



RCSI

RCSI.COM

# CONTENT STYLE GUIDE



# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the RCSI Content Style Guide.

This guide is intended to ensure consistency across all written communications on behalf of the University, and is an important element of RCSI's branding guidelines.

Any individual, department or organisation seeking to communicate to the general public on behalf of RCSI – whether in print or online – should refer to this guide closely to ensure the content they produce is of the highest standard, and that they adhere to our house style.



## 01 RCSI BRAND

The RCSI brand is valuable; content produced to represent RCSI or illustrate the experience of studying or working here represents the brand. Therefore, content producers working for RCSI, or attached to companies involved in producing content for us, have primary duties and responsibilities to both the brand and our audience – be they current students, prospective students, teachers, alumni, management or staff.

Our audience expects and deserves content of the highest quality, accuracy and comprehension, which we aim to deliver in a straightforward and consistent manner at every touchpoint, be that a web page, printed article, image, video or social media post.

### **WHO ARE WE?**

- Our mission is to educate, nurture and discover for the benefit of human health.
- Centuries of discipline in independent education, research and responsibility for human health.
- Surgery at our essence demands precision, professionalism and skill at the highest level.
- Today, we are a world-leading international health sciences education and research institution.
- Our leading research centres drive pioneering breakthroughs in human health.
- An independent not-for-profit higher education institution charting our own course.
- Ultimately, the patient is at the heart of all we do.

## 01 RCSI BRAND

### OUR TONE OF VOICE

When writing, for any of our branded websites, social media channels or printed material, we should have a consistent tone of voice. The right tone of voice can build an instant rapport with our audience, while writing in a style that misses the mark can alienate them.

### AT RCSI WE ARE...

**Informative, knowledgeable and trusted:** We are thought-leaders in our field and understand our audience's needs; we are confident in our knowledge and proud of our own achievements, however we are not elitist or smug about our achievements.

**Respectful of our audience:** We never talk down to our readers/users – instead we are engaging, we flatter their intelligence and appeal to their sense of self.

**Formal but friendly:** We deal with our audience in a straightforward manner, while retaining a relatable, sincere and welcoming tone.

**Straight talkers:** The language that we use to reflect our tone is simple, precise, clear, active (not passive) and in the first person.

### AT RCSI WE ARE NOT...

**Trivial or glib:** We understand the importance of the educational services we are offering, and like our audience, we respect them.

**Condescending or arrogant:** We are not arrogant about our achievements, nor do we assume that all of our readers/users are medical experts, therefore we do not use overly technical terms. Our users should never have to use a dictionary.

**Clichéd:** Like our voice, our content does not rely on clichés and metaphors (which can dilute our message). Similarly, we do not use slang words or colloquialisms which may alienate our international audience.

**Passive:** We use an active tone of voice. All of our content is attributed to an 'author' and we refer to 'us/we' (RCSI) and 'you' (the reader).

## 02 PUNCTUATION

**The primary purpose of punctuation is to help the reader understand the writer.** An intelligent balance must be found between too much punctuation – which interrupts the easy flow of text – and too little, which streamlines the text but confuses the reader.

### 2.1 COMMAS

The correct use of the comma is crucial in achieving punctuation balance.

A few examples illustrate common pitfalls, such as:

- a) 'The employee says the manager is a fool.'
- b) 'The employee, says the manager, is a fool.'

The importance of the comma is obvious as not only can we not deduce who the 'fool' is, we also do not know who is speaking in the sentence.

Equally:

- a) 'Joe phoned the office, and John and Jim spoke to the CEO.'
- b) 'Joe phoned the office and John, and Jim spoke to the CEO.'

Omission of the comma in both sentences would make the meanings impossible to separate.

Relative clauses giving additional (or parenthetical) information go inside commas, but defining (or identifying) clauses do not.

Thus:

- a) 'The executives, who drank beer, were unfit for work later.'

This suggests that they all drank but allows the possibility that they became unfit for some other reason.

- b) 'The executives who drank beer were unfit for work later.'

Here the defining clause, without commas, implies that other executives (who, perhaps, preferred whiskey or soft drinks) remained fit for work.

Incorrect positioning of commas is also a frequent error:

- a) 'Many, if not most of, the injured passengers were able to walk to the ambulances.'

Omit the commas and it confirms that the second comma must follow 'most'.

Where more than two words or phrases occur together in

sequence a comma should precede the final 'and' only if ambiguity might arise.

- a) 'A great, wise and beneficent measure.'

But ...

- b) 'The ties in fashion were grey and red, blue and brown, green, and grey.'

Refrain from using the Oxford comma. So:

- a) 'I bought apples, oranges and pears.' NOT 'I bought apples, oranges, and pears.'

### 2.2 FULL STOPS

Use full stops frequently. Sentences should be short, crisp and straightforward.

Include a full stop after an initial in a name, e.g. Dr John M. O'Keeffe, however remember that many status titles (e.g. Mr, Mrs, Ms) go without full stops (please see point 3.2 for more on abbreviations and contractions in detail).

Do not include full stops in initialisms. An initialism is an abbreviation which consists of the initials of a word but which are pronounced individually when spoken, e.g. CIE, BBC, UK, TD, MP. Again remember there is a difference between an initialism and an acronym (see point 3.2 for more).

### 2.3 APOSTROPHES

Use apostrophes in phrases like five years' imprisonment, one week's holiday, five pounds' worth, anybody's guess.

Names ending in 's' normally take an apostrophe and have another 's' added, e.g. 'Professor James's opinion. However in some cases it does not occur, like 'in Jesus' name' or 'for goodness' sake'.

Remember, we celebrate St Stephen's Day not St Stephens's Day.

Do not put apostrophes into decades: e.g. the 1990s, NOT 80's.

## 02 PUNCTUATION

Use the normal possessive ending 's after singular words or names that end in s: boss's, caucus's, St James's, Jones's. Use it after plurals that do not end in s: children's, Frenchmen's, media's.

Use the ending s' on plurals that end in s – Danes', bosses', Joneses' – including plural names that take a singular verb, e.g. Reuters', Barclays'.

Although singular in other respects, the United States, the United Nations, the Philippines, etc., have a plural possessive apostrophe: e.g. Who will be the United States' next president?

Some plural nouns have no s, e.g. children. These take an apostrophe and 's' in the possessive, e.g. children's games, gentlemen's clothes, old folk's home.

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

Use apostrophes in phrases such as in two days' time, 12 years' imprisonment and six weeks' holiday, where the time period (two days) modifies a noun (time), but not in nine months pregnant or three weeks old, where the time period is adverbial (modifying an adjective such as pregnant or old) – if in doubt, test with a singular such as one day's time, one month pregnant.

Remember, there is no need to use an apostrophe before a contraction which is accepted as a word in its own right, e.g. flu, phone.

Note: People's = of (the) people, BUT Peoples' = of peoples.

### 2.4 DASHES

Use en dashes '–' rather than em dashes '—'. Do not confuse an en dash with the shorter hyphen '-'.

You can use dashes in pairs for parenthesis or commas that require a longer pause, but not more than one pair per sentence, ideally not more than one pair per paragraph.

Use it to gather up the subject of a long sentence or to introduce an explanation, amplification, paraphrase or correction of what immediately precedes it.

### 2.5 COLONS AND SEMI-COLONS

Use a colon to introduce lists, tabulations, texts, e.g. The features of the new Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy degree programme include: the use of state-of-the-art cardiorespiratory testing equipment; two new laboratories; extensive research opportunities.

Use after the name of a speaker for a whole sentence, e.g. John said: "I've looked up every tree in north Dublin."

Only capitalise the first letter after a colon if the sentence that follows is complete and independent, e.g. 'She received seven As in her exams: She was delighted with her results.' Never capitalise the first letter when a list follows a colon.

Use colons sparingly for emphasis, e.g. 'He had only one choice: to resign.'

Semi-colons should be used sparingly. In text a full stop is almost always more suitable.

But a semi-colon is useful where listing, say, the provisions of a complex proposal; e.g. The committee recommends: extending licensing hours to midnight; allowing children on licensed premises; relaxing planning controls.

Use semi-colons to distinguish phrases where commas would be confusing, e.g. The survivors were named as: Mr Ciaran Shannon of Thurles, Co. Tipperary; his secretary, Ms Jean Simpson of Bray, Co. Wicklow and Dr Hilary Eanes of Ferbane, Co. Offaly.

Please note: for semi-colon use in lists, please follow the style below.

- a) Short itemised lists, no semi-colons, e.g.  
Things to buy at the shop include:  
Milk  
Bread  
Butter
- b) Use semi-colon or full stops for longer sentences in itemised lists.
- c) Use a semi-colon and an 'and' if there is no other punctuation in the sentence BUT use a full stop if there is punctuation used, even if it is just on the first point. e.g.  
Things to buy at the shop include:  
Milk to make pancakes;  
Bread for lunchboxes tomorrow;  
and butter and jam to make scones.

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BUT ...

Things to buy at the shop include:

- A pint of milk, preferably cow's milk.
- Bread to make cheese sandwiches.
- Butter and jam to make scones.

### 2.6 HYPHENS

Use hyphens to avoid ambiguity or to form a single idea from two or more words.

AGAIN remember that a hyphen is not an en or em dash so shouldn't be used in place of these.

