

ADR UK writing guidelines

This guide sets out the basic principles for writing content in the ADR UK style.

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Basic writing principles

ADR UK communications should be:

- Clear and accessible to non-specialist audiences
- Accurate and evidence-based
- Transparent about the strengths and limitations of research
- Relevant to decision makers, researchers and the public
- Inclusive and respectful.

Ask yourself:

- Would a non-expert understand this?
- Have I explained why this research matters?
- Have I clearly distinguished evidence from opinion?
- Have I avoided unnecessary jargon and acronyms?
- Have I explained what specialist terms mean if my audience may not know?

When communicating research:

- Lead with the finding, insight or impact, not the methodology
- Explain why the research matters to people, services or policy
- Avoid overstating findings or implying causation where only association has been shown
- Be clear about uncertainty, limitations and context
- Avoid sensational or alarmist language
- Avoid claiming research has "changed" an outcome (e.g. policymaking) unless there is clear evidence – use terms such as “informed” or “contributed to” instead.

Talking about administrative data

Explaining administrative data: Many audiences will not know what administrative data is. Where appropriate, explain administrative data in plain language, or [link towards the ADR UK website description](#). Avoid assuming familiarity with terms – provide explanations where needed.

Data access and security: When describing ADR UK research, emphasise that researchers securely access de-identified data for approved projects, and be clear that personal information is protected. You can also link towards [the relevant page on ADR UK](#).

Accessibility

All ADR UK content should be as accessible as possible, and accessibility should be considered at every stage of production:

- Write in plain language suitable for a general reader (reading age of approximately 12 years) and avoid unnecessary jargon, unless writing for specialist audiences. Keep sentences under 30 words where possible (average sentence length 15 words).
- Where you need to use specialist terminology, consider whether a definition would be useful to your audience.
- Use bullet point lists to break up complex information.
- Write descriptive alt text for images.
- Make all links descriptive. 'Read our new [report on Covid-19 cases in England](#).' is good. '[Click here](#) to read our new report on Covid-19 cases in England' is bad.
- Break up pages with headings and subheadings to help people navigate the information.
- Ensure tables have clear headings and are understandable when read by screen readers.
- Use acronyms consciously and with consideration for the audience. They make content inaccessible and off-putting to readers. Limit acronym use to commonly used names (ONS, NHS, MoJ) or if a phrase appears many multiple times in a document. Always write the first use in full.
- Avoid long noun strings such as "administrative data research infrastructure development programme".
- Avoid directional language such as "see above" or "click the button on the right".
- Avoid colour-only references such as "shown in red".

Writing digital content

For ADR UK and national websites:

- Front-load key information
- Put the most important message in the first paragraph
- Use descriptive headings
- Keep paragraphs short (typically 1–4 sentences)
- Use bullets where possible
- Optimise content for scanning rather than linear reading.

For social media:

- Be clear, accurate and accessible, translating research into key messages for non-specialist audiences
- Prioritise key findings, insights or impact over methodological detail
- Use plain language and avoid jargon; explain or link to specialist terms where needed

- Lead with the most important information and keep content concise for scanning
- Ensure content is accurate, proportionate and does not overstate findings; avoid implying causation where research shows correlation or association only
- Use line breaks and emojis only where they support readability, not meaning
- Use descriptive links to direct audiences to fuller content
- Tag ADR UK and relevant partners where appropriate.

Use of generative AI: Generative AI tools may be used to support drafting and editing digital content. They should be treated as assistive tools rather than a source of authoritative content. All outputs must be reviewed by a human before publication to ensure accuracy, clarity, tone and compliance with ADR UK guidance. Care should be taken to ensure that AI use does not introduce inaccuracies, bias or misrepresentation, particularly in relation to sensitive or policy-relevant content. Authors remain responsible for all written content.

