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This style guide will be updated on an ongoing basis.
For the most recent version, go to [source.tfl/styleguide](https://source.tfl.gov.uk/styleguide)
If you would like additional copies, email publishing@tfl.gov.uk

Section I

Introduction

Why does TfL need a style guide?



Every publication has its own style guide, a set of rules telling its people whether to write e-mail or email, 10 or ten, 2pm or 14:00. For companies, a style guide can help staff establish a consistent look and feel across printed and online material produced by different departments.

In the case of Transport for London (TfL), it is also important to promote marketing initiatives in a consistent manner. This means establishing rules for transport-related names and products so staff know whether to use travel card or Travelcard, congestion charge or Congestion Charge, Oyster card or Oystercard etc.

Style guides also list ways to replace jargon and words that are frequently misused.

TfL house style rules must be followed when preparing any written or online communications (both internal and external).

This guide is not a list of definitions. Instead, it gives guidance on when and how to use abbreviations, punctuation, numbers, TfL branding, and terms related to equality and inclusion. It also indicates when certain words need to be favoured or avoided, as well as when the upper or lower case needs to be used. Finally, when a word is listed without an explanation, it has been included to show how it should be spelt. Accepted abbreviations are indicated in brackets.

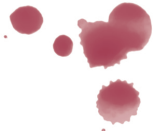
Note: Any questions or omissions can be raised with TfL Group Publishing by emailing publishing@tfl.gov.uk

Section 2

A-Z style rules

A-Z style rules

Aa



a, an

Use 'an' before words or abbreviations that sound, when spoken, like they begin with a vowel: an honour; an event

Use 'a' before words that begin with a consonant or a 'u' sound (as in unit): a cat; a European

able-bodied

Avoid using this term as it is inappropriate

See also **disability**

**abbreviations/
acronyms**

Spell out on first mention in body text, including the abbreviation or acronym in brackets. Use upper case for all abbreviations and acronyms (except TfL and the Met): LU; BBC; RMT

After the first mention, always use the abbreviation or acronym: Transport for London (TfL), United Nations (UN). If the possessive is used, the abbreviation must also be possessive in the first mention: Transport for London's (TfL's)

Do not use full stops or include spaces between initials: TfL; BBC; mph; eg; No 10; WH Smith etc

Use 'm' and 'bn' for sums of money and measurable quantities: £10bn; 1bn litres of water. However, spell out for people and countable nouns: three billion commuters; 10 billion tickets

Use lower case for standard measurements: kg; km; lb; mph **but** use upper case for KB; GB; MB

continued >>



Aa

abbreviations/ acronyms

>> continued

Exception: Spell out metres to prevent confusion with abbreviation for million

Note: 1) Do not include a space between the number and the unit: 20km; 50kph; 100KB

2) Never add an 's' to measurements: 20km **not** 20kms

Use lower case for ie and eg. These should be limited or replaced by simpler alternatives: use 'that is' or 'for example'

accents

On words commonly accepted as English, use only when they make a difference to pronunciation: cliché; exposé

Foreign words should be given their accents

active voice

Avoid the passive voice. 'A hit B' describes the event more concisely than 'B was hit by A'

adult-rate

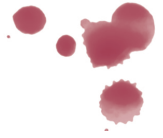
Include a hyphen when using adjectivally: I need to buy an adult-rate ticket

adult-rate

Bus Pass

adult-rate annual Travelcard (Gold Card) holder

It is also acceptable to use **Gold Card holder**



**adult-rate
season ticket**

**adult-rate
Travelcard**

adverbs Do not use a hyphen after adverbs ending with ‘-ly’: rapidly growing economy, carefully crafted answer

adviser Not advisor

aeroplane Not airplane

age under-XXs (n): Under-16s
under XX (adj): If you are under 16

over-XXs (n): Over-60s
over XX (adj): If you are over 60

XX-years-old

See also **elderly; youngsters**

Americanisms Favour British spelling and phrases: programme, not program (except for computer programs); realise, not realize; centre, not center. The only exception is proper nouns: World Trade Center; US Defense Department

among Not amongst



Aa

ampersand (&) Use only when included as part of a proper name: Hammersmith & City line; Waterloo & City line
Do not use as an abbreviation in titles or text

an 'An' precedes any word beginning with a vowel and any word beginning with an 'h' if the 'h' is silent, so 'a hotel' but 'an honour'

anticipate Does not mean 'expect'. If you 'expect' to have a busy day, you can 'anticipate' it by getting up early