#### Use hyphens for:

- a) Fractions (whether nouns or adjectives): two-thirds, four-fifths, one-sixth, etc.
- b) Most words that begin with anti, non and neo. Thus anti-aircraft, anti-fascist, anti-submarine (but antibiotic, anticlimax, antidote, antiseptic, antitrust); non-combatant, non-existent, non-payment, non-violent (but nonaligned, nonconformist, nonplussed, nonstop); neo-conservative, neo-liberal (but neoclassicism, neolithic, neologism). If in doubt check it in the dictionary.
- c) Words that become unmanageably long with the addition of a prefix, e.g. under-secretary.
- d) A sum followed by the word 'worth' also needs a hyphen. Thus \$25m-worth of goods.
- e) Any number used as an adjective: 12-hour, four-year-old, 15-man team.
- f) To avoid ambiguity: a little-used car salesman NOT a little used-car salesman; a high-school girl NOT a high school-girl.
- g) Use hyphens to create phrases from two or more words: right-wing groups (but the right wing of the party); private-sector wages; public-sector borrowing requirement; a 70-year-old judge; state-of-the-union, world-class, patient-centred.
- h) Both out-of-date and up-to-date.
- i) Separating identical letters: book-keeping (but bookseller), coat-tails, co-operate, pre-eminent, (but predate, precondition), re-emerge, re-entry (but rearm, rearrange, reborn), trans-ship. Exceptions include override, overrule, underrate.
- j) Nouns formed from prepositional verbs: bail-out,

build-up, call-up, get-together, lay-off, pay-off, set-up, shake-up, etc.

- k) Quarters of the compass: north-east(ern), southeast(ern), south-west(ern), north-west(ern), the midwest(ern).
- l) Hybrid ethnics: Greek-Cypriot, Irish-American, etc.
- m) The prefixes 'ex', 'self' and 'cross' are generally followed by a hyphen, e.g. ex-husband, self-worth, cross-contamination. However, most prefixes, especially those of one syllable, can be used to form single words (antibacterial, coalminer, householder, landowner, shipbroker) and some combinations will be better left as two words (insurance broker, crossword compiler, tuba player).

### 2.7 EXCLAMATION AND QUESTION MARKS

Only use exclamation marks at the end of a direct quote when it is clear that the remark is exclamatory, e.g. "I hate cats!" she declared ... "Go away!" he shouted.

Equally, a question mark is placed at the end of a sentence but only if it is a direct question, e.g. What time is it?; Where should we go for lunch?

There is no need for a question mark if the question asked is indirect, e.g. She wondered what time it was.

Never use more than one exclamation mark or question mark together.

### 2.8 ELLIPSIS

An ellipsis is three periods/full stops separated from the preceding and following words by a space (...). It can be used to condense a direct quote by eliminating excess or irrelevant words.

Thus the quote:

- "Doctors, working so late into the night, deserve a better deal."

BECOMES ...

- "Doctors ... deserve a better deal."

Ellipsis is also used to indicate when a speaker fails to finish a sentence, e.g. The surgeon said: "I have yet to find a cure ..."



## 02 PUNCTUATION

### 2.9 PARENTHESES AND BRACKETS

- Parentheses: (xxxx)
- Brackets: [xxxx]

Not only do brackets and parentheses look different, they also serve different functions, but both should be used sparingly as they tend to interrupt the reader.

Parentheses can be used in place of dashes or commas to insert non-essential material into a sentence, e.g. in court reporting you will often see ages appearing in parentheses: "John Smith (42) appeared in court yesterday."

The rule of thumb when using parentheses is that the sentence should still work without them.

Parentheses are also used when something can be singular or plural, e.g. 'don't forget to bring your ID and exam(s) with you on the day.'

Brackets are used to add information to text to make it clearer, e.g. "He [the doctor] said I needed to make an appointment immediately."

Brackets are most often used in direct quotes to give context and are usually added by someone other than the speaker.

### 2.10 INVERTED COMMAS/SPEECH MARKS/QUOTATION MARKS

Use quotation marks (") for direct quotes in text.

Only use quote marks if the quote is directly attributed to someone, not: it was said that "xxxxx" etc. e.g. John Martin said: "When finished, it will revolutionise medicine." BUT: Martin's machine will 'revolutionise medicine'.

The comma usually comes before the quotation mark. A full stop at the end of a quotation goes inside the quote marks if the material quoted is a complete sentence, outside if it is not. e.g. He said: "The doctor is a complete fool." But he described the doctor as "a complete fool".

Use single inverted commas for quotations within quotations. e.g. "When I say 'immediately', I mean some time before April," the doctor added.

If an extract ends with a full stop or question mark, put the punctuation before the closing quotation mark. e.g. He posed the question: "What's the difference between a buffalo and a bison?"

If a complete sentence in quotes comes at the end of a larger sentence, the final stop should be inside the quotation marks. e.g. "I asked her: 'what's the difference between a buffalo and a bison?' The answer was: 'You can't wash your hands in a buffalo.' She replied: 'Your jokes are execrable.'"

If a quotation does not include any punctuation, the closing quotation marks should go before any punctuation marks that the sentence requires, e.g. Her date did not strike her as being "boyfriend material". Where, now that she needed him, was "Mr Right"?

When a quotation is broken off and resumed after such words as 'he said', ask yourself whether it would naturally have had any punctuation at the point where it is broken off. If the answer is yes, a comma is placed within the quotation marks to represent this. e.g. "If you'll let me see you home," he said, "I think I know where we can find a cab."

The comma after "home" belongs to the quotation and so comes within the inverted commas, as does the final full stop.

If you are closing a paragraph with a quotation and the next paragraph opens with another quotation, from the same speaker, do not use the closing quotation mark on the first paragraph, e.g. Prof. Kelly said: "... RCSI is leading the world to better health.

"For more than 230 years we have been educating

It is possible to use inverted commas around buzzwords that might cause confusion or to denote irony but use sparingly, e.g. 'hot desking'.

## 03 SPELLING AND GRAMMAR

Grammar is about so much more than simply knowing the difference between a noun and a verb. In fact, it governs how we, as humans, communicate.

### 3.1 CAPITALISATION

In general, **do not use capital letters unless absolutely necessary**. Lowercase should be used whenever possible but there are certain guidelines:

#### 3.1.1 RCSI specific

- Capitalise 'university' and 'college' only when using the full title of an institution, e.g. National College of Ireland OR when referring to RCSI but only if it applies to a sentence when you can easily substitute 'RCSI' for 'University' or 'College' e.g. 'RCSI is the only specialist health sciences institute in Ireland. The University offers Undergraduate programmes in Medicine ...' but not 'RCSI is one of the best Universities in the country ...'. You can read more about the use of University/College for RCSI on page 19.
- Capitalise 'department', 'school', 'faculty' etc. only when using the full title, e.g. 'the School of Pharmacy at RCSI has ...' but 'students who choose to study at the school will ...'
- General course titles should be lowercased if they are non-specific, e.g. 'the course in anatomy', but 'Dr Smith teaches Introduction to Anatomy on a Wednesday afternoon'.
- Fellow and fellowships: Only capitalise when referring to a specific fellowship, e.g. 'RCSI Colles Travelling Fellowship in Surgery' and 'Dr Smith is a Fellow of RCSI ...' not 'the new research fellowship at RCSI is available for three years ...'
- Alumni: Only capitalise when referring to RCSI Alumni and when appearing with Fellows and Members, e.g. RCSI Alumni, Fellows and Members but not 'our alumni are leading the world to better health'.
- If you are dealing with an RCSI-specific digital platform/portal, it is OK to capitalise, along as it is the full title, e.g. Colles Portal but do not capitalise 'surgical trainee portal'.
- Academic degrees: As with fellowships and courses, academic degrees should only be uppercased when

used as proper nouns. e.g. 'Jane has a degree in psychology' but 'Jane has a Bachelor of Science in Psychology'. The same applies when using degree classifications, e.g. first class/second class honour, e.g. 'I have a First Class Honours Degree in Graduate Entry Medicine from RCSI' but 'I got first class honours in my degree'.

- Specialties and subspecialties, such as neurology and interventional cardiology, are not formal names and should not be capitalised, unless part of someone's full job title or a departmental name, e.g. Mary Hurley is Chair of the Department of Interventional Cardiology at Beaumont Hospital.

#### 3.1.2 People

- Use uppercase for ranks and titles when written in conjunction with a name, but lowercase when on their own. Thus: President Obama, but the president; exceptions are the Pope and the Queen.
- All office holders when referred to merely by their office, not by their name, are lowercase: the chancellor of the exchequer, the prime minister, the speaker, the treasury secretary, the chairman of British Coal. The only exceptions are as few exalted people, such as the Dalai Lama and the Aga Khan. Also God.
- Titles of Irish politicians should be capitalised as in: An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD or Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan TD.
- Only capitalise complete specific job titles, e.g. Professor John Murphy, Chair of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Johns Hopkins University but not what could be a job description, e.g. Professor John Murphy is a consultant oncologist at Johns Hopkins University.
- Some titles serve as names, and therefore have initial capitals, though they also serve as descriptions: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Emir of Kuwait, the Shah of Iran. If you want to describe the office rather than the individual, use lowercase.