ADR UK naming conventions

When referring to ADR UK, or any of the national partners (ADR England, ADR Northern Ireland, ADR Scotland, ADR Wales), in text for the first time, this should be done in the following format:

- ADR UK (Administrative Data Research UK)
- ADR England
- ADR Northern Ireland (ADR NI)
- ADR Scotland
- ADR Wales

Note that there should always be a space (not hyphen) between ADR and the country name.

When using the full name forms, 'administrative' should always be written in full rather than shortened to 'admin' (although this may be done verbally).

To list multiple partners, start with ADR UK, followed by the national partners in alphabetical order.

When referencing UK-wide work, this should be as ADR UK. When the work in question is specific to one of the devolved administrations, it should be under the relevant national name (e.g. ADR NI), but with a clear reference to being part of the ADR UK partnership.

Abbreviating partners and projects: When abbreviating the names of partners and projects, expand the abbreviation in the first instance, e.g. 'the Office for National Statistics (ONS)' and thereafter 'the ONS'.

In general, if a partner's full name includes 'the', so should the abbreviation: 'the ONS' and 'the MoJ'. Where used in this way, 'the' should be in sentence case. This is not necessary when using the abbreviation as a descriptor, so 'We are using ONS data' or 'We are funding MoJ fellows' are fine.

Treat abbreviated organisations as singular, so 'the ONS has launched...' 'the ONS is...'

Where only part of the partner or project's name is abbreviated, make sure the full name is still represented in the text, e.g. 'the GUIE dataset', not 'the GUIE' and 'the GRADE fellowships', not 'the GRADEs'.

ADR UK / research-specific terminology

Below is a list of commonly used terms. You may also refer to the [ADR UK Glossary](#) for descriptions.

Administrative data: written in full (not 'admin data')

Data: treat as a singular or mass noun, so use "data is" rather than "data are". Some technical communications, that are aimed specifically at those within the space of data and statistics, can treat data as a plural.

Data linkage and data linking: not data matching, unless technically correct

Data owner: with a space

Datasets: no space

Decision makers, decision making: space, no hyphen

De-identified data: with hyphen. Preferred over "anonymised data" where data can potentially be re-linked under strict controls.

Evidence-informed: rather than evidence-based, where nuance is required

Flagship dataset: sentence case. When naming specific datasets, the format is: [Name of dataset] [Year] – [Coverage] in title case, e.g. "Administrative Data | Agricultural Research Collection 2021 – England and Wales". When writing general text, you might add the acronym before the coverage (or remove the coverage where appropriate), as well as the word "dataset" after, e.g. "the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings linked to Census 2011 (ASHE-Census 2011) – England and Wales" or "the Education and Child Health Insights from Linked Data (ECHILD) dataset".

Grant holder: with space; say this rather than award holder

ONS Secure Research Service: no possessive apostrophe

Policymaking, policymaker: one word

Public engagement: should not be used interchangeably with public involvement

Public services: preferred over "government services" where appropriate

Research Excellence Framework: (uppercase) and abbreviated as REF. The Teaching Excellence Framework is TEF.

Research Fellow/Fellowship: capital letters

Research project: sentence case; refers to a specific project within a research theme

Research-ready data: hyphen, sentence case

Research theme: thematic groupings of research projects, e.g. health and wellbeing, used to group related work across the ADR UK partnership

Trusted research environment (TRE): sentence case; always expand the acronym first

Numbers and dates

Billion: one thousand million

Biannual, biennial: avoid where possible, use explicit definition. Biannual means twice a year, whereas biennial means once every two years

Bimonthly: avoid as means both twice a month and every two months

Centuries: hyphenate centuries if using as an adjective. For example, "21st-century newspapers".

Currencies: lower case when the whole word is used: euro, pound, sterling, dong, etc. Abbreviate dollars like this: \$50 (US dollars); A\$50 (Australian dollars); HK\$50 (Hong Kong dollars).

Dates and times: 21 July 2016, 14:00 – 16:00 (day month year, time); 21 July – 6 August; 6-10 August. Avoid 2nd and 21st as this can cause formatting issues.