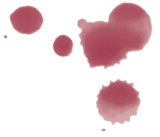
antisocial Not anti-social

articulated bus **Note:** If writing for passengers, use **bendy bus** as the term articulated bus is not commonly understood

Anytime Day Travelcard Replaces Day Travelcard (Peak). Valid for travel between 04:30 and 09:30 Monday to Friday except public holidays)

Anytime 3 Day Travelcard Replaces 3 Day Travelcard (Peak). Valid for travel between 04:30 and 09:30 Monday to Friday except public holidays)

Art on the Underground Formerly **Platform for Art**



Asian

Use when referring to Chinese, Far East Asian, Indian, Japanese and Pakistani communities. If referring to an individual, it should be used as an adjective, not a noun: an Asian woman, not an Asian; Asian people, not Asians

Note: The term Oriental should not be used

See also **race and ethnicity**

Auto top-up

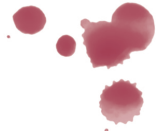
Use to describe the Auto top-up facility available for pay as you go Oyster cards



Aa

A-Z style rules

Bb



| | |
|--|--|
| Bank Holiday | Always use upper case Use only when referring specifically to Bank Holidays, otherwise use the more general term 'public holiday' See also public holiday |
| bendy bus | Acceptable colloquial shorthand for articulated bus |
| billion | Use 'bn' for sums of money and measurable quantities: £10bn; 1bn litres of water Note: Do not include a space between the number and the unit: £1bn; £20bn Spell out for people and countable nouns: three billion commuters; 10 billion tickets See also numbers |
| bisexual | See sexuality |
| black | See race and ethnicity |
| black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) | Spell out whenever space allows, rather than using BAME Note: This replaces Black Minority Ethnic (BME), which should no longer be used See also race and ethnicity |



Bb

black cab

Use 'licensed taxi' instead

Note: Black cab can be referred to at the first mention of 'licensed taxi' if it is helpful to readers: The PCO licenses taxi (black cab) services in London

blind

This term implies total sight loss. Consider using visually impaired person/passengers etc if referring to people with sight loss as it is a more inclusive term

Note: It is acceptable to use specific terms such as blind or partially sighted if it is relevant to the topic

See also **disability**

Blue Badge holders

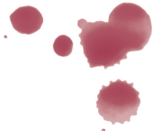
board

Use lower case unless referring to a named board: TfL Board members

borough

Use lower case unless referring to a specific (named) borough: London boroughs; the London Borough of Brent

Borough Spending Plans (BSPs)



| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| brand names | <p>TfL products and brands should follow this style guide to ensure consistency: Oyster card, not Oystercard; Congestion Charge, not Congestion charge</p> <p>For other brands, do not use design or typographical elements that, in effect, turn a name or brand into a logo. This is to prevent confusion, especially for visually impaired readers. Avoid: kd lang boarded an easyJet flight wearing GUESS? jeans and a pair of adidas. This should read: Wearing Guess jeans and a pair of Adidas, KD Lang boarded an Easyjet flight</p> <p>Do not use the ©, ® or ™ symbols unless legally required to</p> |
| British Transport Police (BTP) | <p>Like ‘police’, the BTP should be treated as a collective noun and followed by a plural verb: the BTP are not the BTP is</p> <p>See also police</p> |
| bulleted lists | <p>Start each point with a capital letter but do not use a full stop at the end (not even at the end of the final point)</p> |
| Bus & Tram Pass | <p>Not ‘Bus Pass’</p> |
| Bus and Tram Discount card | <p>Not issued after August 2008</p> |



Bb

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| buses | Use lower case when referring to buses as a mode of transport: London's buses also accept Travelcards See also London Buses Bus Pass |
| Bus Pass | Do not use. Refer to Bus & Tram Pass |
| bus Saver | No longer sold but still valid for travel |
| bus station | Use lower case: Finsbury Park bus station; Edmonton bus station |
| business | Use lower case unless referring to a named organisation or firm: we support the business; the Small Business Bureau |
| Byelaws | |

A-Z style rules

Cc

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| © | Do not use the © symbol unless legally required to |
| cab | Use 'taxi' instead and use only when referring to licensed taxis (black cabs). It must not be used when referring to private hire vehicles |
| Capital | Use 'Capital' (with an upper case C) when referring specifically to London Use lower case when referring to other capital cities |
| capital letters | Do not use ALL CAPITAL LETTERS for headings, to emphasise a point or to introduce a new idea as they are more difficult to read, especially for visually impaired people. They also imply shouting when used online See also Plain English: Accessibility See also brand names; job titles; titles of reports/sections/sub-headings etc |
| CCTV | See closed-circuit television |
| Child Oyster photocard | Issued to children aged five-15 until July 2006. It remains valid but the current schemes are 5-10 Oyster photocard and 11-15 Oyster photocard See also Zip, 14-15 Oyster photocard and under-14 Oyster photocard |