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### 3.1.3 Organisations

- Organisations, ministries, departments, treaties, acts, etc., generally take uppercase when their full name is used. Thus, European Commission, Amnesty International, An Garda Síochána, Oxford University, Bank of Ireland.
- But organisations, committees, commissions, special groups, etc., that are impermanent, ad hoc, local or relatively insignificant should be lowercase, e.g. the international economic subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Carlow rural district council.
- Parliament and Congress are uppercase. But the opposition is lowercase. The government, the administration and the cabinet are always lowercase, however if you're referring to the current Irish Government uppercase it.
- The full name of political parties is uppercase, including the word party: Republican Party, Labour Party. Note that usually only people are Democrats, Christian Democrats, Liberal Democrats or Social Democrats; their parties, policies, committees, etc., are Democratic, Christian Democratic, Liberal Democratic or Social Democratic (although a committee may be Democrat-controlled).
- A political, economic or religious label formed from a proper name – e.g. Paisleyite, Leninist, Napoleonic, Marxist, Thatcherism, Christian, Buddhism, Hindu, Islamic – should have a capital.
- Please note: 'State' is usually lowercase except in books on political theory or in reference to federal systems, where the State may be the nation-state. Therefore 'Irish State', as we are located in Ireland and it is our state it is uppercased.

### 3.1.4 Places

- Use uppercase for definite geographical places, regions, areas and countries (The Hague, Transylvania, Germany), and for vague but recognised political or geographical areas: the Middle East, South Atlantic, East Asia (which is to be preferred to the Far East), the West (as in the decline of the West), the Gulf, the North Atlantic, South-East Asia, the Midlands.
- Lowercase for east, west, north, south except when part of a name (North Korea, South Africa, West End) or when

part of a thinking group: the South (in the US, but lowercase west), the Highlands (of Scotland). But use lowercase if you are, say, comparing regions of the US, some of which are merely geographical areas: 'House prices in the north-east and the south are rising faster than those in the south-west.'

- Europe's divisions are no longer neatly political, and are now geographically imprecise, so use lowercase for central, eastern and western Europe. But North, Central and South America are clearly defined areas, so should be given capitals as should Central, South, East and South-East Asia.
- Use West Germany (West Berlin) and East Germany (East Berlin) only in historical references. They are now western Germany (western Berlin) and eastern Germany (eastern Berlin). The third world (an unsatisfactory term now that the communist second world has disappeared) is lowercase. If in doubt use lowercase.
- Lowercase for province, county, river, state and city when not strictly part of the name, e.g. Dublin city, New York state, Washington state, Cabanas province. But we will now make exceptions for the River Thames, Mississippi River – and Guatemala City, Ho Chi Minh City, Kuwait City, Mexico City, New York City, Panama City and Quebec City, even though City is not part of their names, as it is in Kansas City, Oklahoma City and Salt Lake City.
- The area in the centre of Dublin is Dublin city centre not Dublin City Centre.

### 3.1.5 Periods/events

- The names of geological and historical periods and events (e.g. Iron Age, Dark Ages, World War II) are usually capitalised as long as they are referred to fully and by their correct title.

### 3.1.6 Euro-terms

- Usual rules apply for the full, proper names. Thus: European Commission; European Parliament. Informally, these become: the commission, the parliament, etc.
- As a rule, words derived from Europe (the continent) are capped, whereas words derived from euro (the currency) are not.

### 3.1.7 Websites/email addresses

- Only capitalise the first word of a web address and hyperlink the text, e.g. Twitter.com.

## 03 SPELLING AND GRAMMAR

- However, remember some URLs may be case sensitive so don't change the capitalisation.
- The same applies to email addresses.

### 3.1.8 Miscellaneous

- Seasons are always lowercased, e.g. summer, winter. While months are always uppercase, e.g. February, March.
- Do not capitalise abbreviations for the time of day (am and pm).
- When referencing journal articles, chapter titles and lecture titles, only capitalise the first word and use inverted commas, e.g. "I read an article titled 'New advances in diabetes treatment' in the most recent *International Journal of Medical Sciences*."
- Use capitals to avoid confusion, especially with 'no' (and therefore 'yes'). 'In Brussels no votes predominated' suggests a stalemate, whereas 'In Brussels No votes predominated' suggests a triumph of no over yes. In most contexts, though, yes and no should be lowercase.
- When it comes to animal's name, if referring to a specific animal, e.g. my pet cat Snowy or Gerry the giraffe, the name takes a capital but the animal type/breed is lowercased, i.e. cat and giraffe.
- The force is An Garda Síochána, not the Gardaí. Garda is always uppercase when referring to the force itself, whereas gardaí is lowercase as it is merely the Gaelic version of police and refers to individual police officers. Never write 'He reported the crime to the gardaí' but instead '...to gardaí'. Garda takes an initial cap when used as a rank – Garda Fred Smith, Garda Superintendent Michelle Moore. It is lowercase when used as a common noun (a garda, plural gardaí).
- When referring to a Christian Church as an institution, it should take an initial capital, the Church of Ireland, the Roman Catholic, etc. e.g. 'The Church of Ireland is calling for government action ...' But lowercase for the building and for churches in a general sense.

### 3.2 ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS, INITIALISMS AND CONTRACTIONS

It's important to know the difference between acronyms, abbreviations, initialisms and contractions:

- a) **Acronyms:** words formed from the initial letters of a

word and pronounced as they are spelled, e.g. NATO, UNESCO.

- b) **Abbreviations:** shortened versions of longer words/terms, e.g. administration becomes admin, professor becomes prof.
- c) **Initialisms:** A type of abbreviation which consists of the initials of the word and are pronounced individually, e.g. UN, BBC, MA.
- d) **Contractions:** shortened forms of words from which one or more letters from the middle of the word have been omitted, e.g. Mister becomes Mr.

When using acronyms and initialisms in text, use the full wording when first introducing the term if it's not commonly known, with the acronym in brackets: 'the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) announced that ...' without full stops between the letters.

Subsequently, just use the acronym or abbreviated word throughout the text. It is important to be aware of punctuation when using acronyms, abbreviations, initialisms and contractions.

The easiest way to remember whether or not to include a full stop is to look at the word and see if it requires a full stop to 'finish it', this particularly applies to contractions, e.g. Mr (Mister), Dr (Doctor), St (Saint) – when the last letter is the same as the last letter of the contracted word – the word appears 'finished' so therefore no full stop is required to signify that the word could be 'incomplete'.

However, abbreviations might include: approx. (for approximately), inc. (include) and prof. (professor), where the last letter is not the same and therefore require the full stop. Words like it's (instead of it is), we'll (instead of we will) and they've (instead of they have) are also considered contractions.

Remember to use acronyms only for entities that frequently shorten their names on second reference. Do not create acronyms to save a few words. For certain entities and terms that are particularly familiar to the RCSI community, there is no need for a parenthetical reference before using an acronym on subsequent references, e.g. HSE.

Please note: To prevent overuse of punctuation, we do not include the full stop on academic qualifications, e.g. MPharm, BSc.



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### 3.3 THE USE OF ITALICS

Foreign words and phrases such as *de jure*, *glasnost*, *intifada*, *perestroika*, should be set in italics unless they are so familiar that they have become Anglicised and so should be in roman, e.g. *ad hoc*, *apartheid*, *avant-garde*, *bona fide*, *bourgeois*, *café*, *de facto*, *elite*, *en masse*, *en route*, *post mortem*, *status quo*, *vice versa*, *vis-à-vis*.

The exact titles of newspapers, magazines and journals should all be italicised. Titles of books, plays, TV shows and albums should also be italicised. Always ensure it is the full and correct title, therefore *The Irish Times* and not *Irish Times*.

Please note: the Bible and the Koran are in roman, no italics /quote marks.

Chapters in books or articles in journals should be in inverted commas, not italicised.

The titles of individual tracks, TV episodes and poems are not italicised, however inverted commas can be used to differentiate them from plain text.

Titles of paintings and sculptures are italicised. As are names of ships, apart from the prefixes so *HMS Repulse*. The names of parties involved in legal cases are italicised but *v.* between them is in roman.

Do not use italics on punctuation. So 'In *Camilla*: the story evolves...'. Ensure the colon isn't italicised.

### 3.4 THERE, THEIR, THEY'RE

Not knowing the difference between 'there', 'their' and 'they're' is one of the most common and easily fixed grammar mistakes.

- a) **There:** Is used when referring to a place, thing or the existence of something. OR as a more extensive description it is an adverb that means the opposite of 'here' (e.g. 'Where is the man?', 'he's over there under the tree. '); it can also be used as a pronoun that introduces a noun or clause (e.g. 'There is a strange smell in here. '); as an adjective that emphasises which person (e.g. 'That man there stole the wallet. '); or as a noun that means 'that place'. e.g. 'I'm not going there tonight.'
- b) **Their:** Shows possession, it is the third person plural possessive adjective; so as something could be referred to as 'yours' or 'ours' it can also be 'theirs'. 'Their' is nearly always followed by a noun, e.g. 'Their

dog is the black Labrador.' 'Where is their car?'

- c) **They're:** Is a contraction of 'they are', e.g. 'I heard they're going to see that new film in the cinema later.'

### 3.5 HE/SHE/THEY

If the identity of a person is unknown, never use 'he' or 'she' on its own. Instead of writing: 'A good executive knows her stuff.' make it: 'Good executives know their stuff.' When rewording is not an option we recommend the use of 'they' to avoid misgendering an individual, but use sparingly.

Never fall into the trap of following 'he or she' with the plural 'their'.

### 3.6 COURTESY TITLES AND APPELLATIONS

Avoid using courtesy titles (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) in front of full names as they can be seen as outdated and too formal.

However, please note that when referring to a surgeon that has received their Fellowship they stop using the title Dr and use Mr or Ms instead (in the UK, Ireland and Australia). Mr or Ms is an earned title rather than a courtesy title in this instance and should be included.

Equally, the titles Dr, Father (later Fr), Monsignor (later Mgr), Professor (later Prof.) should all be included with the full name.