Decades: Use figures for decades: the 1960s, the swinging 60s, etc. When wanting to refer to the middle of a decade format as "mid-90s".

Euro: currency; plural euros and cents.

Numbers: one to nine to be written out in full; numerals from 10 to 999,999; thereafter use million, billion or trillion written in full.

- Use the same format for ordering, e.g. first, second – ninth, followed by 10th, 11th etc.
- Use the same format for money, e.g. £23 million rather than £23m.
- Unless precision is necessary, round numbers for public audiences, e.g. “2.5 million” rather than “2,487,341”, using “around”, “approximately” or “fewer/more than” where needed.

“One in-” : should be treated as a plural e.g. “one in six people are”

Page 1: written in full with “page” in lower case and a numeral

Penny, pence: 1p is one penny, not “one pence”

Percentages: use % rather than per cent and convert into fractions when possible

Percentage rises: an increase from 3% to 5% is a 2-percentage point increase or a 2-point increase, not a 2% increase; any sentence saying “such and such rose or fell by X%” should be considered and checked carefully

School years: year 2, key stage 1 (note that “key stage” is not used in Scotland)

Threefold: no hyphen for numbers under ten, and then a hyphen for number above ten (e.g. eleven-fold etc.)

Time of day: use the 24-hour clock with a colon, e.g. “the event will run from 14:00 – 16:00”

Punctuation and formatting

Abbreviations, acronyms: no full stops between letters. For example, IMF not I.M.F. On the first mention write the name in full with the acronym in brackets. Capitalise acronyms.

“e.g.”, “i.e.” and “etc.”: use lower case and full stops. However, try to avoid and instead write “such as” or “for example”.

Headings and subheadings: use sentence case

Italics: avoid in general but can use for foreign words and phrases, poetry, scientific names and emphasis

Links: do not use ‘click here’ or ‘to find out more’. The link text should describe what the content is.

Lists: when using numbers, use a full stop after the number (for example, 2.)

Try to order the list in descending order of length as this is easier to read.

Where bullet points follow a colon to complete a sentence, use sentence case for the bullets and only a full stop after the final bullet point, for example:

“You are eligible to attend if you are:

- a data science researcher
- a civil servant working with population data.”

If the list is not completing a sentence, then it isn’t necessary to include a full stop at the end.

“Research themes:

- Crime and justice
- Health and wellbeing”

If a bullet is long enough to include a full sentence, punctuate it using sentence case. However, try to avoid this – bullets are easier to understand when they’re kept concise.

Listing conditions: Use ‘and’ or ‘or’ to specify whether you mean all or any of the listed conditions. For example:

“You are eligible to apply if:

- you are an early career researcher, and
- you have experience working with population data.”

Quotation marks:

- Use double quotes at the start and end of a quoted section, with single quotes for quoted words within that section.
- Place full stops and commas inside the quotes for a complete quoted sentence; otherwise the full stop goes outside.
- When beginning a quote with a sentence fragment that is followed by a full sentence, punctuate according to the final part of the quote, e.g. The Minister called the allegations “blatant lies. But in a position such as mine, it is only to be expected.”
- Avoid ‘that’ before quotes. Use colons to introduce a quote when appropriate – so “NAME SURNAME said: “This is a promising development”,” not “NAME SURNAME said that: “this is a promising development”.”
- Try to avoid using quotation marks for names or unfamiliar terms, but use single quotation marks if it is necessary.

References: our preferred reference style is [APA](#), but we recognise that researchers may be required by their institutions to follow alternative styles.

Research projects and outputs: use sentence case for project titles unless the official title requires capitals; use sentence case for publication titles

Semicolon: worth using, only correctly.

Spacing: use single spaces not double. Within a sentence using a dash (-) put spaces on either side, e.g. “Administrative Data Research UK – otherwise known as ADR UK –”. This does not apply when using a hyphen.

