



LanguageWire Style Guide

Rules and preferences for translating into American English

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INTRODUCTION

This style guide contains rules and preferences for LanguageWire translations into American English.

The “Rules” section contains rules that must be followed in all texts.

The “Preferences” section contains our preferred stylistic choices when more than one grammatically correct option exists. If we find that a translation does not follow a preference, we will make note of it in your review but we will not mark it as an error.

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

1. RULES

These rules are not meant to be comprehensive. If you are unsure about a rule not mentioned in this guide, please consult a standard style reference appropriate for the type of content you are translating, such as *The AP Stylebook* or *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For US spelling, we recommend the [Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary](#).

1.1. PUNCTUATION

Punctuation usage can differ between languages. Use the most appropriate punctuation for US English when translating into US English. Even where punctuation symbols are used in both the source and target language, do not automatically copy the punctuation used in the source text since it may not be the most appropriate choice in US English.

Period

Between sentences, a period should be followed by a single space.

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

When parentheses or brackets are used to enclose an entire independent sentence, put the period inside the closing parenthesis or brackets.

Example: Sara was happy to travel to France. (She had never been there before.)

In common business titles, do not use periods.

Example: CEO, VP, CFO

Use a period as a decimal point.

Example: 15.5 billion

Comma

Remember to consult your style guide for a more thorough discussion of when to use a comma. The following rules are for common scenarios.

Use a comma before the last item in a series of three or more if it is needed to clarify the relationship between the items. (See also the “Preferences” section.)

Example: She dreamed of her mother, a famous singer, and a magician.
(The story is about three different people. Without the final comma, it could mean that the mother was both a singer and a magician.)

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”)

Use a comma at the end of *etc.*, *i.e.*, and *e.g.* if they are the final items in a series, unless they appear at the end of a sentence.

Example: Think about your posture, wrist position, distance from the keyboard, etc., when thinking about ergonomics.

Use a comma after the day of the month in the long form of a date.

Example: January 1, 2015

Use a comma after each element of a geographical place, unless it comes at the end of a sentence.

Example: We went to Oslo, Norway, for a conference.

Use a comma as the thousands separator for numbers.

Example: 500,000-byte files

Semicolon

Use a semicolon to connect two independent clauses that are not joined by a conjunction to signal a closer connection between them than a period would.

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

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

Example: I know people from Dallas, Texas; Santiago, Chile; and Lyon, France.

Use a semicolon before an adverb that transitions from one independent clause to another (*then, however, thus, hence, indeed, accordingly, besides, therefore*).

Example: The CEO was unavailable that day; therefore, the company made plans for a new executive meeting.

Colon

Use a colon to introduce a list or series of items illustrating or amplifying what has preceded the colon. Use only after a complete sentence. One space, not two, should follow the colon unless it indicates a ratio or similar.

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

Question mark

Do not use a question mark in an indirect question.

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

Exclamation point

Avoid exclamation points in formal contexts. Use sparingly to express an outcry or emphatic statement.

Example: Stop it right now! What on earth are you doing?

Dashes

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

On a Mac: Press Shift + Opt (or Alt) + hyphen (-)

On a PC: Hold down Alt and type 0151, or press Ctrl + Alt + minus sign (-).

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

Use an en dash (–) to denote a range of values (such as dates, times, or numbers).

On a Mac: Press Opt (or Alt) + hyphen

On a PC: Hold down Alt and type 0150, or press Ctrl + minus (-)

Example: Ages 18–21, patient–physician relationship

Hyphenation

Use a hyphen to link words or parts of words to clarify meaning. When in doubt about when to use a hyphen in compound words, consult your standard spelling and style references.

Example: Man-eating shark vs. man eating shark

Do not hyphenate a two-word phrasal adjective that begins with an adverb ending in *-ly*.

Example: a highly successful leader

Use a hyphen to separate numbers that are not inclusive, such as phone numbers or social security numbers. For inclusive numbers, use the en dash.

Apostrophes

Apostrophes are used mainly to indicate possession or to indicate missing letters.

Examples:

The consultant's manager is here. (meaning the manager of one consultant)

The consultants' manager is here. (meaning the manager of several consultants)

Don't think twice about it. (don't = do not)

Important: *it's* is a contraction of "it is." Do not use *it's* to indicate possession.