In civil court cases plaintiffs and defendants are referred to as Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms. In criminal cases, defendants are extended the same courtesy until they are convicted after which they are referred by their surnames only.

High Court and Supreme Court judges and the President of the Circuit Court are titled Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms Justice John/Joan Smith with following references covered by 'the judge'. Circuit and District Courts judges are called Judge John/Joan Smith and then 'the judge'. The juryless Special Criminal Court comprises three judges from the High, Circuit and District Courts and they retain their titles attached to their courts.

### 3.7 IT'S AND ITS

We must be careful to distinguish between it's and its. Used with an apostrophe, 'it's' is always an abbreviation of 'it is' or 'it has': 'It's good to hear that it's been dealt with at last.'

## 03 SPELLING AND GRAMMAR

Without the apostrophe, 'its' is the possessive form of the pronoun 'it' – the equivalent of hers, theirs, ours, yours, etc. Note that the apostrophe in plural nouns goes before the 's' in the possessive form: Old folk's home, the people's preference, children's shoes, etc.

### 3.8 COLLECTIVE NOUNS

Organisations, companies, and groups like government, cabinet, council, committee, union, etc., should be treated as singular.

Only sports teams and groups of musicians should be treated as plural. There is a temptation, when the subject sounds plural, as in Cooper & Lybrand, or General Motors, to follow it with 'they' – resist it.

Remember a company is always an 'it' not a 'they', so 'GE Healthcare has released its latest medical device' NOT 'GE Healthcare has released their latest medical device'. The same applies to RCSI, in instances where we need to use the third person, e.g. 'RCSI is a leader in ...' not 'RCSI are ...'

### 3.9 USE OF THE FADA

Be sensitive to the appropriate use of the fada (acute accent) especially in words with official and government connotations i.e. Gardaí, Dáil Éireann, An Tánaiste.

Ensure the correct use of the fada when writing Irish names i.e. Seán O Míadhacháin and Irish-language expressions i.e. Éirinn go Brách.

It is advisable to check the websites of the institutions/ individuals in question, to see how they use the fada in their titles.

### 3.10 AMPERSANDS

The ampersand symbol (&) should not be used in place of the word 'and'.

The only time ampersands are acceptable is if they are part of branded, official names, e.g. Marks & Spencer, Johnson & Johnson.

### 3.11 MORE THAN VS OVER

While 'more than' and 'over' are considered relatively interchangeable to indicate greater numerical value, we

have a preference for 'more than' in cases of currency and people, e.g. 'the project was worth more than €50m', 'more than 20 students' and over when writing about height and age, e.g. 'she was over two metres tall', 'he was over 50'.

### 3.12 BRITISH VS AMERICAN ENGLISH

Always use British English. The only time Americanised English should be used is if you are directly quoting an American speaker. See below some of the differences between British and Americanised English.

British	American	e.g.
-our	-or	colour/color
-ise	-ize	organise/organize
-yse	-yze	analyse/analyze
-ce	-se	defence/defense
-ae-	-e-	anaemia/anemia
		anaesthesia/anesthesia
		gynaecology/gynecology
		haemophilia/hemophilia
		orthopaedic/orthopaedic
		paediatrics/pediatrics
-oe-	-e-	coeliac/ceeliac
		foetal/fetal
-re	-er	centre/center
-lling	-ling	travelling/traveling
-lled	-led	travelled/traveled
-lled	-led	travelled/traveled
-lled	-led	travelled/traveled
-lled	-led	travelled/traveled
-ll	-l	enrol/enroll and
		enrolment and enrollment
-mme -	m	programme/program

## 04 NUMBERS, FIGURES AND DATES

Consistency is crucial when it comes to using numbers, dates and figures as it's one of the first areas a reader will notice mistakes. However, the good news is it's also easy to get right when you impose a style and ensure all authors stick to it.

### 4.1 DATES

In general content, write dates using Arabic figures (e.g. 1,2,3,4) without st, nd, rd or th and in the British English format (with the day before the month):

Friday, 21 October 2016

- (From) 21–23 October
- (From) 21 October to 7 December
- (Between) 21 and 23 October
- (Between) 21 October and 7 December

As opposed to any of the following: September 20th, September the 20th, 20 of September, September 20 or September 20th–23rd, etc.

When referring to decades write: in the 1960s, the 1990s etc. – there is no inverted comma.

Specific years should be written in full: 1984, not '84. Century numbers are written as follows: 19th century (adjective 19th-century painting), and 21st century (adjective 21st-century).

When writing spans of years, shorten but only if the period is unambiguous, e.g. World War II lasted from 1939–45. Also remember en dashes should be used when writing date and time spans not hyphens.

### 4.2 TIME

In general editorial, write time in this format: 2pm, 12:30am, etc. Remember there is no punctuation between the letters, pm and am and ensure you are consistent in your use of either the 12-hour or 24-hour clock (24-hour clock may be more suitable in a table).

Similarly, adding 00 is never acceptable unless in a table or diary in which there are a lot of dates and times.

### 4.3 TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Telephone numbers should be in the following format (note the spacing and use of parenthesis):

- Seven digit: (01) 123 4567 or +353 1 234 4567
- Six digit: (028) 123456
- Mobile numbers: 086 123 3456
- International: +0044 (0) 1 123 456

### 4.4 FIGURES

Never start a sentence with a figure. This can also apply to years, so if the sentence starts with '2009 was a difficult year...', try to reconstruct the sentence so it starts with something else, e.g. 'In 2009 ...'

Use figures for numerals from 10 upwards, and for all numerals that include a decimal point (e.g. 4.25).

Use words for simple numerals from one to nine, except:

- in references to percentages (e.g. 4%)
- in sets of numerals, some of which are higher than 10, e.g. 'Deaths from this cause in the past three years were 14, 9 and 6
- when specifically enumerative (Section 2, Formula 1, Clause 6, Article 9, Page 3)
- In plain text use: ages nine to 12; however in a list use 9–12.

Do not use figures in common phrases where numbers are expressed, e.g. 'forty winks'.

Abbreviate million and billion after the first mention in content to €12m and €30bn – never use rows of noughts. Use commas in numbers of four figures and more, but not for pages, room numbers or street numbers.

When measuring non-currency items, spell out million or billion, e.g. five million refugees; one billion people.

Do not use a hyphen in place of 'to' when dealing with non-exact figures, so: 'He received a sentence of 15–20 years in jail' but 'He promised to have escaped within three to four weeks'.

## 04 NUMBERS, FIGURES AND DATES

When referring to things like screen size, it should be '7-inch screen' not '7" screen' or 'seven-inch screen'.

With figures in general, use a person or per person, a year or per year, not per caput, per capita or per annum (except in some business contexts).

In most non-American contexts, prefer hectares to acres, kilometres (or km) to miles, metres to yards, litres to gallons, kilos to lb, Celsius to Fahrenheit, etc.

Always spell out 'degree' instead of using the figure, e.g. 'It was 30 degrees yesterday so I went to the beach.'

### 4.5 ORDINAL NUMBERS

Ordinal numbers represent rank and position, not quantity, e.g. first (1st), second (2nd) third (3rd).

In general ordinal numbers should be written in full: 'John received first place in the long jump.'

However, it is acceptable to use abbreviate if the number is over 10, e.g. 'John came 17th in the egg and spoon race' or if there is a list of ordinal numbers, e.g. 'John came 7th, Claire came 10th and Rebecca came 16th overall in their exam results'. In general we recommend that these are not written in superscript.

### 4.6 PERCENTAGES

Use % not per cent or percent.

However, where a sentence begins with a percentage (try to avoid this where possible) it is always spelt out.

### 4.7 DISTANCES AND MEASUREMENTS

For distances, all abbreviations are singular and don't include a space – 4yd; 2ft 6in; 64km; 3.5cm; 25mm.

Use the same for measurements of length, height, weight, time – 3hr 5min; 10lb; 6kg; 5ft 2in; 15km. In the case of metres and miles it is better to spell out both to avoid confusion – 3 metres or 12 miles.

### 4.8 CURRENCY

Always use the symbol rather than spelling the word out when referring to currency, so €50 not 50 euro or 50 euros. Euro and cent, dollar and cents, and pound and pence are written as €24.56, \$24.56 and £24.56 respectively.

Cent, cents and pence are written as 56c, 56c and 56p.

For foreign currency use the index and then symbol where possible if the symbol alone might cause confusion; so for pounds sterling use: GBP£.

### 4.9 AGE

Same rule applies as above with spelling out numerals less than nine, BUT 'the woman was in her late fifties' and 'the two-year-old child'.

### 4.10 EXPRESSING RATIOS

Where 'to' is being used as part of a ratio, it is usually best to spell it out. Thus 'They decided, by nine votes to five, to put the matter to the general assembly which voted, 27 to 19.'

Where a ratio is being used adjectivally, figures and hyphens may be used, but only if one of the figures is greater than 10: thus a 50-20 vote, a 19-9 vote. Otherwise, spell out the figures and use to: a two-to-one vote, a ten-to-one probability.

### 4.11 FRACTIONS

Fractions should be hyphenated (one-half, three-quarters, etc.) and spelt out in words, even when the figures are higher than nine: 'He gave a tenth of his salary to the church, a twentieth to his mistress and a thirtieth to his wife.'

Do not express fractions as a number, i.e. 21/2 as this comes across badly in print and online.



