagramed (US); **diagram, diagrammed** (Br); Intl: **diagrammed**; but **diagramming** and **diagrammatical**(ly) have *-mm-* in Br and US

dialed, dialing (US); **dialled, dialling** (Br); Intl: **dialed, dialing**

dialectic def: testing the truth

dialog (US); **dialogue** (Br) Intl: write **dialogue** when referring to conversation, but **dialog** in computer science (eg: **dialog box**)

diaper (US); **nappy** (Br); Intl: **diaper**

diaphragm

diarrhea (US); **diarrhoea** (Br); Intl: **diarrhea**

dielectric def: electric insulating medium

dietician/dietitian dietitian rec

different from/different than/different to the preferred expression is *different from*; *different to* also is acceptable; *different than* should never be used

diffuser/diffusor diffuser rec

digitally

digitise (Br); **digitize** (US); Intl: **digitize**

dike/dyke def: an embankment; **dike** rec

diopter (US); **dioptre** (Br); Intl: **diopter**

disbud/debud disbud rec

disassemble/dissemble *disassemble* means to take apart; *dissemble* means to conceal the truth

disassociate see **dissociate** (rec)

disc (Br); **disk** (US); Intl: use **disc** for general use, but **disk** to refer to a computer disk

discernible

discolor (US); **discolour** (Br); Intl: **discolor**

discreet/discrete def: *discreet* means having discretion, being prudent; *discrete* means separate and individually distinct

disenfranchise/disfranchise disenfranchise
rec

disfavor (US); **disfavour** (Br); Intl: **disfavor**

disheveled (US); **dishevelled** (Br); Intl: **disheveled**

dishonor (US); **dishonour** (Br); Intl: **dishonor**

disorient; disoriented; disorienting; disorientation

dispatch/despatch dispatch rec

dissociate/disassociate dissociate rec

distil (Br); **distill** (US); Intl: **distil**; but distilled and distillation always have *-ll-*

distribute; distributor

divided highway (US); **dual carriageway** (Br); Intl: **divided highway**, but define the first use if there is any possibility of misunderstanding

dolor (US); **dolour** (Br); Intl: **dolor**; but **dolorous** is so spelled in US and Br

domicil/domicile domicile rec

dovecot/dovecote dovecote rec

down- as a prefix combines into one word: *downgrade, downrange, downtime, downwind*

draft/draught US uses **draft** for both a financial document or an order, and for air motion; Br uses **draft** for a document, but **draught** for air motion; Intl: **draft** rec for both; also see **draughts**

draftsperson (US); **draughtsperson** (Br); Intl: **draftsperson**; but do not write **draftsman** or **draughtsman** because they indicate it's only a male occupation

drapes (US); **curtains** (Br); def: a cloth window covering; Intl: **curtains**

draughts (Br); **checkers** (US); def: a board game; Intl: **checkers**, but offer both terms the first time: *the game of checkers (draughts)...*

drawing pin (Br); **thumb tack** (US); def: a push pin for holding papers on a wallboard; Intl: **thumb tack**, but define when first using the term

drier/dryer def: a drying machine; **drier** (Br); **dryer** (US); Intl: **dryer**

drop; dropped; dropping; droppable

drugstore (US); **chemist's shop** (Br); Intl: **drugstore or pharmacy** (rec)

dual carriageway (Br); **divided highway** (US); Intl: **divided highway**, but define the first use if there is any possibility of misunderstanding

due to avoid using this expression; replace with *because of*

duffle bag

dumbfound(ed)/dumfound(ed)
dumbfound(ed) rec

duplicator

dustbin (Br); **garbage can** (US); Intl: **garbage can**

dwarf; dwarfed; dwarfing; pl: **dwarfs** (rec) or **dwarves**

dynamo pl: **dynamos**

E

earthward/earthwards earthward rec

eastward/eastwards eastward rec

e-commerce

ecumenic(al)

edema (US); **oedema** (Br); Intl: **edema**

editorialise (Br); **editorialize** (US); Intl: **editorialize**

effect/affect use *effect* primarily as a noun, as in '*the effect on their hearing was acute*'; use *effect* as a verb when the meaning is 'to have an effect on...', as in '*a contractor was hired to effect a better level of service*'; use *affect* only as a verb, as in '*the high sound level affected their hearing*'; avoid using *impact on* as a synonym for *affect* or *effect*

efficacy/efficiency def: *efficacy* means effectiveness, the ability of a product, process, or system to do a job; *efficiency* is a measurement of capability (the ratio of work done to energy expended)

effluence/efflux effluence rec

e.g. or **eg** (rec) abbr for *exempli gratia* (Latin, meaning 'for example')

eggplant (US); **aubergine** (Br); Intl: **eggplant**

eighth	entrepreneur; entrepreneurial
elevator (US); lift (Br); Intl: elevator	entrust/intrust entrust rec
elite/élite elite rec	eon (US); aeon (Br); Intl: eon
email/e-mail email rec	epaulet (US); epaulette (Br); Intl: epaulette
embed; embedded; embedding	epicenter (US); epicentre (Br); Intl: epicenter
emit; emitter; emitted; emitting	epitomise (Br); epitomize (US); Intl: epitomize
empathise (Br); empathize (US); Intl: empathize	equaled, equaling (US); equalled, equalling (Br); Intl: equaled, equaling
emphasise (Br); emphasize (US); Intl: emphasize	equalise/equalize equalize rec
employee	equi- as a prefix combines into one word: <i>equiphase, equipotential, equisignal</i>
empower	equilibrium pl: equilibriums (rec) or equilibria
enamor, enamored (US); enamour, enamoured (Br); Intl: enamor, enamored	equip; equipped; equipping; equipment
encapsulate	erase; erasable
encase/incase encase rec	eraser (US); rubber (Br); def: a rubberlike compound used to erase pencil marks on paper; Intl: eraser
encipher	erratum pl: errata
enclose/inclose enclose rec	eroticism/erotism eroticism rec
encyclopaedia/encyclopedia encyclopedia rec	eskar/esker esker rec
endeavor, endeavored, endeavoring (US); endeavour, endeavoured, endeavouring (Br); Intl: endeavor, endeavored, endeavoring	esophagus (US); oesophagus (Br); Intl: esophagus
endorse/indorse endorse rec	estate agent (Br); realtor (US); Intl: use either, but define the meaning of the word(s) on first using them
energise (Br); energize (US); Intl: energize	esthete, esthetic (US); aesthete, aesthetic (Br); Intl: aesthete, aesthetic
enforce not <i>inforce</i>	estrogen (US); oestrogen (Br); Intl: estrogen
enfranchise	estrus (US); oestrus (Br); Intl: estrus
engine driver (Br); engineer (US) def: the person who drives an engine (usually a railway engine); Intl: engine driver (to avoid confusion with the title engineer – which is used in all countries to refer to a professional engineer)	etc (Br); etc. (US); Intl: etc abbr for <i>et</i> <i>cetera</i> ; def: means 'and others'
engrain/ingrain ingrain rec	eurhythmics (Br); eurythmics (US); Intl: eurythmics
enquire/inquire; enquiry/inquiry inquire, inquiry rec	euro pl: euros; abbr: €
enrol, enrolment (Br); enroll, enrollment (US); Intl: enrol, enrolment ; but enrolled and enrolling have -//- in Br and US	evangelise/evangelize evangelize rec
ensure/insure/assure def: <i>ensure</i> means to make certain; <i>insure</i> means to secure financial protection; <i>assure</i> means to state with confidence, to give support	everybody/every body def: <i>everybody</i> means all the people within a group; <i>every body</i> means every individual object (body)
enterprise	everyone; every one def: <i>everyone</i> means all the people within a group; <i>every one</i> means every single item
enthral (Br); enthrall (US); Intl: enthrall ; but enthralled, enthralling have -//- in Br and US	excel; excelled; excelling
	exercise
	excise
	exhibitor
	exorcise/exorcize exorcise rec

expressway (US); **motorway** (Br); Intl: **expressway**, but define its meaning on first using it

extensible/extensile extensible rec

extol; extolled; extolling

extracurricular

extraordinary

extrovert

F

facade/façade façade rec

face- as a prefix normally combines into one word in the n and adj forms: *facedown*, *facelift*, *faceplate*; an exceptions is *face-saving*

faggot (Br); fagot (US) def: a bundle of sticks; Intl: faggot

fail-safe

fall (US); autumn (Br); Intl: autumn

fallout one word as n or adj; two words as v

fantasy/phantasy fantasy rec

farther/further def: use *farther* to denote distance; use *further* to describe a continuation

faucet (US); tap (Br); Intl: tap

faultfinder; faultfinding

favor (US); favour (Br); Intl: favor

feldspar/felspar feldspar rec

fender (US); bumper (Br) def: a horizontal bar to prevent damage to the front or back of an automobile in an accident; Intl: fender

fertilise (Br); fertilize (US); Intl: fertilize

fervent/fervid fervent rec

fervor (US); fervour (Br); Intl: fervor

fete/fête fete rec

fetid (US); fetid (rec) or foetid (Br); Intl: fetid

fetus (US); fetus (rec) or foetus (Br); Intl: fetus; pl: fetuses

fewer/less def: use *fewer* to describe things that can be counted; use *less* to refer to general amounts

fiber (US); fibre (Br); Intl: fiber also fibrous

fiberglass (US); fibreglass (Br); Intl: fiberglass; *Fiberglas* is a registered trade name

filigree/filagree filigree rec

film (Br); movie (US); Intl: movie

finalise (Br); finalize (US); Intl: finalize

first floor def: in US this is the ground floor, but in Br it is the floor immediately above the ground floor; Intl: use ground floor for the entry-level floor and second floor for the floor immediately above it; when referring to the second floor in this context, the first time you use the expression also insert in parentheses: '(the floor immediately above the ground floor)'

fit/fitted def: past tense of v 'to fit'; fitted rec

fiord/fjord fjord rec

flamingo pl: flamigos (rec) or flamingoes

flammable/inflammable def: use *flammable* to describe a substance that can be easily ignited; avoid using *inflammable* because the reader may think 'in' means 'not'

flautist (Br); flutist (US); Intl: flutist

flavor (US); flavour (Br); Intl: flavor

flection/flexion flexion rec

fleur-de-lis (US); fleur-de-lys (Br); Intl: fleur-de-lis

flier (US); flyer (Br); Intl: flier

floatation/flotation flotation rec

flowchart

FM abbr for frequency modulation

focus; focused; focusing pl: focuses (rec) or foci

foehn/föhn föhn rec

foetid (Br); fetid (US) fetid rec

foetus (Br); fetus (US); Intl: fetus; pl: fetuses

font (US); fount (Br); def: a typeface Intl: font

for/because/since def: use *for* to describe something that is intangible: 'The project was delayed for undisclosed reasons'; use *because* to describe cause-and-effect: 'The project was delayed because the hardware arrived late'; use *since* when time is an element: 'There have been no outages since we installed the new software.'