Child photocard

Only issued for use on National Rail

Current TfL photocard issued to under-16s are on Oyster; **5-10 Oyster photocard** and **11-15 Oyster photocard**

Note: Child photocard should only be referred to when this type of card specifically needs to be mentioned

child-rate season ticket

Not child rate season ticket (without hyphen)

child-rate Travelcard

Not child rate Travelcard (without hyphen)

CitizenCard

Withdrawn January 2006

closed-circuit television (CCTV)

collective nouns

Treat as singular, except staff and police: TfL is; the committee has **but** the staff are; the police want

A pair and a couple are both plural

Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)

See **Equalities and Human Rights Commission**

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| committee | Use lower case unless referring to a named committee: Transport Committee for London |
| company names | Always treat as singular: TfL wants not TfL want See also abbreviations/acronyms; brand names |
| compass points | Use lower case except when including as part of a proper noun: north; east; south; west but South East England See also London |
| Conditions of Carriage | |
| Congestion Charge/Charging | Use upper case except when using charge or charging on their own: pay the charge online; when you enter the charging zone |
| Congestion Charging scheme | Use lower case when referring to 'the scheme' on its own |
| Congestion Charging zone | Use lower case when referring to 'the zone' on its own: People living within the zone are eligible for a discount |



contractions Contractions – such as ‘don’t,’ ‘isn’t’ or ‘can’t’ – can be used sparingly to make communications more friendly and less corporate. However, don’t use them to such an extent that your text appears sloppy or rude

**cooperate/
cooperation** Not co-operate/co-operation

**coordinate/
coordination** Not co-ordinate/co-ordination

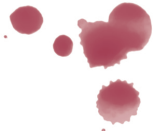
Countdown

Crossrail Not Cross Rail or Cross rail

customers Do not use. Use ‘passengers’ where possible
Where reference is also being made to TfL services that don’t carry passengers, use ‘passengers and people who use TfL’s/our services’

A-Z style rules

Dd



dates

Day, month, year, in that order, with no commas:
1 January; 1 January 2007; Tuesday 1 January;
01/01; 01/12/07

Note: Do not abbreviate days or months if space allows them to be spelt out in full

If necessary, abbreviate days and months to three letters (**exception:** Thursday – use five letters)

Do not use 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc

Do not add spaces on either side of hyphens when listing inclusive dates: 11–15 April;
2005–2006; 10 May–10 June

A forward slash is used when listing years in reports or titles: 2006/07

Note: No spaces on either side of the forward slash

If abbreviating individual dates, also use forward slashes: 01/12; 01/12/06 **not** 01-12; 01-12-06

Do not use an apostrophe for decades, except when using the possessive form: the station opened in the 1960s **but** it is a 1960s' station

See also **plurals; possessives**



Dd

Day Travelcard (Peak) See **Anytime Day Travelcard**

Day Travelcard (Off-Peak) See **Anytime Day Travelcard**

deaf This term implies total hearing loss. Consider using hearing-impaired person/passengers etc as it is a more inclusive term. However, it is acceptable to use the term 'deaf' if it is relevant to the topic or if referring to the deaf community as a whole

Note: The deaf community should be identified separately from the disabled community: disabled and deaf communities

If referring to the disabled and Deaf communities, then generally a capital D is used

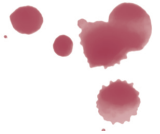
See also **disability; hearing-impaired**

departments Use upper case for departments: Corporate Finance; Group Communications

de-train

Dial-a-Ride (DaR) Not Dial-A-Ride (with upper case A)

Disability Rights Commission (DRC) See **Equalities and Human Rights Commission**



disability

Use positive language about disability, avoiding outdated terms that stereotype or stigmatise. Do not use 'cripple', 'handicapped' or 'wheelchair-bound' and avoid referring to people as nouns (eg 'the disabled') or as suffering from, or afflicted by, a condition

It is preferable to use 'xxx' people rather than people with 'xxx': disabled people (not people with disabilities); hearing-impaired passengers; visually impaired users; wheelchair user; learning-disabled people; mobility-impaired passengers

It is acceptable to use specific terms such as blind, deaf or partially sighted if it is relevant to the topic

However, whenever possible, it is preferable to describe the barriers that disabled people experience rather than impairments linked to a person's medical condition: hearing-impaired passengers or people who use our services who may experience communication barriers; passengers who experience physical barriers