## 05 WEB CONTENT RULES

The previous pages outline in detail the importance of using the correct spelling, grammar and punctuation in all forms of written material. However, there are some simple rules to follow, specifically when writing for the web, that can vastly improve the reach and impact of your content.

### WRITING FOR THE WEB: 11 SIMPLE RULES

#### 1. CONSISTENCY MUST BE THE GUIDING RULE

A lack of consistency will not only dilute the brand, it will also confuse a potential 'customer' – be they a student, teacher, researcher, Google or an investor – so check your content for inconsistencies in spelling, grammar and formatting.

#### 2. KEEP IT SHORT AND SWEET

Our attention spans – particularly when it comes to reading and viewing content online – are much shorter than they used to be so keep your sentences and paragraphs short and easy to digest, remember you're not writing a research paper or a novel.

#### 3. STRUCTURE IS IMPORTANT

While you might not be writing a novel, it's important to remember that your content still needs structure. Using heading tags and inserting pull quotes aren't just to make Google happy, they're also important for breaking up text for the reader.

This also applies when inserting media. Would you want to watch two videos in a row about the same topic? Probably not, so remember this when structuring a web page.

#### 4. EDIT, THEN EDIT AGAIN

Web content is all about accessibility and while you can improve accessibility by keeping your content short, you should also ensure you edit out those redundant buzzwords, complicated phrasing and unnecessary adjective (e.g. major breakthrough – here, 'major' is merely embellishing rather than offering greater understanding of the 'breakthrough', other examples include 'absolutely essential' and 'completely unanimous' ).

#### 5. LEARN THE VALUE OF LINKS

Both internal and external linking is important.

Linking to internal content assists in keeping the user on the site – you'll regularly see this as CTA buttons like 'read more' or 'related articles' etc., but you should also be linking text within a content page when relevant – while linking to external sources and crediting your sources correctly helps with SEO and can assist in gaining backlinks to the site.

Equally, you should remember to make your links contextual. Avoid things like 'click here'; users are far more likely to click on a link like 'research has shown' or 'in a recent article published in the *Journal of Medical Ethics*' so they know exactly what they are clicking on. This is also important for accessibility, if someone has a visual impairment and is using an aid/screen reader etc. a non-contextual link will not make sense to them.

#### 6. ALWAYS START WITH YOUR READER

Remember the most important person to consider when writing for the web is your reader. So, who are they? How old are they and what are their interests? How did they land on your web page?

Your content should add value for the reader, not preach at them the things you think they should know.

Your reader should also never need to use a dictionary to understand what you're trying to say, so again, use short, easy to read sentences with uncomplicated wording.

#### 7. ONE TOPIC = ONE PAGE

Divide your content up into coherent topics and sections. Your main pages should include the most important information you want to communicate to your audience.

Background or supporting information should be on secondary pages. Equally, don't repeat information (e.g. small print issues), if the topic is well covered, and up-to-date, elsewhere on the website, simply link to this location.

## 05 WEB CONTENT RULES

### 8. USE YOUR KEYWORDS WISELY

Keywords are important to consider when writing web copy, but remember while you should be including your main keyword in your headlines, links and body copy, you should never stuff your copy with them or shoehorn them in where they shouldn't be; all this will do is annoy your reader and cause them to bounce away from your page within a few seconds. Think quality over quantity.

### 9. TREAD CAREFULLY WITH SPECIAL CHARACTERS AND FONT STYLES

While there are some instances when you may need to use styles like italics or special characters like superscript, in general use sparingly as they are often hard to read and can be non-compatible when viewing content as plain text.

Remember, font style should never be applied to punctuation; i.e. if you put a book title in italics, ensure the full stops that follows the title is not in italics, and refrain from using capital letters, underlining and/or colour changes to imply emphasis – this is redundant.

### 10. USE THE ACTIVE VOICE

We're passionate about what we do and we prove it by using an active tone in our content. Not only will a passive tone disengage a reader, it can often be confusing and too wordy.

Sentences should always follow the subject>verb>object structure rather than the object>verb>subject, e.g. 'the doctor operated on the patient' is always better than 'the patient was operated on by the doctor'.

### 11. SPEAK IN THE FIRST PERSON

This rule specifically applies when writing content for RCSI, as a first-person active tone of voice is part of our brand guidelines, so when writing for RCSI, use 'we' rather than 'it' or 'they' when referring to the University.

While it is perfectly acceptable to open a sentence with: 'RCSI was founded in 1784 ...' once you have introduced who the 'we' is you should use this throughout where relevant and appropriate.

Consistency will also play a part here, as it's important that you don't flit back and forth between voices, this will confuse your reader.

### 12. USE COMMON SENSE WHEN IT COMES TO ACCESSIBILITY

We are invested in ensuring that our websites are accessible to all, regardless of ability. Much like ensuring you 'start with your reader', use common sense and consideration when thinking about how your content might be consumed by someone with a disability. Are you adding a lot of images to a page with no alt text for a screen reader to 'translate'? Do you have to zoom into a low resolution image to see it properly? Have you added an infographic or a PDF to a page where you cannot clearly read and highlight all the text and therefore neither can a screen reader?

### 13. REGULARLY REVIEW AND REVAMP

One of the best things about publishing content online is that not only is it flexible and easy to change, it's also easy to track and monitor. And while this can be time-consuming, it's a vital part of the job.

Regularly tracking how your content is performing and tweaking it to improve performance – whether it's updating dates, fixing broken links or adding in images or video content – can lead to surprising increases in traffic.

Remember, there is no such thing as 'publish and forget it' when it comes to web content.

## 06 RCSI WORD BANK

The word bank consists of some regularly used words and terms associated with RCSI, including how we spell and format them for consistency. Note the case of the first letter. Unless the word is at the start of a sentence, please adhere to the case below.

### 6.1 RCSI-SPECIFIC WORD BANK

- 26 York Street – not No. 26 York Street
- Alumna/alumnae/alumni – only capitalised when referring to RCSI Alumni and when appearing with Fellows and Members.
- anaesthesia – we use the British spelling not the American or Canadian spelling
- CPD-SS – Continuous Professional Development Support Scheme
- College or University – is only uppercased when referring to RCSI
- backup (noun) but back up (verb)
- People earn a degree from RCSI, they do not receive a degree, unless it is an honorary degree.
- EU student/non-EU student: lowercase 'n' on non
- gynaecology – we use the British spelling not the American or Canadian spelling
- lecturer
- life-long
- login (noun, adjective) but log in (verb)
- opt in (verb) but opt-in (noun, adjective)
- patient-focused
- postdoctoral (no hyphen)
- postgraduate (no hyphen, whether as noun or adjective). When referring to an RCSI Postgraduate programme, remember to uppercase the P
- 'RCSI' not 'the RCSI' and rarely 'Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland' this is inappropriate in certain markets.
- sign in
- signup (noun, adjective) but sign up (verb)
- St Stephen's Green
- state-of-the-art
- subjects, i.e. chemistry, physics etc. are lowercase, unless you're referring to a very specific course and/or module title, e.g. MA in Chemistry.
- terms and conditions
- undergraduate (no hyphen, whether as noun or adjective). When referring to an RCSI Undergraduate programme, remember to uppercase the U
- URL (always uppercase)
- username
- well-being

### RCSI: UNIVERSITY VS COLLEGE

RCSI achieved university status in Ireland in 2019 and is now officially 'RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences'; however it is still correct to use 'College' when referring to RCSI, under certain circumstances. Please be mindful of the following:

- All educational programmes (Undergraduate, Postgraduate and CPD) research and other activities related to, and taking place at, RCSI Dublin should use University as the shortened form of RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences.
- The full correct title is RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences – there is no punctuation.
- College can be used to replace RCSI when referring to the Office of the President or writing on behalf of the Office of the President; in reference to the surgical side of the institution, specifically the work of the Department of Surgical Affairs, e.g. fellowship opportunities, surgical training programmes, etc.; and by our Postgraduate faculties, specifically the Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery, Faculty of Sports & Exercise Medicine, Faculty of Dentistry and the Faculty of Radiologists.
- We recommend that if you are writing content where the name of the institution is mentioned more than once (e.g. a news story, press release, etc.), you use the full title for the first mention, e.g. RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences and then 'RCSI' or 'University' thereafter.
- Remember to uppercase University/College when referring to RCSI.

## 07 THINK TWICE WORDS

When it comes to spelling and grammar we tend to make the same errors over and over again. Why? Because our brains love grouping words together in a process called 'word priming', according to how and when we use them. While we can't rewire our brains, this section should help as a reference guide for those think twice words when you're not sure if you should use affect or effect.

### A

- A lot: never alot. Alot is not a word.
- an: Before nouns beginning with 'h': use 'a' if the 'h' is pronounced, 'an' when it is not.
- Achilles' heel but Achilles tendon.
- adverse vs averse: 'Adverse weather conditions resulted in an accident' but 'I'm not averse to a cup of tea'.
- admissible: Not admissable. Likewise permissible.
- admitted: has a connotation of guilt. Agreed is often a better choice. Note also that the word 'to' is superfluous after admit. People admit crimes, they don't admit to crimes.
- advice/advise: Advice is a noun, e.g. 'she gave me advice, but I ignored it', advise is a verb when you give someone advice, e.g. 'I advise you to attend the event'.
- affect/effect: Affect is always a verb. It means to influence as in 'hot weather affects his health' or to feign, as in 'beginners often affect learning'. Effect is both verb and noun. As a verb it means to accomplish, or carry out; as a noun it means result, consequence and outcome.
- aggravate: to make worse, not to annoy.
- AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. People are not AIDS victims, they are AIDS sufferers.
- aircraft: not 'plane' or 'aeroplane'.
- alibi: is not a synonym for excuse. The true definition of alibi is the fact of being, or the claim to have been, somewhere else at the material time.
- allude vs elude: Allude means to draw attention to something, elude means to escape from or avoid something, e.g. a thief may elude the authorities.