forbear/forebear def: *forbear* is a v that means to withstand; a *forebear* is one of one's ancestors

foreman avoid using this gender-sensitive term; replace with supervisor or team leader

foresee

foreword/forward def: a *foreword* is a set of introductory remarks (a *before* word); *forward* means to move onward

for example the abbreviation is e.g. or eg (rec)

formalise (Br); formalize (US); Intl: formalize
 formula pl: formulas (rec) or formulae
 forty def: 40
 forward/forwards forward rec; also see foreword
 fossilise (Br); fossilize (US); Intl: fossilize
 fourth def: 4th
 franchise n and v
 free- as a prefix normally combines into one word: *freehand, freehold, freestanding, freeway, freewheel*
 french fries (US); chips (Br); Intl: french fries
 frequency modulation abbr: FM
 freshman avoid using; use a gender-neutral term in its place
 frying pan (Br); skillet (US); Intl: frying pan
 fulfil (Br); fulfill (US); Intl: fulfill; fulfilled, fulfilling *always have -ll-*
 full stop (Br); period (US); def: the punctuation at the end of a sentence; both are acceptable: see Article 5
 fungus pl: fungi (rec) or funguses
 funnel: funneled, funneling (US); funnel, funnelled, funnelling (Br); Intl: funneled, funneling
 furor (US); furore (Br); Intl: furor
 further see farther
 fuse/fuze def: a detonation device; fuse rec

G

gage see *gauge*
gallon always define whether referring to US or Imperial (Br) gallons; a US gallon is 3.785 dm³; in Br and most other countries a gallon is 4.546 dm³
 gallop; galloped; galloping
 galoshes/goloshes galoshes rec
 galvanise (Br); galvanize (US); Intl: galvanize
gaol (Br); **jail** (US); Intl: **jail**
 gambol, gamboled, gamboling (US); gambol, gambolled; gambolling (Br); Intl: gamboled, gambolling
 gang; ganged; ganging
 garbage or trash (US); rubbish (Br); Intl: garbage
 garbage can (US); wastebasket (Br); Intl: garbage can

gas [gasoline] (US); petrol (Br); Intl: gasoline (not *gas*)
 gauge (Br); gage (US); Intl: gauge
 gel/jell use *gel* as a noun and *jell* in the verb form
 gelatin (US); gelatine (Br); Intl: gelatin
 generalise (Br); generalize (US); Intl: generalize
 genus pl: genera
 geo- a prefix meaning 'of the earth'; combines to form one word: *geocentric, geodesic, geomagnetic, geophysics, geoscientist*
 ghetto pl: ghettos (rec) or ghettoes
 glamor/glamour glamour rec; but always glamorous
 globalise (Br); globalize (US); Intl: globalize
 glycerin (US); glycerine (Br); Intl: glycerin
 goiter (US); goitre (Br); Intl: goiter
 galoshes/galoshes galoshes rec
 got/gotten replace *got* with a more descriptive word: *bought, ordered, purchased*; never use *gotten* in technical or business writing
 gourmand
 gram/gramme gram rec
 grateful (not *greatful*); def: to show gratitude
 gray (US); grey (Br); Intl: gray
 gridlock/traffic jam def: use traffic jam to describe a general stoppage of vehicles, and gridlock to describe a massive stoppage
 grill (Br); broil (US); def: a method of cooking; Intl: grill
 grill (US); grille (Br); def: a lattice or screen; Intl: grille
 grommet
 ground floor/first floor def: in US the ground floor is floor 1; in Br it is floor 0 (so that floor 1 is immediately above it); Intl: always use ground floor for the entry-level floor
 grueling (US); gruelling (Br); Intl: grueling
 guarantee; guarantor
 guesstimate def: to make only a general estimate
 guideline; guidelines
 gulley/gully gully rec
 gybe (Br); jibe (US); def: a term used to describe sailing across or before the wind; Intl: jibe
 gynaeco- (br) gyneco- (US); def: a prefix meaning 'of women'; Intl: gyneco-

gynaecology/gynecology gynecology rec

H

haem-/hem- prefix hem- rec

haemorrhage (Br); hemorrhage (US); Intl:
hemorrhage

half, halved, halves, halving

halo pl: halos (rec) or haloes

hand- as a prefix normally combines into one
word: *handbook, handful, handheld,*
handpicked, handset

handbag (Br); purse (US); Intl: handbag

hangar/hanger def: a *hangar* houses aircraft; a
hanger is a supporting device

harbor (US); harbour (Br); Intl: harbor

hard- as a prefix normally combines into one
word: *hardhat, hardware*; exceptions are *hard-*
earned and *hard-hitting*

hardware store (US); ironmonger (Br); Intl:
hardware store

harmonise (Br); harmonize (US); Intl:
harmonize

head- as a prefix normally combines into one
word: *headfirst, headquarters, headset,*
headstart, headway

heat- as a prefix, heat combines erratically:
heatproof, heat-resistant, heat-run, heatsink,
heat-treat

hemorrhage (US); haemorrhage (Br); Intl:
hemorrhage

hero pl: heroes

hiatus pl: hiatuses

highway (US); main road (Br); Intl: highway

highjack/hijack hijack rec

hindmost

hinge; hinged; hinging

hirable (US); hireable (Br); Intl: hirable

hoarding (Br); billboard (US); Intl: billboard

hodgepodge/hotchpot hodgepodge rec

hog (US); **pig** (Br); Intl: **pig**

honor, honorable (US); honour, honourable (Br);
Intl: honor, honorable; but use honorary in
both US and Br

hood (of a car or automobile) def: the cover
over the engine (US); the roof over the driver
and passengers' heads (Br); Intl: define the
meaning when first writing *hood*

hoof pl: hooves (rec) or hoofs

homicide (US); murder (Br); Intl: murder

humor, humored, humoring, humorless (US);
humour, humoured, humouring, humourless
(Br); Intl: humor, humored, humoring,
humorless; but use humorous and humorist in
both US and Br

hyaena/hyena hyena rec

hydro- as a prefix normally combines into one
word: hydroacoustic, hydroelectric,
hydromagnetic, hydrometer

hyperbola/hyperbole def: a *hyperbola* is a
curve or arc; *hyperbole* is an exaggerated
statement; pl of **hyperbola** is **hyperbolas**
(rec) or **hyperbolae**

hypothesis pl: hypotheses

hypothesise (Br); hypothesize (US); Intl:
hypothesize

I

idealise (Br); **idealize** (US); Intl: **idealize**; but
idealism in Br and US

idolise (Br); idolize (US); Intl: idolize

i.e. or **ie** (rec) abbr for *id est* (Latin, meaning
'that is')

illegible

immittance

immovable/immoveable immovable rec

impact on avoid using as a synonym for *affect*
or *effect*; see **affect** or **effect**

impel; impelled; impeller; impelling

imperceptible

impinge; impinged; impinging

imply/infer def: a writer or speaker can *imply*;
a reader or listener can *infer*

imposter/impostor impostor rec

improvise

in/into def: use *in* as a passive action; use *into*
as a positive action: *ride in the bus; step into*
the bus

inadvisable/unadvisable inadvisable rec

incalculable/incalculatable incalculable rec

incase/encase encase rec

incise

inclose/enclose enclose rec

incur; incurred; incurring

index pl: indexes (for a cross-reference list) or indices (in a mathematical or technical sense)

indigo pl: indigos

indiscrete/indiscreet def: *indiscreet* means imprudent; *indiscrete* means not divided into separate parts

indorse/endorse endorse rec

industrywide

infer; inferred; inferring; inference; inferable; also see imply

inflammable/flammable flammable rec; also see flammable

inflection/inflexion inflection rec

ingrain/engrain ingrain rec

initialed, initialing (US); initialled, initialling (Br); Intl: initialed, initialing

inoperable/inoperatable inoperable rec

inquire/enquire; inquiry/enquiry inquire, inquiry rec

insect (Br); bug (US); Intl: insect

inseparable

in so far as.../insofar as... insofar as... rec

inter- as a prefix normally combines into a single word: interact, intercarrier_interdigital, interface, interoffice

install, installed, installer, installing, installation are Br and US; but instalment in Br, installment in US; Intl: installment

instil (Br); instill (US); Intl: instill; but instilled, instilling, instillation in Br and US

insure/ensure/assure def: *insure* means to secure financial protection; *ensure* means to make certain; *assure* means to state with confidence, to give support

interceptor/interceptor interceptor rec

internalise (Br); internalize (US); Intl: internalize

Internet

interrupter/interruptor interrupter rec

intrust/entrust entrust rec

invert; inverter; invertible

invigorate; invigorated; invigorating

invoice (US); bill (Br); Intl: invoice

inward/inwards inward rec

iodise (Br); iodize (US); Intl: iodize

ionise (Br); ionize (US); Intl: ionize

ironmonger (Br); hardware store (US); Intl: hardware store

irregardless delete the *ir-*; write *regardless*

irrelevant not *irrevelant*

irreversible

italicise (Br); italicize (US); Intl: italicize

itemise (Br); itemize (US); Intl: itemize

its/it's def: *its* means belonging to; *it's* is a contraction of 'it is'