Titles: capitalise individual job titles and job description, e.g. President Barack Obama, the US President, Barack Obama, and Obama on subsequent mention; the Duke of Westminster, the Duke at second mention; Pope Francis, the Pope.

Titles – academic: at first mention for people practising as a doctor in the field in which they gained that qualification, including medical and academic doctors and doctors of divinity (not, for example, a politician who happens to have a PhD); thereafter, just use surname except in leading articles. The abbreviation ‘Dr’ does not need a full stop.

Typographical emphasis: use bold sparingly for emphasis, do not use all-caps or underlining.

Under- : prefixes are normally one word, e.g. underachieve, underact, underage, undercover, underdeveloped, undermanned, underprivileged, undersea, undersecretary, undersigned, undervalue, underweight.

Grammar and spelling

“An” or “a” before “H”: use “an” before a silent “h” (e.g. an honour), use “a” before an aspirational “h” (e.g. a hospital)

Adviser: spelt with an “e” not an “o”

Occurred: with two “r”s

Panellist: with two “l”s

-st: Use amid and while rather than amidst and whilst

-ee: -ee means something happens to you; -er means you do something: so employee, refugee but escaper rather than escapee

-ise: at the end of a word, not -ize. The exception is capsise.

-se: not -ze, even if spellcheck tells you otherwise

-t: ending for past participle: the cakes are burnt, the word is misspelt. But earned, not earnt

Political / government terminology

Brexiteers: use Brexiteers rather than Brexiteers

Byelection, bylaw, byline, bypass, bystander: no space, no hyphen

Cabinet: do not capitalise (shadow cabinet) unless referring to the Cabinet Office

Departments and their abbreviations:

Department for Business and Trade (DBT)

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

Department for Education (DfE)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Department for International Trade (DIT)

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT)

Department for Transport (DfT)

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)

Ministry of Defence (MoD)

Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

Office of the Leader of the House of Commons

Northern Ireland Office

Scotland Office not Scottish Office

Wales Office not Welsh Office

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

Treasury

Cabinet Office (but the cabinet)

Home Office

Departments of state: Capitalise initials of British government ministries and ministers

Devolved government: not devolved administration

EU: spell out in full for first mention only

EU presidents: There are three, so don't say "EU president" or "president of the union" without making clear which you mean (of the commission, of the parliament, of the European council).

First Minister: both words upper case

Foreign political parties: In general, use the English translation of a political party if (a) that is how it is most commonly known in the English-speaking world, or (b) the party's name in its own language is not easy for readers to translate themselves

Foreign Secretary: upper case

General election: lower case

Government: lower case when referring to government in the general, and uppercase when referring to a specific government (e.g. UK Government). As a collective noun, can be treated as singular or plural. Useful to specify in the UK context, so write e.g. Scottish Government.

Government agencies, public bodies, quangos: initial caps, e.g. Crown Prosecution Service

Government departments: initial capitals when full name is used, e.g. Home Office, Foreign Office, Ministry of Justice

Greater London Authority (GLA): not to be used interchangeably with Greater London Assembly

Hon members: of parliament (all words lower case)

Leader of the house: (all lower case) or leader of the Commons

The left: left wing, leftwinger (nouns) and left-wing (adjective). Same principles for the right.

Lib Dems: can be used after Liberal Democrats is written in full

Lords, House of Lords: but the house, not the House; their lordships

Ministers: upper case, for example, Minister for Health and Social Care

MLA: member of the Northern Ireland assembly (it stands for member of the legislative assembly)

MPs and MSP: capitalised, but spelt out in full is lower case (member of parliament, member of the Scottish parliament)

No. 10: with a full stop

One-nation politics: with a hyphen, but one nation Tory (without)

Parliament, parliamentary: lower case when referring to a general parliament, but Houses of Parliament or UK Parliament with capitals. Initial capital for parliaments referred to by their name in the relevant language, e.g. Bundestag, Duma, Folketing, Knesset

Party: lower case in the name of the organisation e.g. Conservative party

Peers: "peers" is not capitalised unless used as a proper noun. Refer to peers by the name by which they are most widely known, which in most cases will be the one they had before their peerage. Use this at first mention, a simple title (Lord or Lady) at second mention, and thereafter surname only. E.g. Andrew Adonis (first mention), Lord Adonis (second mention), Adonis (thereafter).