Note: This can also include people with luggage, pushchairs, bulky items or similar

Note: The deaf community should be identified separately from the disabled community: the disabled and deaf communities

See also **able-bodied**; **blind**; **deaf**



Dd

disabled person's Freedom Pass

Use upper case when referring to the disabled person's Freedom Pass in text. It should only appear as lower case (freedom pass) on the official logo

Discount photocard: Bus & Tram

Available from January 2008. Replaces **Bus and Tram Discount card** available to Londoners on Income Support

discount-rate ticket

Docklands Light Railway (DLR)

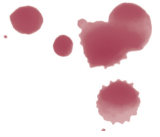
double-decker bus

DVLA

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency; not normally necessary to spell out

A-Z style rules

Ee



11-15 Oyster photocard

18+ Student Oyster photocard scheme

Earl's Court station Unlike the area or the exhibition centre, the Tube station has an apostrophe

Earls Court Unlike the Tube station, neither the area nor the exhibition centre have an apostrophe

East London Line Project (ELLP)

East London Railway (ELR)

East London Transit (ELT)

eg Not e.g.

See also **abbreviations/acronyms**

elderly Use older people in place of elderly people as it is inappropriate

eLearning



Ee

| | |
|--|--|
| email | Not e-mail |
| endorsement | TfL cannot be seen to endorse external companies/suppliers |
| equality and inclusion | See individual entries: able-bodied; age; Asian; black, Asian, and minority ethnic; blind; deaf; disability; gender; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community; race and ethnicity; sexuality; transgendered |
| Equalities and Human Rights Commission (CEHR) | EOC/DRC/CRE have all been amalgamated |
| Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) | |
| Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) | See Equalities and Human Rights Commission |
| ethnicity/ethnic group | See race and ethnicity |
| external suppliers | TfL cannot be seen to endorse external companies/suppliers |

A-Z style rules

Ff

5-10 Oyster photocard

5-Year Investment Programme

Do not use (re-branded May 2006)

See **Investment Programme**

14-15 Oyster photocard

No longer issued after January 2008. It remains valid but the current schemes are **5-10 Oyster photocard** and **11-15 Oyster photocard**

faith and belief

Use 'people of faith', 'people of belief' or 'faith communities' when referring to groups of people with a shared faith or belief. Do not use the term 'religious communities' as this has a different meaning and refers to organised religious communities (eg monastic communities)

Note: It is acceptable to be specific if it is relevant: a Sikh temple; a Muslim festival

Family Travelcard

Withdrawn January 2006

FAQs

Acceptable abbreviation for frequently asked questions

Avoid the error of adding an apostrophe: (FAQ's)

fax numbers

Use 020 XXXX XXXX

fewer

'Fewer' is used for countable nouns and means smaller in number: fewer coins; fewer passengers;

continued >>



Ff

fewer

fewer tickets

>> continued

Do not confuse with **less**, which is used for singular nouns and quantities: less money; less time; less fat

figures

Never start a sentence or title with a figure. If a sentence or title begins with a number, it must be spelt out

See also **numbers**

fire service

Use lower case unless referring to a named brigade: the fire service has been called; a letter from the London Fire Brigade

First Class ticket

first person

For external documents use the third person, ie 'TfL aims to...'. For internal, more informal documents, the first person is often acceptable, ie 'we aim to...'

focuses

Never 'focusses'

Freedom Pass

Use upper case when referring to the Freedom Pass in text. It should only appear as lower case (freedom pass) on the official logo

See also **disabled person's Freedom Pass;**
older person's Freedom Pass

fuel cell bus

A-Z style rules

Gg

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Games | See London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games |
|--------------|---|

| | |
|------------|----------------------|
| gay | See sexuality |
|------------|----------------------|

| | |
|---------------|---|
| gender | <p>Avoid giving offence by using outdated or patronising terms and include references to gender only when it is essential. Using the plural can be helpful: customers; local people; employees</p> <p>The term ‘manned’ should be replaced in all cases with ‘staffed’</p> <p>Do not refer to women as ladies or girls as this can be interpreted as patronising</p> <p>Also do not use ‘female’ or ‘male’, use: woman/man, women/men</p> <p>See also sexuality; transgendered</p> |
|---------------|---|

| | |
|-----------|--|
| GB | Acceptable abbreviation for gigabyte. Do not include a space between the number and the measurement: 2GB |
|-----------|--|

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Gold Card holder | It is also acceptable to use adult-rate annual Travelcard (Gold Card) holder |
|-------------------------|---|