J

jail (US); **gaol** (Br); Intl: **jail**

janitor (US); caretaker (Br); Intl: janitor

jell/gel use *jell* in the verb form and *gel* as a noun

jewelry (US); jewellery (Br); Intl: jewelry

jingo pl: jingoes

journey pl: **journeys**

judgement (Br); **judgment** (US); Intl: **judgment**

judicial/judicious def: *judicial* means related to the law; *judicious* means sensible, discerning

K

kayak

kerb/kerbstone (Br); **curb/curbstone** (US); def: sidewalk edge (US) or pavement edge (Br); Intl: **curb**; *curb* also is used as a v meaning to restrain or as a n meaning a restraint

ketchup (Br); **catsup** (US); Intl: **ketchup**

key- as a prefix normally combines into one word: *keyboard*, *keypunch*, *keystroke*, *keyway*, *keyword*; also keying

kidnaped/kidnapped;
kidnaping/kidnapping; **kidnapped** and **kidnapping** rec

kinaesthesia (Br); **kinesthesia** (US); Intl: **kinesthesia**

kleptomania

knowledgable/knowledgeable
knowledgeable rec

kudos

L

labeled, labeling (US); **labelled, labelling** (Br); Intl: **labeled, labeling**

labor (US); **labour** (Br); Intl: **labor**

lackluster (US); **lacklustre** (Br); Intl: **lackluster**

lacquer

lambaste

lanolin

lanthanide

lath/lathe def: a *lath* is a strip of wood; a *lathe* is a machine for shaping wood and metal

lanyard

largess (US); **largesse** (Br); Intl: **largesse**

lasagna (US); **lasagne** (Br); Intl: **lasagna**

lavatory and **WC** (Br); **washroom** (US); Intl: **washroom**

lawyer (Br); **attorney** (US); Intl: **lawyer**

learned (US); **learnt** (Br); Intl: **learned**

leitmotif (Br); **leitmotiv** (US); Intl: **leitmotif**

lengthy not *lengthly*

less/fewer def: use *less* to refer to general amounts; use *fewer* to refer to items that can be counted

leuco-/leuko leuko- rec

leukaemia/leukemia leukemia rec

leveled, leveling (US); **levelled, levelling** (Br); Intl: **leveled, leveling**

libeled, libeling (US); **libelled, libelling** (Br); Intl: **libeled, libeling**

licence/license in US, *license* is both v and n; in Br, *licence* is a n, *license* is a v; Intl: **license** rec for both v and n

licorice (US); **liquorice** (Br); Intl: **licorice**

lift (Br); **elevator** (US); Intl: **elevator**

light- as a prefix normally combines into one word: *lightface* (*type*), *lightweight*; an exception is *light-year*

lightening/lightning def: *lightening* means to make lighter; *lightning* is an atmospheric electrical discharge

likable (US); likeable (Br); Intl: likeable

line or lineup (US); queue (Br); Intl: lineup as n or adj, line up as v

lip-sync (US); **lip-synch** (Br); Intl: **lip-sync**

liquefy; liquefaction

liquorice see licorice

liter/litre litre rec because it is an SI standard recognized worldwide; see Article 6

livable (US); liveable (Br); Intl: livable

lock- as a prefix combines into one word as n or adj: locknut, lockout, locksmith, lockstep, lockup, lockwasher; as a v, use two words: to lock out..., to lock up...

locus pl: loci

lodestar/loadstar lodestar rec

lodestone/loadstone lodestone rec

lodgment/lodgement lodgment rec

-log (US); -logue (Br); recommendations for these word endings (as in *dialog/dialogue*) are shown individually in the list

logbook

logorrhea (US); logorrhoea (Br); Intl: logorrhea

lorry (Br); truck (US); Intl: truck

lot (US); plot (Br); def: a defined piece of ground; Intl: lot

loud-hailer (Br); bullhorn (US); Intl: bullhorn (but define it on first use in a document)

louver (US); louvre (Br); Intl: louver

lovable (US); loveable (Br); Intl: lovable

luster (US); lustre (Br); Intl: luster

M

maneuver, maneuvered, maneuvering (US); manoeuvre, manoeuvred, manoeuvring (Br); Intl: maneuver, maneuvered, maneuvering

magneto pl: magnetos

magneto- as a prefix normally combines into one word: *magnetolectric*, *magnetostriction*; if combining word starts with 'o' or 'io', insert a hyphen: *magneto-optics*, *magneto-ionization*

main road (Br); highway (US); Intl: highway

malleable

mango pl: mangoes (rec) or mangos

manifesto pl: manifestos (rec) or manifestoes

manikin/mannikin manikin rec

market; marketed; marketing

marshal, marshaled, marshaling (US); marshal, marshalled, marshalling (Br); Intl: marshal, marshaled, marshaling

marvellous (Br); marvelous (US); Intl: marvelous	micro- as a prefix meaning very small, normally combines into one word: microammeter, micrometer, microorganism, microswitch, microview, microwave
material/materials/materiel def: <i>material</i> and <i>materials</i> are the substances or goods out of which a product is made or a service is provided; <i>materiel</i> means all the equipment and supplies needed to support a project or undertaking	mid- as a prefix normally combines into one word: <i>midday</i> , <i>midpoint</i> , <i>midweek</i> ; if combining word is a proper noun, insert a hyphen: <i>mid-Atlantic</i>
math (US); maths (Br); Intl: math def: abbreviation for 'mathematics'	milage/mileage mileage rec
matrix pl: matrices (rec) or matrixes	mile def: the statute mile is 5280 ft (1609 m); the nautical mile is 6080 ft (1853 m); abbr nautical mile as n.m.
mausoleum pl: mausoleums	milli- as a prefix combines to form one word: <i>milliammeter</i> , <i>milligram</i> , <i>millimicron</i>
maximum pl: maximums (rec) or maxima	militarise (Br); militarize (US); Intl: militarize
maximise/maximize maximize rec	mini- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: <i>minicomputer</i> , <i>minireport</i>
meager (US); meagre (Br); Intl: meager	minimise (Br); minimize (US); Intl: minimize
mechanise (Br); mechanize (US); Intl: mechanize	minimum pl: minimums (rec) or minima
medalist/medallist medallist rec	mis- def: a prefix meaning bad(ly) or wrong(ly); combines to form one word: <i>misalign</i> , <i>misfired</i> , <i>mismatched</i> , <i>misshapen</i> , <i>misspell</i>
mediaeval/medieval medieval rec	miter, mitered (US); mitre, mitred (Br); Intl: miter, mitered
medium (n) pl: media when referring to substances, liquids, materials, advertising, or means of communication; use mediums in all other cases	mobilise (Br); mobilize (US); Intl: mobilize
memento pl: mementos (rec) or mementoes	model, modeled, modeling (US); model, modelled, modelling (Br); Intl: modeled, modeling
memorandum pl: memorandums (rec) or memoranda; abbr: memo and (pl) memos	mollusc (Br); mollusk (US); Intl: mollusc
memorise (Br); memorize (US); Intl: memorize	mold, moldy (US); mould, mouldy (Br); Intl: mold, moldy
merit; merited; meriting	molt (US); moult (Br); Intl: molt
mesquite	momentary; momentarily def: both mean 'for a moment', not 'in a moment'
metabolise (Br); metabolize (US); Intl: metabolize	mono- as a prefix normally combines into one word: <i>monopulse</i> , <i>monorail</i> , <i>monoscope</i>
metal, metaled, metaling (US); metal, metalled, metalling (Br); Intl: metalled, metalling	mortice/mortise mortise rec
metallic	mortician (US); undertaker (Br); Intl: undertaker
metalise/metallise/metalize/metallize rec metallize for US, Br, and Intl	motorway (Br); expressway (US); Intl: expressway , but define its meaning on first using it
metallurgy	moustache (Br); mustache (US); Intl: moustache
metamorphic	movable/moveable movable rec
meteorology/metrology def: <i>meteorology</i> pertains to the weather; <i>metrology</i> pertains to weights, measures, and calibration	movie (US); film (Br); Intl: movie
meter def: a metric unit of length; see metre	movie theater (US); cinema (Br); Intl: movie theater
methadone	muffler (Br); scarf (US); def: a long piece of cloth wound around the neck to protect from cold; Intl: scarf
metre/meter def: a metric unit of length; metre rec because it is an SI standard recognized worldwide; see Article 6	
miasma pl: miasmas (US) or miasmata (Br); Intl pl: miasmas	

muffler (US); silencer (US); def: the part of an exhaust pipe that deadens noise; Intl: silencer, but define on first using

multi- as a prefix normally combines into one word: multiaddress, multibus, multicavity, multielectrode, multistate

murder (Br); homicide (US); Intl: murder

murk; murky

N

naive/naïve/naïf naive rec

namable/nameable nameable rec

naphtha; naphthalene

nappy (Br); diaper (US); Intl: diaper

narcissism

narwhal/narwhale narwhal rec

nationwide

nautilus pl: nautilus (rec) or nautili

NB abbr for 'note well'

nebula pl: nebulae (Br), nebulas (US); Intl: nebulae

neighbor (US); neighbour (Br); Intl: neighbor

neighborhood (US); neighbourhood (Br); Intl: neighborhood

nerve-racking/nerve-wracking nerve-racking rec

neuron/neurone neuron rec

nevertheless

night/nite night rec; never use *nite*

No. abbr for 'number(s)'

no one/no-one no one rec

non- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: *nonconductor, nonnegotiable, nonlinear, nonstop*

nonplused (US); nonplussed (Br); Intl: nonplussed

normalise (Br); normalize (US); Intl: normalize; also normalization in Br and US;

northeast; northwest; northward

notable def: worthy of taking note

note well abbr: NB

noticeable; noticeably

nought

null

number/amount def: use *number* to refer to items that can be counted: *the number of tests we completed in 2003 was 17% higher than in 2002*; use *amount* to refer to a general quantity that cannot easily be counted: *the amount of traffic seems to be higher*

number(s) abbr: No.; omit 's' when referring to more than one number; e.g. *Vats No. 13 through 27 were contaminated.*

numbers in narrative general rule: spell out numbers one through nine, use numerals to write numbers 10 and up; always use numerals when inserting a symbol: 7 Ω or 4 MW; see Article 7 for detailed guidelines