Political language: on first mention use quotations around politically partisan phrases e.g. “big society”.

Private member’s bill: all lower case, plural is private members’ bill.

Referendum: plural is referendums not referenda

Voting systems: lower case, but may be abbreviated after first mention, e.g. first past the post (FPTP) or alternative vote (AV)

White paper: both words lower case

Inclusive language

Use language that is respectful, accurate and inclusive. Preferences for terminology can vary between individuals, communities, organisations and countries, and language may change over time.

Where possible, follow the preferences of the people or communities being described. This may be informed by public engagement activities, stakeholder consultation, or guidance from relevant organisations and government bodies.

Be aware that there may not always be a single preferred term. Where terminology is contested or varies across sources, use the most appropriate term for your audience and context, and consider acknowledging differences in terminology where relevant to the research.

When reporting on data, use the terminology used in the source dataset where necessary, but explain terms that may be unfamiliar, outdated or open to interpretation.

In general, ADR UK adheres to the guidance overleaf:

BAME or BME: Avoid collective terms such as BAME and BME unless required for consistency with a dataset, publication or source. Be as specific as possible when describing ethnic groups.

Black: always capitalised when describing ethnicity

Countries:

Great Britain refers to England, Scotland and Wales (not Northern Ireland).

The United Kingdom refers to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Use UK instead of writing out United Kingdom in full. Britain can be used as convenient shorthand for Great Britain.

Use British rather than UK as an adjective, for example: British citizens.

Use British and Britons rather than Brits. However, there is a preference for “those living in the UK” to avoid exclusion.

Use an initial capital letter for all country titles, for example Poland.

Child sexual abuse: never child sex

Deaf: capitalised if referring to members of the Deaf community, or if preferred by the person.

Dementia: not “senile dementia”. We should take care to refer to a person or people with dementia, or living with dementia, not as a “dementia sufferer” or “victims of dementia”. Dementia is an umbrella term that refers to various conditions.

Low- and middle-income countries: preferable to “developing countries”, never “third world”

Disability: use neutral, non-stigmatising language such as “disabled people” or “people with disabilities”, depending on context and preference. Avoid terms that imply deficit (e.g. “suffers from”). Follow person- or identity-first language depending on individual or community preference.

Disabled people: not “the disabled” as this reduces people.

Domestic violence: always include helpline numbers.

Domestic violence victims/survivors: The term victim is used for those in a violent situation or at risk of violence. The term survivor is used for people who have experienced domestic violence in the past. Give priority to the preferences of the person we are writing about.

Drug use: rather than “drug misuse” which can come across as judgemental. Also, it can be quite useful to specify “problematic drug use”.

Ethnic: never say ethnic when you mean ethnic minority

Gaelic: when referring to the Scottish language, but use Irish, Irish Gaelic or gaeilge when referring to Ireland's native language.

Gender identity: use individuals' stated terms and pronouns (he, she, they) where known. If unknown, use "they" rather than assuming gender.

Gypsy people: are recognised as an ethnic group under the Race Relations Act, as are Roma people and Irish Travellers, hence capped up.

Learning disabilities: rather than learning difficulties, unless referring to education

LGBT+: or LGBTQ+, LGBTQIA+; use instead of LGBT

Lived experience: refers to people who have personal experience of an issue or who are directly affected by it, including in relation to the research being described.

