



LanguageWire Style Guide

Rules and preferences for translating into UK English

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INTRODUCTION

This style guide contains stylistic preferences for LanguageWire translations into UK English.

Please read all the rules and preferences in this style guide and do your best to integrate them into your writing. Thank you for your cooperation.

The guide is not meant to be comprehensive; if you cannot find something in this guide, please consult a standard style reference appropriate for the type of content you are translating, such as the [Guardian style guide](#) or the [European Commission English Style Guide](#). For UK spelling, we recommend [Collins English Dictionary](#).

1. RULES

PUNCTUATION

Punctuation usage can differ between languages. Use the most appropriate punctuation for the language you are translating into: UK English. Even where punctuation symbols are used in both your source language and UK English, don't automatically copy the punctuation used in the source text since it may not be the most appropriate for your target text.

Full stop

Between sentences, a full stop should be followed by a single space.

Example: This is an example. Please follow this format.

When parentheses (brackets) or quotation marks are used to enclose text, place full stops and commas inside the quotes for a complete quoted sentence; otherwise the punctuation comes outside.

Examples:

Mary said: 'Our style guide needs updating,' and I said: 'I agree.'

Mary said updating the guide was 'a difficult and time-consuming task'.

Truncations (in which the end of the word is deleted) are followed by a point, but contractions (in which the middle of the word is removed) are not.

Examples:

Co., Art., Chap.

Dr, Ms, Ltd

In common business titles, do not use full stops.

Example: CEO, VP, CFO

Use a point, not a comma, for decimals.

Example: 15.5 billion

Comma

Use a comma before the last item in a series of three or more where it is needed to clarify the relationship between the items. This is sometimes referred to as a 'serial' or 'Oxford' comma. (Without a comma in the example below, it could sound like the author is claiming divine parentage).

Example: This book is dedicated to my parents, Ayn Rand, and God.

Use a comma to separate two adjectives when the word *and* can be inserted between them.

Example: a big, heavy box (the box is big and it is heavy) *but* a fancy diamond ring (*fancy* modifies the diamond ring; you would not say 'a fancy and diamond ring').

Put a comma outside the brackets (as demonstrated here), when those brackets appear at the end of a clause within the sentence.

There is no comma in the long form of a date, even if the day of the week is included.

Example: Wednesday 1 January 2015

Use a comma as the thousands separator for numbers.

Example: 500,000-byte files

Semicolon

Use a semicolon to connect two independent clauses; it signals a closer connection between them than a full stop would. It is very important that the two clauses are both independent; each clause has to be able to stand alone and make complete sense without the other.

Example: Mary drives an Audi; Tom drives a Ford.

Use a semicolon in a series of items when the items themselves are complex or contain internal punctuation.

Example: In the meeting today we have Colonel Mustard, from the army; Dr Watson, of Baker Street; his colleague, Sherlock Holmes and leading crime expert Joe Bloggs.

There should be no space preceding the semicolon. The colon should be followed by a single space.

Colon

Use a colon to introduce a list or series of items which illustrates, explains, qualifies or expands on what has preceded the colon. The part before the colon must be a complete sentence capable of standing alone.

Example: The shirt came in three sizes: extra small, large and extra large.

There should be no space preceding the colon. The colon should be followed by a single space.

If a colon is used in a heading, it should be followed by a capital letter.

Question marks and exclamation marks

Do not use a question mark in an indirect question.

Example: The father asked when the child would come home.

Avoid exclamation marks in formal contexts. Use sparingly, only to express an outcry or emphatic statement.

Example: Come home right now! What on earth are you doing?

If a bracketed aside needs a question mark or exclamation mark, you'll still need to add a full stop on the outside to complete the sentence (like this!).

Dashes

Use an en dash (–) to indicate a sudden change in thought or an abrupt end to a sentence.

To type an en dash on a PC, hold down Alt and type 0150 (with the number lock on).

Example: He made it his mission – his one and only mission – to tell them about what happened.

Hyphenation

Use a hyphen (-) to denote a range of values (such as dates, times, or numbers).

Example: Ages 18-21, doctor-patient relationship

A hyphen is also used to link words or parts of words to clarify meaning.

Example: Man-eating shark vs. man eating shark

When an adverb can also be an adjective (e.g. hard), the hyphen is required to avoid ambiguity.

Example: a hard-pressed person.

This is a complex area; when in doubt, consult your standard spelling and style references.