O

occur; occurred; occurrence; occurring

ocher (US); ochre (Br); Intl: ochre

o'clock avoid using this expression

odor (US); odour (Br); Intl: odor; write odorous in Br and US

oe-/e- see individual entries and Article 1

oedema (Br); edema (US); Intl: edema

oesophagus (Br); esophagus (US); Intl: esophagus

oestrogen (Br); estrogen (US); Intl: estrogen

oestrus (Br); estrus (US); Intl: estrus

off- as a prefix combines erratically: offset, offshoot, off-center(ed), off-scale, off-the-shelf

offence (Br); offense (US); Intl: offense; offensive has 's' in Br and US

offer; offered; offering

offline

omelette (Br); omelet (US); Intl: omelet

omit; omitted; omitting

one- as a prefix normally combines with a hyphen: *one-piece, one-sided, one-to-one, one-way*; exceptions are *oneself* and *onetime* (adj)

online

onomatopoeia

onward/onwards onward rec

operate; operator; operable (not *operatable*)

optimum pl: optima (rec) or optimums; also optimal

orbit; orbital; orbited; orbiting

organdie (Br); organdy (US); Intl: organdy

organisation (Br); organization (US); Intl: organization

organise, organised, organising (Br); organize, organized, organizing (US); Intl: organize, organized, organizing	parallel; paralleled; paralleling; parallelism; parallelogram
oriented/orientated oriented rec; but orientation in Br and US	paralyse (Br); paralyze (US); Intl: paralyze
origin; original; originally	paraprofessional
orthopaedic (Br); orthopedic (US); Intl: orthopedic	parcel, parcelled (Br); parcel, parceled (US); Intl: parcel, parceled
ostracise (Br); ostracize (US); Intl: ostracize	parentheses (US); brackets (Br); def: a means for enclosing information (as shown here); Intl: parentheses; see Article 4
out- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: <i>outbreak, outcome, outdistance</i> ; but <i>out-of-date</i> and <i>out of phase</i>	parlor (US); parlour (Br); Intl: parlor
output; outputted; outputting	partisan/partizan partisan rec
outward/outwards outward rec	part-time
over- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: <i>overbunching, overcurrent, overdrive(n), overexcited, overrun</i>	pass- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: <i>passbook, passkey, passport, password</i>
overage def: too many, or too old	pasteurise (Br); pasteurize (US); Intl: pasteurize
oxidise (Br); oxidize (US); Intl: oxidize	pavement (Br); sidewalk (US); def: a path beside a road or highway; Intl: sidewalk; in US, pavement means the road surface
oxidation/oxidization oxidation rec	pay- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: <i>paycheck (US); paycheque (Br), payday, payload, payroll</i>
P	
paederasty/pederasty pederasty rec	pedal, pedaled, pedaling (US); pedal, pedalled, pedalling (Br); Intl: pedaled, pedaling
paediatrician (Br); pediatrician (US); Intl: pediatrician	pederasty/paederasty pederasty rec
paedo- (Br); pedo- (US); def: a prefix meaning 'pertaining to a child or children'; Intl: pedo-	pedestrian crossing (Br); crosswalk (US); Intl: crosswalk
pajamas (US); pyjamas (Br); Intl: pajamas	pediatrician/paediatrician pediatrician rec
palaeo- (Br); paleo- (US); def: ancient, old; Intl: paleo-	pedlar (Br); peddler (US); Intl: peddler
palette/pallet/ def: a <i>palette</i> is a handheld board on which an artist mixes paint; a <i>pallet</i> is a thin mattress or a platform for carrying goods	pedo- (US); paedo- (Br); def: a prefix meaning 'pertaining to a child or children'; Intl: pedo-
pamphlet	pencil, penciled, penciling (US); pencil, pencilled, pencilling (Br); Intl: penciled, penciling
panel, paneled, paneling, panelist (US); panel, panelled, panelling, panellist (Br); Intl: paneled, paneling, panelist	pendulum pl: pendulums
pants (US); trousers (Br); Intl: trousers	percent/per cent percent rec
paper as a prefix mostly combines into one word: <i>paperback, paperbound, paperhanger, paperweight, paperwork</i> ; exceptions are <i>paper-covered, paper cutter, paper-thin, paper trail</i>	perennial; perennially
papier-mâché	perceptible
papyrus pl: papyri (Br); papyrus (US); Intl: papyri	period (US); full stop (Br) def: the punctuation at the end of a sentence; both are acceptable: see Article 5
parabola; parabolas; parabolic; paraboloid	permissible
	permit; permitted; permitting
	personal/personnel def: <i>personal</i> means concerning one person; <i>personnel</i> refers to the members of a group (ie employees)
	personalise (Br); personalize (US); Intl: personalize
	petrol (Br); gas or gasoline (US); Intl: gasoline (not <i>gas</i>)

phantasy/fantasy	fantasy rec; also fantastic	practicable/practical	def: <i>practicable</i> means feasible to do; <i>practical</i> means suitable for carrying out in practice
philter (US); philtre (Br); Intl: philter		practice/practise	def: in Br, <i>practice</i> is a noun and <i>practise</i> is a verb; in US, <i>practice</i> is used for both n and v; Intl: practice for both n and v
phoney (Br); phony (US); Intl: phony		pram (Br); baby carriage (US); Intl: baby carriage	
piano	pl: pianos	praxis	pl: praxes (rec) or praxises
pickax (US); pickaxe (Br); Intl: pickaxe		pre-	as a prefix normally combines into one word: preamplifier, predetermined, pre-emphasis, pre-ignite, preset
pig (Br); hog (US); Intl: pig		precis/précis	précis rec
pigmy/pygmy	pygmy rec; pl: pygmies	predaceous (US); predacious (Br); Intl: predacious	
pin (US); brooch (Br); Intl: brooch		prefer; preferred; preference; preferment; preferring	
pinochle/pinocle	pinocle rec	premise/premises	def: a <i>premise</i> is a basic understanding or proposition; <i>premises</i> are a building or property that one occupies
piraña; piranha	piranha rec	prescribe/proscribe	def: <i>prescribe</i> means to state as a fixed rule or requirement; <i>proscribe</i> means to deny permission or forbid
pivot, pivoted, pivoting		presently	def: in US <i>presently</i> means immediately; in Br it means after a while, when it's convenient; Intl: avoid using; replace with immediately or shortly
placebo	pl: placebos (rec) or placeboes	pressurise, pressurised, pressurising (Br); pressurize, pressurized, pressurizing (US); Intl: pressurize, pressurized, pressurizing	
plagiarise (Br); plagiarize (US); Intl: plagiarize; but plagiarism is both Br and US		pretence (Br); pretense (US); Intl: pretense	
plateau	pl: plateaus (rec) or plateaux	prevail; prevailed; prevailing	
Pleiocene/Pliocene	Pliocene rec	preventable/preventible	preventable rec
plenum	pl: plena or plenums (rec)	preventive/preventative	preventive rec (as in <i>preventive maintenance</i>)
plexus	pl: plexus or plexuses (rec)	pricey/pricy	pricey rec
plot (Br); lot (US); def: a defined area of ground; Intl: lot		primaeval (Br); primeval (US); Intl: primeval	
plough (Br); plow (US); Intl: plow		principal/principle	def: as a noun <i>principal</i> means the primary one or first in importance, or a sum of money; as an adj it means most important or chief; <i>principle</i> is a noun meaning a strong guiding rule or code of conduct
plug; plugged; plugging		prioritise (Br); prioritize (US); Intl: prioritize; prioritize also is becoming acceptable	
pluralise (Br); pluralize (US); Intl: pluralize		prise (Br v); prize (US v and n)	Intl: when the meaning is to lift up, perhaps with difficulty, use <i>prise</i> ; when the meaning is an award, use <i>prize</i>
p.m.	abbr for <i>post meridiem</i> ; def: after noon	privatise (Br); privatize (US); Intl: privatize	
podium	pl: podia or podiums (rec)	progesterone	
polarise (Br); polarize (US); Intl: polarize			
poly-	as a prefix combines into one word: <i>polydirectional</i> , <i>polyphase</i>		
polyethylene (US); polythene (Br); Intl: polyethylene			
poncho	pl: ponchos		
popularise/popularize	popularize rec		
popularism/populism	populism rec		
porch (US); verandah (Br); Intl: verandah			
post-	as a prefix normally combines into one word: <i>postacceleration</i> , <i>postgraduate</i> , <i>postpaid</i> ; an exception is <i>post office</i>		
post meridiem	def: after noon; abbr: p.m.		
potato	pl: potatoes		
potato chips (Br); french fries (US); Intl: french fries			
potter about (Br); putter about (US); Intl: potter about			

progestogen/progestin progestogen rec
 program (US); programme (Br); Intl: program;
 but programmed and programming are correct
 for both US and Br; also, a software program
 is spelled like this in both US and Br
 propel; propellant; propelled; propelling; propeller
 prophecy/prophesy use *prophecy* as a noun and
prophesy as a verb
 pro rata; prorata def: to assign proportionally
 psychoanalyse (Br); psychoanalyze (US); Intl:
 psychoanalyse; but it's psychoanalysis in Br
 and US
 ptomain/ptomaine ptomaine rec
 publicise (Br); publicize (US); Intl: publicize
 punctuation for guidelines, see Article 5
 purge; purged; purging
 purse (US); handbag (Br); Intl: handbag
 putter about (US); potter about (Br); Intl: potter
 about
 pygmy/pigmy pygmy rec; pl: pygmies
 pyjamas (Br); pajamas (US); Intl: pajamas
 pyorrhea/pyorrhoea pyorrhea rec