- all right: instead of alright.
- alternative: There can be only one alternative, anything more and they are choices or options.
- ante vs anti: 'Ante' comes from the Latin to mean before or 'in front of' and applies to words like antenatal, anteroom, antemortem; 'anti' means against or 'preventing', so antidepressant and antihistamine. However anti can also be hyphenated, normally if the word that comes after it begins with a vowel, so anti-abortion, anti-American, anti-inflammatory.
- anti-Semitic: Hyphenated with a capital 'S'.
- anticipate: is not a synonym for expect. It means to take action in expectation of something, or to foresee, or even forestall. The same applies for anticipation and expectation.
- among vs amongst: Both are acceptable but among is more commonly used.
- artefact: Not artifact.
- attack: As a verb or noun it has connotations of physical assault so it should be used sparingly to describe criticism.

### B

- bale out from an aircraft; bail out a boat or a prisoner.
- balk (verb); baulk (snooker).
- bank holiday: lowercase.
- banking terms: BIC, IBAN, sort code, SWIFT, ensure consistency when using these.
- bare vs bear: bear is an animal and a verb so 'please bear with us' and 'she bore the pain of the operation but she could not bear his sense of humour' but 'she bared her teeth'.
- benefited, benefiting
- between: means two are involved. If there are more use 'among'.
- biannual: (twice-yearly); biennial (two-yearly). Bimonthly and biweekly can be ambiguous; use every two months/twice-monthly, and fortnightly/twice-weekly.
- Bill: (Dail); cap only with its name.
- blond: always correct except for human females (blondes have blond hair)
- bogey: Golf score, apparition, bugbear; bogie truck or wheels.



## 07 THINK TWICE WORDS

- the Border: when referring to the divide between the North and South of Ireland.
  - breech vs breach: Breech is used to refer to the back end of something, e.g. a gun, and is used when referring to a breech birth. Breach can be used as a noun and a verb; as a noun it's a gap or hole, and as a verb it means to 'break an agreement/law'. Therefore 'he was in breach of his rental agreement' or to break through or make a hole, e.g. 'the protester breached the security fence.'
  - Brussels sprouts.
  - burnt.
  - Budget: Irish, but budgetary, budget resolutions.
  - built-in.
  - burglary: is housebreaking by night. Housebreaking is the daylight act of breaking and entering a dwelling.
  - bused, busing: Transport by bus, not bussed or bussing.
  - buzzwords: Don't use them.
  - by-election, by-law, but bygone, bypass, byword.
- C**
- Cabinet: to describe a government but lowercase when describing furniture.
  - caddie: Golf but caddy for tea.
  - card games: All terms in card games are in lowercase: spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs, ace, king, queen, jack, trumps, no-trumps, etc.
  - caster: sugar but castor wheel
  - Ceann Comhairle
  - Celsius uppercase but centigrade is lowercased. In text write 15C, not 15c or 15 deg C
  - centred on: Not around.
  - century: Use figures, not words – the 21st century.
  - cereal vs serial: the breakfast food vs something which takes place in a series/sequence.
  - Chair is preferred. Do not use chairman or chairwoman unless referring to named individuals that use those words.
  - cheap: Do not refer to cheap prices/fares. If goods or travel are cheap, the prices or fares are low.
  - clergy: A collective noun, so it is wrong to say 'three clergy arrived'. The correct form is 'three members of the clergy arrived.'
  - climactic and climatic: the first means to reach a climax, the second refers to the climate.
  - coast: The east coast, etc.
  - cohort: A group of people, not a colleague or companion.
  - collide: Only moving objects can collide. A runner cannot collide with a lamp post.
  - common sense and commonsense: The first is the adjective and noun: 'He had the common sense to lock his door.' The second is the adjective: 'She had a commonsense approach to work.'
  - complement vs compliment: In both noun and verb complement refers to completion ('that scarf complements your outfit'; 'the team had a full complement of 15'). Compliment refers to praise, 'she complimented his handwriting.'
  - comprise: The whole comprises the parts; the parts do not comprise the whole.
  - company names: Ltd and plc are normally omitted but, when used, are not preceded by a comma. If an ampersand is in the company name/logo always use an ampersand in text to comply with branding, e.g. Marks & Spencer, which abbreviates to M&S (no spaces). However, never use an ampersand in place of 'and' is plain text.
  - compare: Compare A with B to draw attention to the difference (March's trade surplus compares with a deficit for February); compare A to B only to stress a similarity (Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?)
  - compass: Cardinal points SSE, NW, etc. but use lowercase for most purposes, the east, south-west. For specific and recognised geographical areas, use caps, as in: the Deep South. Also use caps for areas of a city, e.g. London's West End, Dublin's Northside, Paris's West Bank.
  - Connacht: The province, but Connaught Road, Connaught Rangers.
  - consensus: Not concensus
  - constitution: Uppercase for the Constitution of Ireland but lower for American constitution etc. and the constitution of an organisation.
  - continuous means without intermission. Continual means frequently recurring throughout.

## 07 THINK TWICE WORDS

- continent: the continent (of Europe) is always lowercase, as is continental and continental shelf.
  - controversial: An over-used word. In most cases the facts speak for themselves, or the matter is so well-known as controversial it does not need restating.
  - cords: Vocal (not chords).
  - counties: From Co. Armagh to Co. Wicklow, it is always Co., with a full point.
  - court martial: The plural is courts martial while the verb, to court-martial, is hyphenated. Reports of Army and Air Corps must make it clear that verdicts are subject to confirmation, whereas naval courts martial are not.
  - crescendo: The build up to a climax, not the climax itself.
  - criterion: Singular, plural is criteria.
  - curriculum (singular); curricula (plural).
- D**
- damp: Not dampness
  - decimate: originally meant to kill one in 10, but has become a vague term for 'destroy many of'. Do not use it in this sense.
  - defuse: is to resolve a problem. Diffuse is to disseminate.
  - degrees: All lowercase – ordinary, first-class honours etc. Abbreviations – PhD, BSc, MA, etc.
  - demonstrator
  - dependant: is a noun as in 'She is a dependant of the State'. Dependent is an adjective as in 'She is dependent on the State'.
  - Dexterous: Means manually skilful, not dextrous.
  - dignitaries are often signatories to important documents. There is no such word as 'dignatories'.
  - different: is always followed by from, not to or than.
  - diphtheria: Not diptheria. Similarly ophthalmic.
  - disabled: never 'the disabled' as this defines people with disabilities as being separate from the rest of humanity. Also, never use invalid or handicapped to describe someone nor should you define someone by their disability, as this implies they have no other positive qualities. Instead, say they suffer from or have the condition. Try to avoid saying someone is 'confined to a wheelchair' as this suggests they are imprisoned or lack mobility, instead say they 'use a wheelchair'.
  - discreet vs discreate: Discreet denotes being careful, while discreate is used to mean 'separate or distinct'.
  - diseases: always lowercase after name, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, etc.
  - disinterested: means unbiased, dispassionate. Uninterested means bored, lacking in interest.
  - disk: is what you put in a computer, a disc is any other round object.
  - dispatch: not despatch.
  - dissociate: not disassociate.
  - dogs: Breeds should be in lowercase when possible, even when derived from proper nouns, e.g. Alsatian, Labrador, Pekinese, etc., but St Bernard, German sheepdog, Yorkshire terrier, Border collie.
  - Domesday Book: Not Doomsday.
  - dots-per-inch: Can use it at the first mention and then dpi thereafter but generally more acceptable to use dpi throughout.
  - draftsman: of documents but draughtsman of plans, drawing, etc.
  - due to/owing to: 'His absence is due to illness' is correct. 'He is absent due to illness' is wrong (use owing to). The test is: If you can replace 'due to' with 'caused by', the usage of 'due to' is correct. Incorrect: The game was postponed due to rain. Correct: The game was postponed because of rain. Correct: The game's postponement was due to rain. The wordy expression 'due to the fact that' should be replaced by 'because' or 'since' where possible.
  - Dutch: nationality, but to go dutch; dutch auction; dutch courage; dutch elm disease or dutch treat, etc.
- E**
- educationists: not educationalists
  - effectively/in effect. Not the same. 'The campaign was effectively launched yesterday' means that the launch was successful – the intended effect was achieved. 'The campaign was in effect launched yesterday' means that, though this was not the official launch of the campaign, the event described did have the effect of launching it.
  - Elicit vs illicit: You may elicit information from someone, however your friend might be having an illicit affair.
  - email: not e-mail but still e-commerce and e-book.