Apostrophes

Apostrophes are mainly used 1) to indicate possession or 2) to show missing letters.

Examples:

- 1) The consultant's manager is here (the manager of one consultant)
- 1) The consultants' manager is here (the manager of several consultants)
- 2) Don't think twice about it (don't = do not)
- 2) It's correct to assume that the company increased its profit margin.
(it's is a contraction of 'it is.' Do not use it's to indicate possession).

QUOTATIONS AND DIALOGUE

Quotation marks

Please ensure that you use 'curly' rather than 'straight' quotation marks.

Use double quotation marks (" ") when quoting direct speech.

Double quotation marks can also be used to emphasise certain words for added effect (usually sarcasm or irony).

Examples:

"We always have tea on Fridays," he said. "But on Thursdays, we have coffee."
Sure, the politician "cares" about people who vote for him. (intended sarcasm)

Use single quotation marks (' ') for quotes within a quote.

Example: "They said that the test was 'tricky' but it wasn't," said Dr Brown.

They are also used for the titles of books, articles, etc.

Example: She liked the '5 Ways to Plant a Tree' article.

Ellipsis

An ellipsis is used to show an emission. If the ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence, do not add a fourth full stop or a space. In the middle of a sentence, there is normally a hard/nonbreaking space before and a normal space after the ellipsis.

Example: Is that ... a pineapple?

1.1. SPELLING

American vs British spelling

LanguageWire uses British spelling unless the customer requests otherwise or the job is specifically for US English. For US English, see the separate US style guide.

We do not use 'Oxford English'. This means that where the Oxford dictionary prefers an '-iz-' to an '-is-' word ending, we always use the '-is' variant favoured by many other sources. Hence we use 'organisation' not 'organization'. The exception to this rule would be where an official name or title uses the '-iz-' spelling.

The correct UK spelling of 'programme' applies unless referring to a computer program.

1.2. GRAMMAR AND USAGE

'A' or 'an'?

Use *a* before words and acronyms with a consonant sound, including silent y, h, and w, no matter how the word is spelled. Use *an* before words and acronyms that start with a vowel sound. (Tip: Read your sentence out loud and you'll hear when *an* is needed.)

Examples:

a European representative, an Eastern European, a utopia, a horse
a NATO member, an NBA player

Some speakers use 'an' before 'historic'. Although we would not do so, this is not incorrect; do not change it if you are quoting them.

Capitalisation

In general, capital letters are used for 1) specific people, places, and things, not 2) general concepts.

Examples:

Board of Directors, the Board
the Nordic region, northern France, the Spanish language

Use an initial capital letter for the following elements:

1) specific people, places, and things, not 2) general concepts.

- The first word in a sentence (unless the sentence begins with a term that is not capitalised for a specific reason)
- The days of the week, the month
- The terms Table, Figure, Appendix, and Chapter when they are followed by a number
- Terms identifying the name of a key on the keyboard, such as Shift and Alt
- The first word of a complete sentence in a quotation

Example: She asked, "Can you go to the shop on your way home?" *but*
Growing up, my mother always told us to "do the right thing".

Capitalise a person's professional title, but not if that term is used as a descriptor.

Examples:

President and CEO Bobbi Brownie
Brownie, president at the company ...
He is chief executive officer of the company

Currencies

Do not place a space between a currency symbol and the amount. But do place a space between the ISO currency code and the amount (see second example). Do not use both the symbol and currency code or either of these and the spelled-out name together.

Examples:

€1.5 billion

SEK 6.50 per share

100,000 shares of common stock

It is helpful, but not necessary, to place a non-breaking space between the letters and numbers (press Ctrl+Shift+Spacebar on a PC).

Numbers

Spell out whole numbers from zero to nine. Use figures for whole numbers greater than nine. Where numbers in a range fall above and below this limit, use figures for both:

Example: '9 to 11', not 'nine to 11'.

You should also use figures for numbers containing decimals, and for numbers written with their units of measurement. Try to avoid starting a sentence with a figure: spell it out or change the word order (see first example).

Examples:

Forty-five new trees were planted.

We have offices in 12 countries.

Output was 250 kW.

This is another complex area and more detail is available in standard style and grammar references.

Relative clauses

Determining whether a relative clause is 'defining' or 'non-defining' will tell you whether or not you need to use a pair of commas to separate it from the main clause. Defining (or 'restrictive') relative clauses give information which identifies the noun being referred to. There is no pause in speech, so no comma is used in writing.