Q

quadraphonics/quadrophonics quadraphonics
 rec
 quarrel, quarreled, quarreling (US); quarrel,
 quarrelled, quarelling (Br); Intl: quarreled,
 quarreling
 quasi- as a prefix normally combines with a
 hyphen: *quasi-active*, *quasi-bistable*, *quasi-
 linear*
queue def: a term commonly used in Br as a v
 or n to mean a line of people; in US **lineup**
 [n] and **line up** [v] are more common; Intl:
 use **lineup** (n) and **line up** (v)
quick- as a prefix normally combines with a
 hyphen: *quick-acting*, *quick-freeze*, *quick-
 tempered*; exceptions are *quicklime* and
quicksilver

quiescent; quiescence

quiz; quizzed; quizzing

quotation marks see Article 5 for guidelines
 for using

R

raccoon/racoon raccoon rec; pl: raccoons (rec)
 or raccoon

racket def: a loud, usually unpleasant noise

racquet (Br); racket (US) def: a bat strung with
 nylon or catgut, used in tennis, squash, etc;
 Intl: racquet

radio- as a prefix normally combines to form
 one word: *radioactive*, *radiobiology*,
radioisotope, *radioluminescence*, *radiosonde*,
radiotelephone; if combining word starts with
 'o', omit one 'o': *radiology*, *radiopaque*

radius pl: radii (rec) or radiuses

radix pl: radices (rec) or radixes

railway (Br); railroad (US); Intl: railway

raise (US); rise (Br); def: a salary increase;
 Intl: raise, but for clarity insert 'pay' ahead of
 it: pay raise

rancor (US); rancour (Br); Intl: rancor

range; rangefinder; range marker

ranunculus pl: ranunculuses (rec) or ranunculi

ratable (US); rateable (Br); Intl: ratable

rattan/ratan rattan rec

re- as a prefix normally combines into one
 word: *reactivate*, *rediscover*, *reemphasize*,
reentrant, *reignition*, *rerun*, *reset*; an
 exception (to avoid misunderstanding): *re-
 cover* (to cover again)

readout one word as n or adj; two words as v

reafforest/reforest reforest rec

realise (Br); realize (US); Intl: realize; also:
 realization

real time (n); real-time (adj)

realtor (US); **estate agent** (Br): Intl: use
 either, but define the meaning of the word(s)
 on first using them

recognise (Br); recognize (US); Intl: recognize

reconnoiter (US); reconnoitre (Br); Intl:
 reconnoiter

recover/re-cover def: *recover* means to get
 back; *re-cover* means to cover again

recur; recurred; recurring def: to occur
 again; **reoccur**, etc, can be used but is less
 preferred

re-enforce/reinforce def: *re-enforce* means to
 enforce again; *reinforce* means to strengthen

refer; referable; referee; reference; referred;
 referring

referendum pl: referendums (rec) or referenda

reflection/reflexion reflection rec

relaid/relayed def: *relaid* means laid down
 again; *relayed* means sent on

removable

renaissance/renascence def: *renaissance* means revival of a particular art or culture; *renascence* means reborn

renege/renege renege rec; also reneged; reneging

reoccur see recur

repel; repelled; repellent; repelling

reset; resetting

retro- as a prefix normally combines into one word: retroactive, retrofit, retrogression; if combining word starts with 'o', insert a hyphen: retro-operative

return ticket (Br); round-trip ticket (US); Intl: round-trip ticket

revel, revelled, revelling (Br); revel, reveled, reveling (US); Intl: revel, reveled, reveling

reverse; reverser; reversal; reversible

reverse charge [call] (Br); collect call (US); Intl: collect call

revolutionise (Br); revolutionize (US); Intl: revolutionize

rhapsodise (Br); rhapsodize (US); Intl: rhapsodize

rhombohedron pl: rhombohedrons (rec) or rhombohedra

rhombus pl: rhombuses (rec) or rhombi

rhumba see rumba

rhythm; rhythmic; rhythmically

ricochet; ricocheted; ricocheting

rigamarole/rigmarole rigmarole rec

rigor (US); **rigour** (Br); Intl: **rigor**; but **rigorous** is correct spelling in US and Br

rival, rivalled, rivalling (Br); rival, rivaled, rivaling (US); Intl: rival, rivaled, rivaling

rivet; riveted; riveter; riveting

road- as a prefix normally combines into one word: *roadblock*, *roadmap*, *roadside*

robot def: a mechanical or electronic mechanism that performs human tasks; in South Africa, a traffic light also is called a *robot*, so the term may need to be defined in international documentation

roentgen/röntgen roentgen rec

role/rôle role rec

roof pl: roofs (rec) or rooves

rostrum pl: rostrums (rec) or rostra

rot; rotted; rotten; rotting

rotate; rotatable; rotator; rotary

rouble (Br); ruble (US); Intl: ruble

round def: circular

round (Br); around (US) def: enclosed, about, at that place or time: Intl: around

round-trip ticket see return ticket

rout def: a disorderly retreat

route; routed; routing def: a travel path

-rrhea (US); -rrhoea (Br); Intl: -rrhea; see Article 1 for more about this suffix

rubber (Br); eraser (US) def: a rubberlike compound used to erase pencil marks on paper; Intl: eraser

rubbish (Br); garbage or trash (US); Intl: garbage

ruggedise (Br); ruggedize (US); Intl: ruggedize

rumba/rhumba pl: rumba rec

rumen pl: rumens (rec) or rumina

rumor, rumored (US); rumour, rumoured, (Br); Intl: rumor, rumored

S

saber (US); **sabre** (Br); Intl: **sabre**

safe-deposit box (Br); safety-deposit box (US); Intl: safe-deposit box

salable (US); saleable (Br); Intl: salable

saltpeter (US); saltpetre (Br); Intl: saltpeter

salvage; salvageable

salvo pl: salvos (rec) or salvoes

sanatorium/sanitarium sanatorium rec; pl: sanatoriums (rec) or sanatoria

sanitise (Br); sanitize (US); Intl: sanitize; also sanitization

sarcoma pl: sarcomas (rec) or sarcomata

satirise (Br); satirize (US); Intl: satirize

savable/saveable savable rec

savior (US); saviour (Br); Intl: savior

savor (US); savour (Br); Intl: savor

scalawag/scallywag scalawag rec

scald def: to burn with hot liquid or steam

scandalise (Br); scandalize (US); Intl: scandalize

scarf/muffler def: a long piece of cloth wound around the neck to protect from cold; Intl: **scarf**; pl: **scarves** (rec) or **scarfs**