## 07 THINK TWICE WORDS

- embarrass: Note two 'Rs' and two 'Ss'.
  - embassy: initial cap in full title, e.g. the American Embassy, but the embassy thereafter.
  - enable: means to make able. Allow means to make possible. 'The new style book will enable authors to allow fewer errors of style to appear'.
  - enamoured of (not with or by).
  - enormity: is commonly misused. It signifies great wickedness, not great size.
  - enrol with one l is the British English spelling, two lls is American.
  - ensure: is to make certain, whereas you insure against risk.
  - escaper: not 'escapee'
  - Eskimo(s)
  - execute: executions are carried out after some form of judicial sentence. Victims of terrorists or criminals are killed or murdered.
- F**
- fact: is fact, not true fact or actual fact.
  - Fahrenheit: lowercase, 64F, not 64 deg F.
  - fallacy: is a faulty argument and not simply a mistaken belief.
  - famous: If a person is really famous, the reader already knows this, so the word is superfluous. The same applies to controversial.
  - farther: is a comparative of far and describes physical distance whereas further means additionally to a degree or extent.
  - federal: applies primarily to the US government run from Washington DC (federal government) and is always lowercase. However, when speaking of specific agencies, it is uppercase, e.g. US Federal Trade Commission, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
  - fetid: not foetid.
  - fewer: of number but less of quantity.
  - Filipinos: natives of Philippines.
  - fine-tooth comb: not fine toothcomb.
  - firstly, secondly, thirdly: or first, second, third. Ensure consistency of use.
  - firebomb: one word.
  - firefighters: not firemen.
  - flammable: may be used, but see inflammable.
  - flaunt/flout: flaunt is ostentatious display, as in 'to flaunt your wealth', whereas flout is to treat with contempt – 'He flouted the rules'.
  - floor: Beware Irish/American differences. In Ireland, most English-speaking countries and European countries, floors of a building are numbered ground floor, first floor, second floor, etc. but in parts of America, the most frequent usage is first floor, second floor, third floor, etc. or less frequently, ground floor, second floor, third floor, etc. See also storey.
  - fluorescent: not flourescent.
  - focused, focusing
  - following: and after are often used for 'when', 'in' and 'because of', e.g. 'Three people were killed after an explosion in a warehouse ...' this suggests that they were killed in some other way, not by the explosion.
  - forbid to do: not forbid from doing.
  - forgo: is to do without; forego is to proceed.
  - fortuitous: does not mean fortunate. It should be used only to describe something happening by chance or was unplanned.
  - frontline healthcare workers: frontline is one word.
  - fulfil vs fulfill: While both are technically correct we use fulfil as the double 'l' is the Americanised spelling.
  - fulsome: is a pejorative word, often wrongly used as a synonym for 'full' or 'lavish'. It should be used only in the sense of 'offensively excessive'. Therefore, to be given 'fulsome praise' is tantamount to an insult.
  - fundraising: one word in all cases.
- G**
- gaffe: is a blunder. Gaff is a hook for landing fish or a slang term for a house.
  - gallop: is what a horse does. Galop is a dance, while Gallup is a poll.
  - gaol: use jail.
  - Gasfield/gasring (one word).
  - GB and Gb: gigabyte (GB) and a gigabit (Gb) – a gigabyte being eight times larger than a gigabit.

## 07 THINK TWICE WORDS

- gender: is the grammatical distinction between masculine and feminine. The biological difference between men and women is sex.
  - general election: but election in copy thereafter.
  - general synod: but the synod thereafter.
  - gibe: is a sneer. Gybe is a nautical term which means to alter course, while jib is a foresail.
  - gilt: gilt-edged.
  - girl: girlhood ends at 18 in most countries, so a 17-year-old girl, but an 18-year-old woman.
  - godsend: but Godspeed.
  - goodwill: of business and when used as adjectivally, e.g. goodwill visit; but a man of good will.
  - Gospel: the Holy, but the gospel truth.
  - Government: uppercase when referring to the current Irish government in power – ‘The Government plans to introduce the new system’, but then ‘a government decision’, secretary, etc. When referring to foreign governments, it is always lowercase.
  - green paper.
  - Greenwich: Mean Time (use GMT).
  - grill: toast, cross-examining; but grille a grating.
  - grisly sight but gristly steak and grizzly bear.
  - guerrilla.
  - gynaecology.
- H**
- hair’s-breath (noun), hairbreadth (adjective).
  - half-dozen: but half a dozen.
  - halfway: (adjective), half way (adverb).
  - hangar: where an aircraft is parked.
  - hanger: where clothes are hung.
  - hanged: meat is hung, men are hanged.
  - Hat-trick: don’t forget the hyphen.
  - hare-brained: not hair-brained.
  - headmaster: headmistress, headteacher.
  - healthcare.
  - heaven: heaven-sent, heavenly, but uppercase when referring to God.
  - hell/hell-bent.
  - hepatitis C.
  - Herculean.
  - hiccup: not hiccough; hiccupped.
  - hi-fi: high-fidelity; hi-tech.
  - highfalutin.
  - high-rise: multi-storey.
  - hike: An Americanism which is creeping into use in British English. Try to avoid in text, but it is acceptable in headlines instead of ‘increase’ or ‘rise’.
  - His Holiness.
  - Historic: A historic event not an historic event.
  - Historic vs historical: The Queen attended the historic event in Dublin Castle, however she spoke about historical events.
  - homepage: not home page, same applied to website.
  - homeopathy: not homoeopathy.
  - hoard vs horde: ‘The squirrel hoarded nuts for winter’ and ‘the man found a hoard of nuts in the tree’, but ‘hordes of people rushed into the shop for the sale on Black Friday’.
  - honourable: use ‘the Hon.’ before a person’s name.
  - hooves.
- I**
- i.e.: that is to say.
  - ill-health: ill-luck, ill-feeling, ill-will, etc.
  - immoral vs amoral: not morally acceptable vs not concerned with morality.
  - imply vs infer: ‘The teacher implied that algebra would be the first question on the exam’ but ‘the students inferred that algebra would be the first question on the exam due to the past year’s paper’.
  - index: plural indices, but list indexes for books.
  - infer: is often confused with imply. Speakers or writers imply; listeners or readers infer, or conclude from information given.
  - inflammable: remains correct in literal and figurative sense, but the unambiguous flammable is increasingly common, especially in warning signs, and may be used if preferred. The antonym is nonflammable.
  - inquire, inquiry: An inquiry into something produces a report on it.
  - in the near future: use soon instead.

## 07 THINK TWICE WORDS

- innocuous: Harmless, but inoculate.
- internet: use lowercase.
- in order to: use 'to'.
- interment/internment: burial/imprisonment.
- iPhone: not IPhone or Iphone; same rule applies to iPad/iTunes etc.
- Ireland: not Eire.
- irregardless: don't use, irrespective and regardless are alternatives.
- is to: prefer will.

### J

- jargon: Spot jargon and avoid it. Use simple words that make the meaning to all clear.
- jail: not gaol.
- judgment: for a legal ruling. Otherwise judgement.
- Junior and Senior: Abbreviate to jnr and snr when referring to names – John Murphy Jnr and Michelle Jones Snr.

### K

- kilowatt.
- kids: Confine to young goats and not children if at all possible.
- knot: Means sea miles per hour, it is wrong to say knots per hour.
- kudos: singular noun which takes a singular verb.

### L

- lamp-post.
- Land-Rover: but Range Rover.
- last year: in 2016 it means 2015. The 12 months up to the time of writing are the past year.
- launderette.
- latter: means the second mentioned of two. Avoid its use as a noun where possible as in 'the latter part of the year'.
- learned: is an adjective; the past tense of 'learn' is learnt.
- Left, the: otherwise lowercase – the left wing, leftwingers, left-wing party.
- legislation: is the process by which legislators make the

laws. It is not a synonym for law.

- less vs fewer: fewer should be used when referring to people or things in the plural, e.g. 'there were fewer doctors on call than usual that night'; use less for something that doesn't have a plural or can't be counted, e.g. 'there is less money in the account than there was last week'.
- level-crossing.
- liaison: not liason.
- licence: the noun, license, licensing are verb formats.
- lifebelt: lifeboat, lifejacket, lifeline, liferaft, lifesaver, lifestyle, lifetime, but life cycle, life span, life-sized.
- likeable.
- limousin: cattle. Limousine: car.
- liquefy.
- literally: Don't use to exaggerate, e.g. 'I was literally dying after the gym'.
- Lord Mayor: plural Lords Mayor.

### M

- management: not managment.
- mantel: as in mantelpiece, mantelshelf; but mantle is a cloak or covering.
- marquess: but marquis in French – capitalise for full title, e.g. 4th Marquess of York Street.
- masterful: domineering.
- masterly: skilful.
- Mass: Roman Catholic.
- mayday: distress signal; but May Day: 1 May.
- MB and Mb: megabyte (used for file size) and a megabit (used for download speeds), remember this important distinction.
- meantime: is the time between two events.
- meanwhile: means the same time as.
- medieval: not mediaeval.
- meet: not 'meet with' or 'meet up'.
- members of parliament: MPs.
- midday: midnight.
- mileage: not milage.
- minuscule: means minute. No matter how many times you see 'miniscule' there is no such word.

## 07 THINK TWICE WORDS

- mitigate: means to lessen the severity. To militate against means to contend; to have weight.
- Moon, the: but lowercase (e.g. moon-shaped) unless you're referring to the Moon, like Earth.
- motor car: but motorcycle, motorbike.
- motorways: M1, M4, M50, etc.
- movies: use films in heads and text; movies, where necessary, in text only.
- movable.
- music: D flat, E major, the key of F.

### N

- naïve
- National Anthem: Uppercase for Irish, lowercase otherwise.
- national grid.
- Navy: the Irish: lowercase for all others – British navy, French navy.
- neither: followed by 'nor', not 'or'.
- nerve-racking: not wracking.
- New Year's Day: New Year's Eve; but 'early in the new year'.
- next-of-kin.
- none: Almost always takes a singular verb as it is the negative of 'one'. In some case however it will take a plural verb: 'Of all the groups involved, none are more deserving than the refugees.'
- North: North Secretary, North Editor, the North, not Ulster, Northern Ireland.