Manmade: artificial or synthetic are non-gender-specific alternatives

Migration and nationality: avoid terms such as "illegal immigrant". Use "people who have migrated" or specify legal status where necessary and appropriate to the data source. Use "migrant" or "refugee" only where accurate and clearly defined.

(Ethnic) minority groups: rather than "minorities"

Nation: should not be used to mean country or state, but reserved to describe people united by language, culture and history so as to form a distinct group within a larger territory.

Non-white: do not use

Older people: preferable to "elderly people" or "the elderly".

Special educational needs and disabilities: use SEND after first mention. Avoid outdated or stigmatising terms. Where possible, use person-centred language, such as "children with special educational needs and disabilities" or "pupils with SEND".

Sex and gender: refer to the terminology and categories provided in the dataset. Clearly state whether the variable refers to sex or gender as defined by the data source and how it has been operationalised. Do not assume sex or gender where it is not recorded or required, and use inclusive, respectful language throughout. Where definitions differ or are unclear across datasets, explain this clearly.

Sex or gender characteristic(s): refers to the attributes or features that make up sex or gender. A category approach treats sex and gender as single variables, while a characteristics approach recognises that they may comprise multiple biological, social or identity-related attributes. This allows more precise consideration of how sex or gender may relate to research outcomes.

Sex worker: preferable to prostitute, also refers to wider group (anyone working in sex industry)

Sexual abuse: use sexual, not sex abuse as the word sex implies consent

Sexuality: as a rule, avoid using someone's sexuality as a noun (e.g. never "a homosexual") and mention only if relevant to the story. Same applies to trans people (say "a transgender/trans person" etc.)

Social grades: The NRS social grades (not classes), originally developed by the National Readership Survey and still widely used in stories about market research, are the familiar A (upper middle class), B (middle), C1 (lower middle), C2 (skilled working), D (semi- and unskilled) and E (at the lowest levels of subsistence); they are based on the occupation of the chief income earner of a household and are sometimes grouped into ABC1 (middle) and C2DE (working class).

Since the 2001 census, the main UK social classification has been the National Statistics socio-economic classification (NS-SEC), grouping occupations by employment conditions and relations rather than skills, and has 17 categories, which can be broken down into eight (from higher managerial and professional occupations to never worked and long-term unemployed), or just three (higher, intermediate and lower occupations)

Trans: short for transgender, to describe people whose gender identity is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. "Trans man/woman" should be used, rather than "transman/transwoman". "Cisgender", or "cis", describes people who identify their gender as the same as the sex that they were assigned at birth, male or female – "cis man/woman" rather than "cisman/ciswoman".

Suicide: say that someone killed themselves or died by suicide rather than committed suicide. When discussing suicide include helplines.

Uneducated: it is better to use 'with no formal education'

White: usually not capitalised in general text, unless it is used for consistency with dataset categories or variables; in these cases, all ethnic group labels in the dataset should be capitalised consistently.

Woman, women: are nouns, not adjectives, so say female president, female MPs etc rather than "woman president", "women MPs"

Working class: noun; working-class adjective

Young people: try to avoid 'teenagers' as this can be stigmatising. Use 'young people', 'young adults' or a specific age range.

Other vocabulary

Agenda: use agenda rather than agendum

Average: distinguish between mean and median

Bureau: plural bureaus (furniture) or bureaux (organisations)

Chair: use Chair instead of Chairperson or Chairlady

Co-fund: hyphenated

Councillor or counsellor: a councillor serves on a local council; a counsellor offers advice. Counterintuitively, a member of the privy council is a privy counsellor.

Courts: all lower case e.g. court of appeal

Covid-19: capital C, not all caps.

Crown dependencies: The Isle of Man and the bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey in the Channel Islands. They are self-governing possessions of the crown recognised internationally as “territories for which the United Kingdom is responsible”.

Each has a chief Minister as Head of Government and a legislative assembly which can pass laws subject to royal assent through the privy council. Do not confuse them with the 14 British overseas territories (BOTs).