scepter (US); sceptre (Br); Intl: scepter

sceptic, sceptical (Br); skeptic, skeptical (US); Intl: skeptic, skeptical	shareholder; shareware
scone (Br); biscuit or tea biscuit (US); def: a yeast-free baked bun; Intl: scone	sherbet (US); sorbet (Br); Intl: sherbet ; if necessary, define the term
scotch tape (US); sellotape (Br); Intl: scotch tape	shoelace (US); shoestring (Br); Intl: shoelace
scrap ; scrapped ; scrapping def: disposable rubbish (n), or to throw out (v)	shop (Br); store (US); Intl: shop (n and v)
scrape ; scraped ; scrapping def: n: a bad experience or a tear on the surface; v: to tear the surface	shop assistant (Br); clerk (US); Intl: clerk, but precede it with 'store': store clerk
scrub; scrubbed; scrubbing	shovel, shoveled, shoveling (US); shovel, shovelled, shovelling (Br); Intl: shoveled, shoveling
scrutinise (Br); scrutinize (US); Intl: scrutinize, scrutinized, scrutinizing, scrutineer	shrivel, shriveled, shriveling (US); shrivel, shrivelled, shrivelling (Br); Intl: shriveled, shriveling
seborrhea (US); seborrhoea (Br); Intl: seborrhea	sidewalk (US); pavement (Br); def: a path beside a road or highway; Intl: sidewalk ; in US, pavement means the road surface
second floor def: in US, the second floor is the floor immediately above the ground floor; in Br, it's two floors above the ground floor; if using the expression, define it	signal, signalled, signalling (Br); signal, signaled, signaling (US); Intl: signaled, signaling
secularise (Br); secularize (US); Intl: secularize; but secularism is Br and US	signal-to-noise (ratio)
seems/appears def: use <i>seems</i> to describe something intangible, that cannot be seen; use <i>appears</i> to describe something visible	silencer/muffler def: the part of an automobile exhaust pipe that deadens noise; muffler is always used in Br; either silencer or muffler is used in US; Intl: silencer , but define on first using
sellotape (Br); scotch tape (US); Intl: scotch tape	since/because/for use <i>since</i> when time is an element: 'There have been no outages since we installed the new software.'; use <i>because</i> to describe cause-and-effect: 'The project was delayed because the hardware arrived late.'; use <i>for</i> to describe something less tangible: 'The project was delayed for undisclosed reasons.'
semi- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: <i>semiactive, semiannually, semiconductor, semimonthly, semiremote, semiweekly</i> ; if combining word starts with 'i', insert a hyphen: <i>semi-immersed</i>	singe; singed; singeing
senior's discount (US); concession (Br); Intl: senior's discount	singlehanded
sensitise (Br); sensitize (US); Intl: sensitize	siphon (US); syphon (Br); Intl: siphon
sentimentalise (Br); sentimentalize (US); Intl: sentimentalize; but sentimentalism is Br and US	sirocco pl: siroccos
separate; separable (<i>not</i> separatable) ; separator	sirup/syrup syrup rec
septicaemia (Br); septicemia (US); Intl: septicemia	sizable (US); sizeable (Br); Intl: sizable
sepulcher (US); sepulchre (Br); Intl: sepulchre	skillet (US); frying pan (Br); Intl: frying pan
serialise (Br); serialize (US); Intl: serialize	skillful (US); skilful (Br); Intl: skilful
sermonise (Br); sermonize (US); Intl: sermonize	skulduggery (Br); skullduggery (US); Intl: skullduggery
serviceable	sleeper (Br); rail tie (US); def: a crossbar that lies beneath and supports railway lines; Intl: rail tie
servo- as a prefix combines to form one word: <i>servoamplifier, servocontrol, servomotor, servosystem</i>	slip- as a prefix normally combines into one word: <i>slippage, slipshod, slipstream</i> ; an exception is <i>slip ring</i>
shall/will/should see Article 9	smelled (US); smelt (Br); Intl: smelled
sharable (US); shareable (Br); Intl: sharable	
shard/sherd shard rec	

smolder (US); smoulder (Br); Intl: smolder	stiletto pl: stilettos
somber (US); sombre (Br); Intl: somber	stimulus pl: stimuli
soprano pl: sopranos (rec) or soprani	stop- as a prefix normally combines into one word: <i>stopgap, stopnut, stopover</i> (as n or adj), <i>stopwatch</i> ; an exception is <i>stop payment</i>
sorbet (Br); sherbet (US); Intl: sherbet	stoppage
sound- as a prefix combines irregularly: sound-absorbent, sound effects, sound-powered, soundproof, soundtrack, sound wave	store (US); shop (Br); Intl: shop
southward/southwards southward rec	storey (Br); story (US); def: a level or floor of a building; Intl: storey (to avoid confusion with <i>story</i> , meaning a tale)
soya bean (Br); soybean (US); Intl: soybean	strato- as a prefix combines into one word: <i>stratocumulus, stratosphere</i>
spat/spit def: past tense of v 'to spit'; spat rec	stratum pl: strata (rec) or stratum
spatial/spacial spatial rec	stratus pl: strati
specialise, specialised, specialising (Br); specialize, specialized, specializing (US); Intl: specialize, specialized, specializing; also specialist	streetcar (US); tram (Br); Intl: streetcar
specialty/speciality specialty rec	stylus pl: styli (rec) or styluses
specter (US); spectre (Br); Intl: specter	sub- as a prefix normally combines into one word: subassembly, subcarrier, subcommittee, subnormal, subparagraph, subpixel, subpoint
spelled (US); spelt (Br); Intl: spelled	subtle; subtlety; subtly
sphinx pl: sphinxes	subway (US); underground (Br); def: an underground rail system; Intl: subway
spilled (US); spilt (Br); Intl: spilled	succor (US); succour (Br); Intl: succor
spiral, spiraled, spiraling (US); spiral, spiralled, spiralling (Br); Intl: spiraled, spiraling	sulfur (US); sulphur (Br); Intl: sulphur
spirochaete (Br); spirochete (US); Intl: spirochete	summarise (Br); summarize (US); Intl: summarize
splendor (US); splendour (Br); Intl: splendor	super as a prefix normally combines into one word: <i>superabundant, superconductivity, superregeneration</i>
spoiled (US); spoilt (Br); Intl: spoiled	superimpose/superpose def: <i>superimpose</i> means to place one thing generally on top of another; <i>superpose</i> means to lay or place exactly on top, so as to be coincident with
spotweld	supersede
spurt/spirt spurt rec	suppliant/supplicant suppliant rec
stadium pl: stadiums (rec) or stadia	surmise; surmised; surmising
stagey/stagy stagy rec	surprise; surprised; surprising
standardise (Br); standardize (US); Intl: standardize	suspenders (US); braces (Br); def: elasticized straps that reach over the shoulders and clip onto the top of pants (US) or trousers (Br); Intl: suspenders
steadfast/stedfast steadfast rec	swath/swathe def: the noun is <i>swath</i> or <i>swathe</i> ; the verb is <i>swathe</i> ; rec: use <i>swath</i> to describe a band or strip of mown grass or cleared land between two pieces of unmown grass or uncleared land; use <i>swathe</i> to describe a wrapping or enveloping action
steak tartare	sweat/sweated def: the past tense of 'to sweat'; sweated rec, as in <i>sweated labor</i>
stela/stele def: <i>stela</i> means an upright slab or pillar; <i>stele</i> means the central stem of vascular plants; pl: stelae	sweep, sweeping, swept
stencil, stenciled, stenciling (US); stencil, stencilled, stencilling (Br); Intl: stenciled, stenciling	
stereo- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: <i>stereometric, stereoscopic</i>	
sterilisation (Br); sterilization (US); Intl: sterilization	
sterilise (Br); sterilize (US); Intl: sterilize	
stigma pl: stigmas (rec) or stigmata	

sweets (Br); **candy** (US); Intl: **candy**

switch- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: *switchboard, switchbox, switchgear*

swivel, swiveled, swiveling (US); swivel, swivelled, swivelling (Br); Intl: swiveled, swiveling

symbolise (Br); symbolize (US); Intl: symbolize; also symbolism

symposium pl: symposia (rec) or symposiums

syllabus pl: syllabi (Br); syllabuses (US); Intl: syllabuses

synchro- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: *synchromesh, synchronous*

synchronise (Br); synchronize (US); Intl: synchronize

synopsis pl: synopses

synthesis pl: syntheses

syphon (Br); siphon (US); Intl: siphon

syrup/sirup syrup rec

systematize/systemize both are acceptable; systemize rec

systemwide

T

tail- as a prefix mostly combines into one word: *tailboard, tailfin, tailgate, tailless, tailwind*; exceptions are *tail end* and *tail light*

take- as a n or adj prefix, combines into one word: *takeoff, takeover, takeup*; as a v, two words: *take off, etc*

tamable (US); tameable (Br); Intl: tamable

tantalise (Br); tantalize (US); Intl: tantalize

tap (Br); faucet (US); Intl: tap

taxi def: a mode of transportation; pl: taxis (rec) or taxies

tele- as a prefix normally combines into one word: *teleammeter, telemetry, telephonic*

televise

template/templet template rec

temporise (Br); temporize (US); Intl: temporize

tendencious/tendentious tendentious rec

tenderise (Br); tenderize (US); Intl: tenderize

tercel/tiercel tercel rec

terminus pl: termini (rec) or terminuses

terrarium pl: terrariums (rec) or terraria

that is: abbr: ie (rec) or i.e. (meaning *id est*)

theater (US); theatre (Br); Intl: theater

theorise (Br); theorize (US); Intl: theorize

thereabout/thereabouts def: near that place or time; thereabout rec

thermo- as a prefix normally combines into one word: thermoammeter, thermocouple, thermodynamic, thermoelectric, thermoplastic

thralldom (US); thraldom (Br); Intl: thralldom

threshold

through/thru through is the only acceptable spelling in technical documentation

thumb tack (US); drawing pin (Br); def: a push pin for holding papers on a wallboard, etc; Intl: thumb tack, but define when first using the term

tibia pl: tibiae (rec) or tibias

tidbit (US); titbit (Br); Intl: tidbit

timber/timbre def: *timber* is wood; *timbre* is tonal quality

time def: the time of day; 24-hour clock rec; see Article 8

tire (US); tyre (Br); def: an inflated rubber covering for an automobile wheel; Intl: tire

titer (US); titre (Br) def: concentration by titration; Intl: titer

tolbooth/tollbooth tollbooth rec

tomato pl: tomatoes

ton/tonne def: a *ton* in US is 2000 lb (short ton); a *ton* in Br is 2240 lb (long ton); a *tonne* is a metric ton weighing 1000 kilograms (2204.6 lb)

tonnage; tonmile

tonight/tonite tonight rec; *tonite* should not be used in technical documentation

total, totaled, totaling (US); total, totalled, totalling (Br); Intl: totaled, totaling

toward/towards toward rec

toxaemia (Br); toxemia (US); Intl: toxemia

traceable

traffic jam/gridlock def: use traffic jam to describe a general stoppage of vehicles, and gridlock to describe a massive stoppage

traipse

tram (Br); streetcar (US); Intl: streetcar

trammel, trammel; trammeled, trammeling (US); trammel, trammelled, trammelling (Br); Intl: trammeled, trammeling

transfer; transferred; transferring; transferable; transference

transmit; transmitted, transmitter, transmitting, transmission

transship/tranship transship rec

trash (US); **rubbish** (Br); Intl: **garbage** (rec) or **trash**

travel; traveled, traveler, traveling (US); travel, travelled, traveller, travelling (Br); Intl: traveled, traveler, traveling

tremor

trepan; trepanned, trepanning

tri- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: triangulation, tricolor, trilateral, tristimulus, triweekly

troubleshoot; troubleshooter; troubleshooting

trousers (Br); pants (US); Intl: trousers

trousseau pl: trousseaux (rec) or trousseaus

troubadour

truck (US); **lorry** (Br); Intl: **truck**

tub or bathtub (US); bath (Br); Intl: bathtub

tuberose/tuberous tuberous rec

tumbrel (Br); tumbrel (US); Intl: tumbrel

tumor (US); **tumour** (Br); Intl: **tumor**

tunnel, tunneled, tunneler, tunneling (US); tunnel, tunnelled, tunneller, tunnelling (Br); Intl: tunneled, tunneler, tunneling

turbo- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: *turbocharged, turboelectric, turboprop*

turf pl: turfs

two- as a prefix, the two words are normally separated by a hyphen: *two-address, two-phase, two-ply, two-stroke, two-wire*; an exception is *twofold*

type- as a prefix normally combines into one word: *typeface, typeset, typesetting*

tyre (Br); **tire** (US) def: an inflated rubber covering for an automobile wheel; Intl: **tire**