### O

- obituary: 'He is survived by his wife' (not his widow).
- oilfield: oilrig, oilman, oilwell, oilcan, oilskins, etc.
- old-age pensioners: avoid OAPs.
- Ombudsman, the: uppercase when referring to a specific ombudsman, but an insurance ombudsman.
- only: must go next to the words it qualifies. 'He only saw three people', means that he did not hear them as well. The writer meant: 'He saw only three people.'
- on to: (two words).
- operating systems: for smartphones are Android and iOS (watch the use of uppercase). Remember they are never plural or rarely possessive.

- Opposition, the: but lowercase when used as an adjective, as in 'an opposition motion'.
- optimum: means the most favourable adjustment, for a given end, of a number of conflicting factors. It is not a synonym for 'best' or 'maximum'.
- ordnance: military.
- ordinance: law.
- ordinary shares.
- oriented: not orientated.

### P

- parliament: parliamentary.
- part-time/part time: 'She works part time' BUT 'She has a part-time job'.
- per: use 'a' instead as in '€11-a-week', '10-a-month'.
- perceive: means to see or sense what is really there, not to make a vague or mistaken interpretation, as in 'Mr X is perceived to be clever, but is in fact stupid.'
- plainclothes: but in plain clothes.
- plaster of Paris.
- playing-fields.
- poetess, authoress, murderess and similar female designations are unnecessary and patronising.
- pole: South, North – always preceded by 'the'.
- post office: An Post for the company.
- post-mortem examination: do not fall into the trap of just using 'post-mortem' as this merely means 'after death'.
- post-war but postgraduate, postdoctoral.
- potatoes: varieties take caps – Golden Wonders, Kerr Pinks, Roosters.
- practice is the noun; practise is the verb.
- presidential: elections, campaign, etc.
- presently: means soon, 'at present' means now.
- presume vs assume: presume is based on probability/proof, assume works without proof, e.g. 'I assumed the assignment was due today' but 'the victim is missing and presumed dead'. Assume can also be used to mean 'to take on oneself', e.g. 'I assumed the role of MD while she was ill'.
- pressure: a noun, not a verb. You can 'pressurise' someone but you cannot 'pressure' them.



## 07 THINK TWICE WORDS

- pre-war.
- prison officers: not warders.
- program: only in reference to computers, but programme, including course, TV, etc.
- propellant: is the noun; propellent the verb.
- propeller: not propellor.
- protester: not protestor but demonstrator.
- putrefy: not putrify; putrefied, but putrid.
- precede: to carry on.
- principal: means chief.
- principle: is a fundamental law governing one's conduct.
- presently: should be used (if at all) in the sense of 'soon' and not as a synonym of 'now'.
- pretence: means deception; pretension is a claim.
- prescribe: what doctors do; proscribe: what governments do.

### Q

- Qur'an: holy book of Islam (not Koran).
- queueing: not queuing.
- Queen's University Belfast: use apostrophe.

### R

- Range Rover: but Land-Rover.
- razzmatazz: not razzamatazz.
- RCSI: not the RCSI.
- restaurateur: not restauranteur.
- retirement: not ritiral.
- referendum: plural referendums, not referenda.
- refute: means to prove something wrong definitively and is not the same as deny or reject.
- responsible: Only people can be held responsible. It is wrong to say: 'This style book will be responsible for an improvement in consistency.' It will, we hope, cause, or result in, an improvement.
- right-of-way.
- Right, the: otherwise lowercase – the right wing, rightwingers, right-wing party.
- road: always spell out the word fully – Morehampton Road, Cork Road, not Rd. For numerical and alphabetical names use A1, M50 (see motorways also).

- rob/steal: Money and valuables are stolen (the objects of theft). Banks, safes and people are robbed (the victims of theft). Remember, rob implies violence is involved, so someone convicted of theft is not necessarily a robber, although they are always a thief (see burglary).
- rarefied: not rarified.
- rateable.
- *Reader's Digest*: italicise and do not use 'the'.
- receiver.
- royalty: Cap 'R' when referring to the Royal Family of any country, but royal train, party, visit, etc.

### S

- sacked: or dismissed, but not fired.
- sacrilegious: the 'i' comes before the 'e'.
- saleable.
- satellites: Mariner 2, Voyager 4.
- school-leaver: but schoolboy, schoolgirl.
- Scriptures, the: but scriptural.
- seabed.
- seasons: winter, spring, summer, autumn – all lowercase.
- second-hand: part used.
- seconds-hand: of watch.
- semi-state.
- servicemen: servicewomen.
- Shakespeare: Shakespearean.
- shall vs will: in general shall is used for the first person 'I shall go to the shop' and will is used for third person 'they will go to the shop', however when expressing determination the roles are reversed, e.g. 'I will not put up with this behaviour!'
- sheriff: cap when named – Sheriff John Brown, otherwise the sheriff.
- shipping: Fishing vessels have skippers, merchant vessels have masters and warships have captains.
- so-called.
- skier: skiing.
- slight: abuse.
- sleight: dexterity, as in sleight of hand.
- Snapchat: but we send snaps.

## 07 THINK TWICE WORDS

- Someone.
  - sometime: at one time, formerly, as in ‘He was sometime captain’, but some time when unspecified, ‘Come up and see me some time.’
  - SOS: no points.
  - spell: past tense spelt, mis-spelt.
  - spill: prefer spilt to spilled. In some cases however, spilled is the correct form – ‘Water spilled over the top of the bath’, but ‘No use crying over spilt milk’.
  - spoil: prefer spoilt to spoiled, e.g. ‘the spoilt child’, but ‘the flies spoiled our picnic’.
  - specialty: acceptable to use – what would be considered the Americanised spelling – when discussing medical fields.
  - spokesperson: not spokesman or woman.
  - stadium: plural stadiums, not stadia.
  - stalemate: brings a game of chess to an end. The game is scored as a draw and nothing more can follow. If there is any possibility of resolving a situation, it may be a deadlock or an impasse, but is not a stalemate.
  - stanch: check or halt the flow of.
  - stationary: motionless.
  - stationery: writing material.
  - Stock Exchange (Irish): but stock exchanges throughout the world.
  - storey, storeys, storeyed: a three-storeyed building consists of a street level floor, and two raised levels above it (basements and any levels below are not counted). A building whose top floor is the fifth floor is in fact a six-storeyed building.
  - summoned: Called to attend, but summonsed: Called to appear in court on a legal charge.
  - Sun, the: but lowercase (e.g. sunshine, sunny etc.) unless you’re referring to the Sun, like the Moon.
  - supersede: not supercede.
  - suffix: an element added to the end of a word – ize, ness.
  - swap: not swop.
  - syllabus: plural syllabuses, not syllabi.
  - symposium: plural symposiums, not symposia.
  - synopsis: plural synopses.
- T**
- T-shirt: not tee shirt or t-shirt.
  - takeover.
  - tangible: applies literally to that which can be touched. ‘An undertaking is not a tangible result of negotiation.’
  - tape-recorder.
  - targeting (not targetting).
  - taxi-driver.
  - taxi-ing.
  - terms and conditions: Not Terms & Conditions, acceptable to use T&Cs if you need to shorten it but remember no need for an apostrophe.
  - terrorist: is a much-abused word that still has a precise meaning. Terrorism is violent action intended to create terror among a civilian population so as to destabilise a government. Useful words for civilians who take up arms against a government are revolutionary, militiaman/woman, rebel and paramilitary; their actions may make them bombers, gunmen, hijackers or killers.
  - thankfully: is a shortened version of ‘it is thankful that’, therefore it is not correct to use thankfully as an adverb in something like ‘thankfully we all passed the exam’.
  - these vs those: plural forms of this vs. that.
  - tortuous: means winding. Torturous means inflicting pain.
  - triumphant means victorious; triumphal, concerned with celebration of a victory.
  - tying: not tieing.
  - toward: not towards.
  - TV: not television.
  - Twitter: but we send tweets.
- U**
- unique: can never be qualified as in something is ‘rather unique’ or ‘quite unique’. Use with caution.
  - under way: not underway.
  - Unit-holder.
  - US: not USA.
  - unaware(s): adjective, unawares is the adverb.
  - unmistakable.
  - unshakeable.
  - ultimatum: plural ultimatums.

## 07 THINK TWICE WORDS

### V

- vacation: Americans have vacations. We have holidays.
- veto: vetoes.
- verbal: do not use in the sense of an unwritten agreement. It is an oral agreement.
- verify: means to ascertain whether or not something is true. When the truth of one story is borne out of another, the second story does not verify the first, it corroborates it.
- versus: is abbreviated to vs (or v. in court cases).
- virus: plural viruses.

### W

- warder: this term is disliked in the prison service, but difficult to avoid in headlines. In text, say 'prison officer'.
- wearables: not wareables.
- weather: do not use 'weather conditions' etc.
- website, webcam, webcast, webmaster.
- whence: do not say 'from whence'.
- which: informs but 'that' defines.
- whiskey: (Irish and American); whisky (Scotch).
- who, whom: whom is used when it is the object of a preposition ('To whom it may concern') or verb ('The man whom we saw last night') or the subject of a complementary infinitive ('The person whom we took to be your father'). Who is used on all other occasions.
- wide-angle.
- Wi-Fi: not wifi, WiFi or wi-fi.
- worldwide.

### X

- Xmas: don't use, it's Christmas.
- X-ray.



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