Example: The shares (which) he bought when he joined the company are now worthless.

You can tell that these relative clauses define the noun they refer to because if you leave these clauses out, the sentences do not convey much meaning:

Example: The shares are now worthless.
(Which shares?)

Non-defining (or 'non-restrictive') relative clauses give information but do not identify what is being talked about. They are normally marked by pauses in speech and therefore by commas in writing:

Example: His latest film, which has only been in cinemas for a week, has proved very popular.

If a non-defining relative clause is removed, the sentence still makes sense and conveys the essential information:

Example: His latest film has proved very popular.

‘That’ or ‘which’

A related question is the issue of whether to use ‘that’ or ‘which’. This also depends on whether the relative clause is defining (use that; which is also acceptable) or non-defining (always use which).

The following formula may help simplify things:

Defining clauses – that (desirable), no comma (essential).

Example: “Should advertising that targets children be banned?”

(Refers only to advertising targeting children)

Non-defining clauses – which, comma (both essential).

Example: “Should advertising, which targets children, be banned?”

(Refers to all advertising, says it all targets children).

(Reference: the Guardian style guide).

2. PREFERENCES

The following are LanguageWire's preferences when more than one correct option exists.

2.1. GRAMMAR

Headlines and headings

Only capitalise the first letter of headlines, and do not use a full stop, colon or semicolon after a headline.

Example: A brief introduction to our company

Comma

Use the Oxford (or serial) comma if necessary for clarity.

Example: I would like to thank my parents, Ayn Rand, and God.

Quotations vs. italics

Use italics to indicate titles of books and periodicals or major freestanding works. For titles of articles, chapters, and other shorter works, enclose in single quotation marks.

Examples:

I often search the online archive of *Wired*.

The character reappears at the end of Chapter 5, 'The Valley of Shadows'.

Use italics for foreign words and phrases likely to be unfamiliar to the readers. Commonly used terms, such as Latin abbreviations, do not require italics.

Examples:

It has a certain *je ne sais quoi* about it.

a delicious *crème brûlée*, etc., i.e.

2.2. STYLE AND USAGE

Abbreviations, acronyms and contractions

Avoid shortening word forms unless necessary to maintain the original style of the text or unless the abbreviation or acronym is normally used. When you do shorten a word form, spell it out at first use, followed by the acronym in brackets.

Depending on how specialised or informal the original source text is, abbreviations and contractions may be allowed. If in doubt, ask the customer what they prefer.

Examples:

Advanced high-strength steel (AHSS) is a complex material. The AHSS family contains different grades.

An HTML element is a component of an HTML document.

"Hey, you, don't do that!" Let's rock 'n' roll.

Dates and times

For dates, the UK standard is *Day Month Year* for the long form and *MM/DD/YY* for the short form. When possible, write out dates as this helps avoid confusion.

Example: In the year ending 31 December 2010, the company reported a profit.

For time, use the 12-hour clock unless the customer requests otherwise.

Informal vs. formal/business writing style

Translations should accurately reflect the original source text in meaning but also in writing style and tone. Depending on the context, an informal writing style (which exaggerates certain words or letters, or uses slang) is acceptable. Use your best judgment when choosing a writing style. If in doubt, ask your project manager or the customer what they prefer.

Singular or plural

Data is singular.

The plural of euro is euros.

Capitalisation

The internet is not capitalised.

2.3. FORMATTING

General format

The general structure and use of paragraph breaks or line breaks (regardless of whether it is a text- or file-based translation) should perfectly follow and match the original source material.

Be aware that the original source material may contain language-specific punctuation or symbols which might not be appropriate in English.

Online translations

Translations performed in LanguageWire's online CAT tool occasionally contain tags. These tags may need to be repositioned in the target language text. It is the translator's responsibility to position tags correctly in the target text.

File-based translations

Use the same font type, size and colour as the original source text. Maintain the appropriate font styles (bold, italic, underline) as the original source text unless you judge them to significantly impair the readability of the translation; in that case, contact your project manager or the client with your suggestions.

A translation may be longer than the source text and this can create formatting issues.

As a translator, you are expected to make a reasonable effort to maintain a presentable document, but you are not responsible for complex formatting work. Please contact your project manager and the assigned engineer through the dialogue module if you encounter formatting or technical problems.