U

ukelele/ukulele ukulele rec

ultimatum pl: ultimatum

ultra- as a prefix normally combines into one word: *ultrasonic, ultraviolet*; if combining word starts with 'a', insert a hyphen: *ultra-audible, ultra-audion*

un- as a prefix normally combines into one word: *unbiased, uncontrolled, undamped, unethical, unnecessary*; an exception is *unionized* (to avoid confusing with *unionized*)

unaware/unawares unaware rec

under- as a prefix normally combines to form one word: *underbunching, undercurrent, underestimated, underexposed, underrated, undershoot, undersigned*

underage def: can mean either too little or too young

underground (Br); subway (US); def: an underground rail system; Intl: subway

undershirt (US); vest (Br): def: a sleeveless undergarment; Intl: undershirt; also see *vest*

undertaker (Br); mortician (US); Intl: undertaker

unequal, unequaled (US); unequal, unequalled (Br); Intl: unequalled

unequipped

unmistakable/unmistakeable unmistakable rec

unnavigable not *unnavigatable*

unravel, unraveled, unraveling (US); unravel, unravelled, unravelling (Br); Intl: unraveled, unraveling

unrivalled (US); unrivalled (Br); Intl: unrivalled

unsavory (US); unsavoury (Br); Intl: unsavory

unserviceable

unshakable (US); unshakeable (Br); Intl: unshakable

untraceable

up-to-date

updraft (US); updraught (Br); Intl: updraft

uraemia (Br); uremia (US); Intl: uremia

urbanise (Br); urbanize (US); Intl: urbanize

usable/useable usable rec

uterus pl: uteri (rec) or uterus

utilise (Br); utilize (US); Intl: utilize; also utilized, utilizing, utilization

utmost; uttermost utmost rec

V

vagina pl: vaginas (rec) or vaginae

valor (US); valour (Br); Intl: valor; but valorous is Br and US

vapor (US); vapour (Br); Intl: vapor; but vaporized and vaporizing are Br and US

vari- as a prefix normally combines into one word: *varicolored, variform*

veld/veldt veldt rec

vender/vendor vendor rec

verandah (Br); porch (US); Intl: verandah

verso pl: versos

versus abbr: vs

vertex pl: vertexes (Br); vertices (US); Intl: vertices

vest def: in Br *vest* means a sleeveless undershirt; in US *vest* means a sleeveless, pocketed jacket worn under a suit jacket; define term on first using; see also *undershirt*

vibrato pl: vibratos

vice (Br); vise (US) def: a mechanical grip; Intl: vise

vice versa def: in reverse order

victimise (Br); victimize (US); Intl: victimize

video- as a prefix normally combines into one word: videocam, videocast, videocassette, videotape, videotext

vigor (US); vigour (Br); Intl: vigor; but invigorate and vigorous are Br and US

vise see vice

vitalise (Br); vitalize (US); Intl: vitalize

volcano pl: volcanoes (rec) or volcanos; also volcanism

vortex pl: vortices (rec) or vortexes

vs abbr for versus

W

wagon (Br); waggon (US); Intl: wagon

waistcoat def: a sleeveless, pocketed jacket worn under a suit jacket (in US called a vest); Intl: avoid using because it applies only to Br

wallet (Br); billfold (US); Intl: wallet

-ward/-wards use -ward as an adjective;, -wards as an adverb; -ward is the most common use; see individual entries such as *toward/towards*

warranty

washroom (US); lavatory or WC (Br); Intl: washroom

wastebasket (Br); garbage can (US); Intl: garbage can

watercolor (US); watercolour (Br); Intl: watercolor

waive; wave def: as a v, *waive* means to give up one's right to something; as a v, *wave* means to wave one's hand in greeting or farewell

waiver/waver def: *waiver* means to forgo one's claim or give up one's right; *waver* means to hesitate

wave- as a prefix normally combines into one word: **waveband, waveform, wavefront, waveguide, wavemeter, waveshape, waveswept**

weatherproof

well- as a prefix normally combines with a hyphen: **well-adjusted, well-defined, well-pleased, well-timed**

westernise (Br); **westernize** (US); Intl: **westernize**

westward/westwards westward rec

while/whilst while rec

whisky (Br); **whiskey** (US); Intl: **whisky**

wholly not *wholely*

willful (US); **wilful** (Br); Intl: **willful**; also **willfully**

will/shall/should see Article 9

windscreen (Br); **windshield** (US); Intl: **windshield**

woolen (US): **woollen** (Br); Intl: **woollen**

worship, worshiped, worshipping, worshiper (US); **worship, worshipped, worshipping, worshipper** (Br); Intl: **worshipped, worshipping, worshipper**

wrap; wrapped; wrapping

wraparound (n and adj); **wrap around** (v)

X

normally combines with a hyphen: x-axis, X-band, x-particle, x-radiation, x-ray,

X-Y recorder

Y

yard and back yard (US); **back garden** (Br); Intl: **back yard**

your; you're def: *your* means belonging to or coming from you; *you're* is a contraction of 'you are'

Z

zero pl: **zeros** (rec) or **zeroes**

zero- as a prefix combines irregularly: zero-access, zero-adjust, zero-beat, zero-hour, zero level, zero-set, zero reader

zip (Br); **zipper** (US); Intl: **zipper**

zoology; zoological

The Rationale for Some of the Committee’s Decisions

and Some Additional Guidelines

The following pages contain a series of short Articles that provide brief descriptions of certain difficult decisions the committee had to make. We hope they help you understand our rationale better.

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Article 1

Diphthongs: Should you insert them?

Diphthongs are the 'a' or 'o' inserted into an -ae- or -oe- construction within a word of Greek origin. For example:

with diphthong	without diphthong
anaemic	anemic
foetus	fetus
leukaemia	leukemia
oedema	edema
oestrogen	estrogen

Most US writers omit the diphthong. Writers in Britain generally retain the diphthong (although there is a trend to eliminate them).

We suggest that in most cases you eliminate the diphthong if you are writing for an International or a US-based audience, but retain it for a British audience. There are, however, exceptions: for example, *fetid* and *fetus* are favored in Br (rather than *foetid* and *foetus*), and *amoeba* is favored in both the US and Britain (rather than *ameba*). These and similar variances are identified individually in the Guidelines.

Article 2:

Metre and Litre: How should you spell them?

For most US and International documentation we recommend the '-er' ending for words such as *center*, *theater*, etc (our rationale for doing so is explained in the introductory notes). There are, however, two exceptions that override this guideline.

They are:

litre	the unit of liquid measure (and its subunits milliliter , centilitre , and kilolitre)
metre	the unit of linear measure (and its subunits millimetre , centimetre , kilometre)

Both of these terms fall within the *Système International d'Unités (SI)* and their use was defined in 1960 by the 11th Conférence Générale des Poids et Mesures, which is the international authority on metrication.

Consequently, we recommend the '-re' ending for these two words, in all technical documentation.

The abbreviations for metre and litre may seem to be contradictory but they are correct:

metre m

litre L

The abbreviation for litre has to be a capital L because a lower-case 'l' looks like the number '1'. The abbreviation for metre has to be a lower- case 'm' to avoid confusion with the abbreviation for mega, which is a capital 'M'.

Article 3:

Shortening Words Some words have a mildly abbreviated form that is being used more and more. For example, which way would you write these words?

Longer form	Shortened
adaptation	adaption
cultivable	cultivable
demonstratable	demonstrable
disassociate	dissociate
inoperatable	inoperable
orientated	oriented
oxidization	oxidation
navigatable	navigable
preventative	preventive
prioritize	priorize
reoccur(red)	recur(red)
separatable	separable

These differences are not specifically Br or US: they exist in all technical writing. The choice is really yours, although we recommend the shorter spelling, as shown in the Guidelines.

Article 4:

Brackets and Parentheses: Which are which?

There are several different symbols for brackets and parentheses, and they tend to be labeled differently in different countries (the differences are not just between the US and Britain). To achieve conformity we suggest using standard labels for the four symbols you are likely to find on your computer keyboard:

()	brackets (Br) or parentheses (US)
[]	square brackets
< >	angle brackets
{ }	braces

Article 5:

Using punctuation

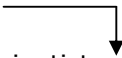
This a larger subject than the title may imply. In this Article we will discuss

- naming the dot (.) placed at the end of a sentence (should it be called a 'period' or a 'full stop'?)
- inserting or omitting serial commas,
- using the semicolon and colon,
- introducing a list,
- punctuating before or after quotation marks, and
- inserting punctuation into titles and addresses in letters.