Customs, Revenue & Customs: treat as singular

“Days”: use capitals for both words, e.g. “Mother’s Day” and “Valentine’s Day”

Declarations: in lower case e.g. “Laeken declaration on the future of Europe”

Diplomatic service: both words lower case

Enquiries or inquiries: enquiries are general questions or requests for information, for example email and telephone enquiries. Inquiries are formal requests for information, for example a government request for information.

Émigré: with accents

EU exit: preferable to Brexit, as more inclusive of Northern Ireland

Europe: includes the UK, distinguish between Britain and the rest of Europe the phrases “mainland Europe”. When discussing regions within Europe you can use: central Europe, eastern Europe, western Europe.

Exploitative: rather than exploitive

Focused: one s

Fahrenheit: use in brackets, without degree symbol, after Celsius figure, e.g. 37C (98.6F)

Freedom of information: lower case, unless referring to Freedom of Information Act. FOI when abbreviated.

Food bank: with space

Foreign words: use the appropriate accents when possible, e.g. café

Geography: distinct areas are capitalised, e.g. Black Country, but areas defined by compass points are lower case: the north, the south-east, the south-west

GMT: should be capitalised

Good Friday agreement: “G” and “F” capitalised

Google: capitalised, even when used as a verb ‘I Googled myself’

Headteacher: not headmistress or headmaster

Healthcare: one word, not “health care”

Help to buy, right to buy, buy to let: no initial caps; hyphenate before a noun, e.g. help-to-buy programme, right-to-buy scheme, buy-to-let mortgages

High street: space in between, lower case when discussing generally and uppercase in proper noun (e.g. Bromley High Street)

Historic or historical: A historic event is notable, a historical event simply something that happened in the past. For example, someone might be accused of historical crimes that happened years earlier.

Homebuyers, homeowners: one word

Honorifics: Use just surname after first mention. Under-18s can be referred to using their first names.

Hospitals and hospital trusts: lower case for the generic part, e.g. Derby district general hospital but uppercase for infirmary e.g. Bristol Royal Infirmary

Humanity, humankind: not mankind

Immigrant, immigrate: arriving in country;
emigrant, emigrate: leaving a country

Index: plural indexes, except for scientific and economic indices

Jobs: job titles should be capitalised (e.g. John Smith, Chief Executive of X)

Joint-funded: hyphenated

Judges: “Judge John Smith said” or “the judge, John Smith, said” are both fine; “judge John Smith” is wrong. Note that UK supreme court judges (or justices as they style

themselves) are Lord This or Lady That – hence Lady Hale, not “Lady Justice Hale”. To call her Lady Justice Hale is to demote her to a court of appeal judge – who are (confusingly) Lord Justice This or Lady Justice That, e.g. Lady Justice Halletta

Juvenile: the Criminal Justice Act 1991 replaced this term with “youth”, and raised the age at which you cease to be one from 17 to 18

Lower case: not lowercase

Land Registry: government department that registers title to land in England and Wales; the Scottish equivalent is Registers of Scotland

Living wage: both lower case. This is advocated by the Living Wage Foundation and paid by some employers; it is important to differentiate this from the “national living wage” (in quotes at first mention), introduced by George Osborne in the 2015 budget to replace the minimum wage for workers over 24.

Long-term or long term: long term is the noun, long-term is the adjective

Magistrates court: lower case, no apostrophe

Mainland: should not be used to refer to Great Britain in reports about Northern Ireland

Majority: unless you are specifically talking about the larger part of a measurable number, “most of” normally sounds more natural.

Master’s: lower case and with apostrophe

Media: The media, including social media, are plural, so television could be described as

your favourite form of media (avoid using medium)

Met: can be used after referring to the Metropolitan police in full

Millennials: this term is generally applied to people born between the early 1980s and mid-2000s. They can also be referred to as Generation Y. Generation Z applies to people born after the mid-2000s. Generation X applies to people born between the early 1960s and the late 1970s.