Example: It's correct to assume that the company increased its profit margin.

1.2. QUOTATIONS AND DIALOGUE

Quotation marks

Use double quotation marks (“ ”) when quoting direct speech. Double quotation marks can also be used to emphasize certain words for added effect (as with sarcasm or irony, occasionally when using a word or letter as an example, or to enclose certain proper nouns such as titles of short works).

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)

She liked the “5 Ways to Plant a Tree” article.

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

Example: “They said that the test was ‘tricky’ but it wasn’t,” said Dr. Brown.

Quotation marks and punctuation

Periods and commas precede closing quotation marks, whether double or single. Colons and semicolons follow closing quotation marks. Question marks and exclamation points follow closing quotation marks unless they belong within the quoted matter.

Examples:

“We need to create next year’s report,” she said.

I was asked to refer to “Acme’s Sustainability Report”; instead, I used another source.

Which customer said “This is the greatest product ever”?

Ellipses

An ellipsis is used to show an emission. If the ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence, do not add a fourth period. There is normally a space before and after the ellipsis.

Example: Is that ... a pineapple?

1.3. SPELLING

American vs. British spelling

When the customer orders a job with US English as the target language, then use US English. LanguageWire recommends using the [Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary](#).

1.4. GRAMMAR AND USAGE

“A” or “an”?

Use *a* before words and acronyms with a consonant sound, including /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

Capitalization

In general, capital letters are used for specific people, places, and things, not 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:

- The first word in a sentence, unless the sentence begins with a term that is not capitalized for a specific reason
- The days of the week and the month
- The terms Table, Figure, Appendix, and Chapter when they are followed by a number
- Each term that identifies the name of a keyboard key
- The first word of a complete sentence in a quotation

Example: She asked, "Can you stop by the store on your way home?" *but*
Growing up, Mom always told us to "do the right thing."

Capitalization and formal titles

Capitalize a person's professional title if it precedes their name, and lowercase the title if it follows the name.

Examples:

President and CEO Bobbi Brownie *but*
Brownie, president at the company ...
He is chief executive officer at 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 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 integers from zero to nine. Use digits for integers greater than nine, for numbers containing decimals, and for numbers with units. Exception: Spell out integers that are the first word of a sentence (see the first example).

Examples:

Forty-five new trees were planted.

We have offices in 12 countries.

Revenue totaled USD 2.5 billion this year. (not 2,500,000,000)

To maintain consistency, if numbers both smaller and larger than 9 are used in the same sentence, all numbers should be written in their numeric form.

Example: The rock was between 7 and 14 million years old.

2. PREFERENCES

The following preferences apply when more than one grammatically correct option exists. As stated earlier, if we find that a translation does not follow a preference, we will make note of it in your review but we will not mark it as an error.

2.1. GRAMMAR

Capitalization in headlines

Only capitalize the first letter of headlines, and do not use a period after a headline.

Example: A brief introduction to our company

Comma

Use the Oxford (or serial) comma for maximum clarity.

Example: We ate bread, toast, and cheese.

Quotations vs. italics

Use italics to indicate titles of books and periodicals or major freestanding works. Titles of articles, chapters, and other shorter works use roman font and are enclosed in 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:

a delicious *creme brulee*, etc., i.e.

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

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 shortened. When you do use an acronym (a word often formed from the initial letters of a phrase, such as HTML, DNA, or IBM), spell it out at first use with the acronym in parentheses.

Depending on how informal the original source text is, abbreviations and contractions are 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.

(In steps of computer instructions): Do not switch on the phone until you hear the beep.

(In informal sentences): “Hey, you, don’t do that!” Let’s rock ’n’ roll.

Dates and times

For dates, the US standard is *Month Day, Year* for the long form and *MM/DD/YY* for the short form. When possible, write out dates.

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

For time, use the 12-hour style with *a.m.* and *p.m.* (or *AM* and *PM*), unless the customer requests otherwise.

Examples:

The meeting was held 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

The course starts at 9 a.m.

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 the customer what they prefer.

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.

Use the most appropriate punctuation when translating into English, since the original source material may contain language-specific punctuation or symbols.

Online translations

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

File-based translations

Use the same font type, size and color 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 the client with your suggestions.

A translation can be longer than the source text and 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 dialog module if you encounter formatting or technical problems.