Full stop or period

In US English, the punctuation placed at the end of a sentence is known as a *period*. In Br English it's known as a *full stop*. As a writer of English-language technical documentation you will use this type of punctuation regularly, but you are unlikely to refer to it by its name. Therefore, we suggest that you know it by either name.

Inserting a serial comma

Should you place a comma here? 
We interviewed many engineers, scientists, and academics.

A comma placed before the 'and' that is inserted between the second-last and the last item in a list is known as a **serial comma**. You could omit it in the above example without confusing your reader. But you would definitely need it here:

We interviewed 32 engineers and technologists in the European manufacturing sector, 17 scientists and their lab assistants in the North American pharmaceutical industries, and 29 professors and assistant professors in Australasia. 

In technical writing we recommend that you always insert the serial comma. The key is to ensure that your information will be clear to your reader.

Using semicolons

There are two criteria for using semicolons: there must be a complete sentence on each side of the semicolon; and there must be a link between the thoughts expressed in each of the two sentences. The previous sentence demonstrates this. So does this one:

To verify our hypothesis, we interviewed 78 technical professionals in North and South America; their responses revealed markedly diverse opinions.

Using colons

Use a colon to introduce a thought that evolves directly from the words that precede it:



Here is a useful idea: store the information in a separate file.

Like the semicolon, there must be a complete sentence in front of the colon.

Introducing a List

You can use a colon to introduce a list or a series of subparagraphs:

Ship the following items to site 17:

- Two manometers model 200A.
- Strip recorder SR2020.
- Printer Nabuchi 300.

Introducing solution XLA will have the following effects:

- There will be a noticeable increase in higher-level abstractions.
- The response time to the initial trigger will be 40% faster.
- There will be no need to monitor the flow.

However, if the introductory statement is *not* a complete sentence, you can

- omit the colon at the end of the introductory statement,
- open each item in the list with a lower-case letter,
- place a comma after each item (except the final one),
- insert the word 'and' after the comma of the second-last item, and
- place a period or full stop after the last item.

For example:

We need you to ship

- two manometers model 200A,
- a strip recorder SR2020, and
- a Nabuchi printer model 300.

This is the same as writing the information in a single sentence:

We need you to ship two manometers model 200A, a strip recorder SR2020, and a Nabuchi printer model 300.

It is much easier, however, to identify the information in the subparagraph approach.

Punctuation after a quotation mark

In the US, the punctuation after a quotation mark is placed *inside* the quotation:

'...in time to offset the reduction.'

In Britain, however, the punctuation is placed *outside* the quotation:

'...in time to offset the reduction'.

For international technical documentation we suggest inserting the punctuation inside the quotation:xxxx.'

This parallels the practice when an exclamation mark or a question mark are used at the end of a quotation:

'It will have a disastrous effect!'

'Can we risk increasing the product's price?'

**Single or
Double
Quotation
Marks?**

It would be illogical to place this type of punctuation after the quotation mark.

In Europe, single quotation marks (`...') are used much more than double quotation marks ("..."). But in the US, double quotation marks are used consistently. For international technical documentation, we recommend using the single quotation mark. It has a significant advantage when you type: you do not have to use the shift key!

However, if you insert a quotation *inside* a quotation, then for the inserted quotation use the alternative quotation marks:

`Xxxxxxx "Xxxxxxxx" xxxxxx.'
or: "Xxxxxxx `Xxxxxxxx` xxxxxx."

**Punctuation in
Names and
Addresses**

The trend today is to omit as much punctuation as possible in the name and address of a letter. This practice is common in Europe, but less common in the US. Postal authorities worldwide prefer that punctuation is omitted, to avoid confusing the optical character reader (OCR) scanning equipment they use to sort mail. Consequently, we recommend the following:

Mr David Orlikow
Quality Control Manager
Multiple Industries Inc
235 Worldwind Drive
Corisand FL 19821-2237
USA

In North America, postal authorities want the city, state or province, and zip or postal code, to be all on one line, with the following spacing:

Corisand FL 19821-2237
↑ ↑
 one space two spaces

In other countries the guidelines will differ; consequently we recommend that you research the address practices current in the countries to which you write.

Contractions

Avoid using contractions in technical documentation. Write 'it is' (not "it's"), 'do not' (not "don't"), 'it is' (not "isn't"), 'you are' (not "you're").

(Note: The above shows intentional use of double quotation marks, to avoid confusion around the contractions containing an apostrophe.)

Article 6:

**Abbreviating
Technical and
Nontechnical Terms**

You may abbreviate any term you like, and in any form you like, providing that you indicate clearly to the reader how you intend to abbreviate it.

State the term in full, then show the abbreviation in parentheses (i.e. brackets – see Article 4) to indicate that from now on you plan to write the term in an abbreviated form. Here is an example:

The length of the document development cycle (ddc) will depend on how early the technical writer is integrated into the product development team. The ddc will be relatively short if the writer works with the project team right from the start. However, the ddc will be much longer if the writer is brought in to prepare the documentation late in the product’s development.

There are three primary rules that affect how you should form abbreviations, and they apply to both words and symbols:

**Use Lower
Case Letters**

Unless an abbreviation is formed from a person’s, a company’s, or an organization’s registered name, use lower-case letters:

approximately	approx
pounds per square inch	psi
British Airways	BA
centimetre	cm
decibel	dB
millivolt	mV

(The ‘B’ and ‘V’ in the last two abbreviations are capitalized because they are formed from the initial letter of each inventor’s name: **B**ell and **V**olta.)

**Omit
Punctuation**

Unless the abbreviated expression forms another word, omit any punctuation:

horsepower	hp
cubic centimetre	cc
pascal	Pa
hertz	Hz
inch	in.
number	No. (or no.)

(The period [or full stop] identifies that the preceding letters are an abbreviation)

**Omit the ‘s’ from
Plurals**

When a plural abbreviation is linked with a quantity (as in 4 inches) omit the ‘s’:

inches	in.	4 in.
pounds (weight)	lb	28.5 lb
kilograms	kg	30 kg

hours

h or hr

15:20 h

**Metric (SI)
Guidelines**

The rules listed above also conform to the guidelines for writing metric units and symbols, with four additional rules. Metric symbols must be written, typed, or printed as follows:

In upright type, even if the sentence or paragraph in which they appear is in italics.

With a space between the last numeral and the first letter of the symbol:

225 mV 38.7 km 121.5 MHz

With no spaces between the letters of the symbol.

With punctuation (period or full stop) after the symbol *only* if it forms the last word in a sentence.

Article 7:

**Writing Numbers
in Narrative**

Whether a number should be written out or expressed as a numeral differs between ordinary writing and technical writing. In technical writing, you are much more likely to express a number in numerals. In the following guidelines we are referring to writing numbers in narrative descriptions, not in a column or a table.

The basic rule is this:

- Spell out single-digit numbers (one to nine).
- Use numerals for multiple-digit numbers (10 and up).

However, there are exceptions.

**Always use
numerals**

Use numerals when writing specific technical information, such as test results, dimensions, tolerances, temperatures, and statistics, and also where a number is followed by a unit of measurement, as in 3 mm, 7 kg, 4 lb.

Use numerals when you have a mix of small and large numbers in the same sentence or paragraph:

We have installed 47 desktop computers on the 2nd floor, all connected to 1 CPU and 3 printers.

Also use numerals when writing

- section, chapter, page, figure, or table numbers,
- percentages and numbers with decimals or fractions. and
- sums of money and people's ages.

**Always
spell out**

Spell out numbers that are generalizations (as in 'about five hundred'), fractions that stand alone (as in 'we have repaired only one quarter of the units'), and numbers that start a sentence (or revise the sentence so the number is not at the start).

Additional Guidelines

When writing a number that is less than unity (1), insert a zero in front of the decimal point: 0.75 0.0037

Write four-digit numbers as a compact unit: 3627

Insert a single space (not a comma) in numbers containing five or more digits: 72 368 365 000 4 387 261

Article 8:

Dates and Times

Dates

To ensure absolute clarity, we recommend that you avoid using all numerals for dates: the date 9/7/03 can be interpreted to mean September 7 (in the US) or 9 July (in Britain). The answer is to spell out the month, either in full or as a three-letter abbreviation:

September 7, 2003 or **Sep 7, 2003**
9 July 2003 or **9 Jul 2003**

We recommend the day-month-year format, rather than month-day-year, because it requires no punctuation.

Always use four digits for the year, which is particularly important during years 2001 through 2012 to avoid confusion with the months 1 through 12.

Times

For absolute clarity, we recommend using the 24-hour clock, which is commonly used by air, rail and bus lines, many governments, and the military. You will see 24-hour times written in three ways:

15:05 15.05 1505

We suggest using the colon to separate the hours and the minutes (**15:05**), because it cannot be confused with a decimal number or a whole number.

Under this arrangement, 12:00 is noon, and 24:00 is midnight. To ensure clarity, we suggest inserting 'noon' after 12:00:

12:00 noon

Article 9:

Shall, Will, or Should: when to use them

The definitions for these three words are particularly important when you are writing specifications and instructions. Their definitions can also be applied to all technical documentation:

- shall** means 'this is absolutely mandatory'
- will** means 'this is almost mandatory, but a change can be made if there is a reasonable argument for doing so and the change is approved by the originating authority'
- should** means 'we prefer that you do it this way, if at all possible'