More than: preferable to “over”

Names: use the full name (title, first name, second name), for example use Professor Emma Bradshaw, on first mention. Afterwards use only the surname.

News agency, news feed: with a space, however newsagent, newsprint, newsreel without.

No one: not no-one or noone

Not-for-profit: use as an adjective and with hyphens

Outpatient: no hyphen or space (same rules for inpatient)

Patients: discharged, not released

Peacekeeper, peacetime: lower case, one word

People: use people not persons

Police: Metropolitan police (the Met after first mention), West Midlands police. Police forces are normally treated as plurals: ‘the Kent police are investigating.’

Police units: lower case e.g. anti-terrorist branch

Post Office: capitalise the organisation, but you buy stamps in a post office or sub-post office

The press: lower case, treat as singular

Princes: Prince Charles or Prince of Wales with capitals as first mention, refer to as the prince thereafter

Prisoners: preferable to inmates

Pro-choice: never pro-abortion. Use anti-abortion instead of pro-life.

Protester: not protestor

Private schools: rather than public schools

QC: use after name without a comma

re/re- : Use “re-” (with hyphen) when followed by the vowels e or u (not pronounced as “yu”): e.g. re-entry, re-examine, re-urge.

Use “re” (no hyphen) when followed by the vowels a, i, o or u (pronounced as “yu”), or any consonant: e.g. rearm, rearrange, reassemble, reiterate, reorder, reread, reuse, rebuild, reconsider, retweet.

Exceptions (where confusion with another word would arise): re-cover/recover, re-creation/recreation, re-form/reform, re-resent/resent, re-sign/resign.

Recur: not reoccur

Redundancy: jobs are made redundant not people

Reform: to improve, re-form is to re-assemble

Reform UK: instead of just “Reform”

Regime: no accent

Rehouse: use this when referring to people, rehome when referring to animals.

Remembrance Sunday: capitalised

Residents: broader than “citizens” are more likely to be inclusive. E.g. “residents of the UK” includes those who live in the UK but are not citizens.

Retail prices index (RPI): all lower case; note that “prices” is plural.

Right to buy, help to buy, buy to let: no initial caps; hyphenate before a noun, e.g. right-to-buy scheme

Roundtable: (adjective); round table (noun): you might hold roundtable discussions at a round table

Royal Courts of Justice: capitalised

Scots law: the justice system of Scotland, but use the adjective Scottish to describe its legislation, courts, judges etc.

Sections, schedules, subsections: to acts of parliament thus: section 10 (3), schedule 7, etc. An act is divided into numbered sections, which sometimes introduced a schedule placed at the end of the act. Note that schedules have paragraphs and sub-paragraphs, not sections and sub-sections

Serious Organised Crime Agency: can use abbreviated to SOCA

The services: and armed forces, both terms are lower case

Shall or will: relatively interchangeable, but shall is more commonly used for emphasis

Small-c conservatism: all lower case

Social media: is technically plural, use “form of social media” instead of social medium

Social security benefits: e.g. income support, all lower case

Spokesperson: rather than spokesman or spokeswoman

Stimulus: use stimuli as a plural

Students’ union: lower case, even in full name

Tax avoidance: is legal whereas tax evasion is illegal

Taxpayer: but council tax payer (lower case)

Think tank: two words

Then: no hyphen in such phrases as “the then Prime Minister”

Trillion: one thousand billion (abbreviated as £12 trillion)

Turnover: in business, one word

Universities (and colleges of further and higher education): caps for institution

UCAS: The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

Universal credit: both lower case, UC abbreviated

US: for United States, not USA: no need to spell out, even at first mention; do not call it America, although its people are Americans

V: for versus, not vs: England v Australia

VAT: valued added tax but no need to spell out in full

Vice-chair, vice-chancellor, vice-president: hyphenated

Wellbeing: one word and no hyphen