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| government | Use upper case only when referring to a specific government: TfL works with the Government. Use lower case when referring to local government or when using in an adjectival context: government expenditure; government funding |
|-------------------|--|



Greater London See **London**

**Greater London
Authority (GLA)**

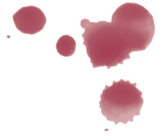
**Green Line
coaches**

group Use upper case only when referring to a named
group: the TfL Group

**Group Day
ticket**

A-Z style rules

Hh



headings See **titles of reports/sections/sub-headings etc**

hearing-impaired See also **disability; deaf**

**Heathrow
Express**

Help point Not Help Point (with upper case P)

hyphens See **Plain English: Punctuation**



Hh

A-Z style rules

li

iBus

ie Not i.e.

See also **abbreviations/acronyms**

intelligent transport system (ITS)

interchange Use lower case: Vauxhall Cross interchange; strategic interchange

internet Not Internet (with upper case I)

into Is one word but 'on to' are two separate words

intranet Not Intranet (with upper case I)

Investment Programme (IP) No longer 5-Year Investment Programme (re-branded May 2006)

Note: Reference to TfL must be made at the first mention of the Investment Programme. Include its abbreviation in brackets if the programme is referred to again: the TfL Investment Programme (IP); Transport for London's Investment Programme (IP)

'ise' Use in preference to 'ize', eg organise

iTrace



A-Z style rules

Jj

job titles

Use upper case when referring to a specific role or named person: the Managing Director; Joe Bloggs, Press Officer

Use lower case if writing generally: service assistants, station managers

When quoting a named individual, no comma is required if referring to a person by title: Prime Minister Gordon Brown said: '...'. However, commas must be used to separate a descriptive title: Gordon Brown, Prime Minister, said: '...'

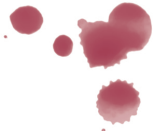
Journey Planner



Jz

A-Z style rules

Kk



KB Acceptable abbreviation for kilobyte. Do not include a space between the number and the measurement: 120KB

kilometres Refer to kilometres instead of miles where possible

See also **abbreviations/acronyms**



Kk

A-Z style rules

Ll

| | |
|--|--|
| learnt | Past tense and past participle of learn. Do not use learned unless using as an adjective, as in scholarly |
| lesbian | See sexuality |
| lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) community | |
| less | <p>'Less' is used for singular nouns and quantities: less money; less time; less fat</p> <p>Do not confuse with fewer, which is used with countable nouns and means smaller in number: fewer coins; fewer passengers; fewer tickets</p> |
| level access | <p>Do not use</p> <p>See step-free access</p> |
| licence | Noun: you will need a licence |
| license/d | Verb/adjective: a body authorised to license drivers; he is a licensed driver |
| Limited/Ltd | Can usually be dropped from company names (except for legal documents and similar) |
| line | Use lower case when referring to Tube lines: Hammersmith & City line; Northern line |



Ll

lists

Do not add a comma before ‘and’ at the end of a sequence unless one of the items includes another ‘and’: We ate oranges, apples and bananas **but** We ordered chocolate cake, cheese and biscuits, and ice cream

Semi-colons can be used to clarify meaning and separate items listed in a catalogue-type sentence: Refurbishment works will include new lighting at the station entrance and on the platforms; new escalators at the North Lane and South Way entrances; and the installation of CCTV cameras

See also **bulleted lists**

local season ticket

Do not use

See **Point-to-Point season ticket**

log in

Verb: you will need to log in

Note: The TfL website uses sign in **not** log in

login

Noun/adjective: you will be issued with a login

London

Use upper case for Inner London; Greater London; the East End and West End of London. Use lower case for central London; north/south/east/west London; northeast/southwest London etc



London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Refer to as the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the 2012 Games or the Games
Do not refer to as the London 2012 Games

London Buses (LB) Do not use 'Buses' (on its own) when referring to London Buses, the TfL subsidiary responsible for overseeing contracts with private bus operators
See also **buses**

London Rail (LR)

London River Services (LRS)

London Service Permits (LSPs)

London Streets Formerly Street Management (re-branded 2007)

London Tramlink Formerly London Trams (re-branded 2008)

London Trams Do not use. Now London Tramlink (re-branded 2008)
See also **London Tramlink; tram**



London Transport Museum

Not London's Transport Museum. Use 'Museum' (with capital M) on second mention

London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG)

Do not use 'Olympic Committee'

London Overground (LO)

In corporate or external communications use 'London Overground'. Use 'LO' as an abbreviation in all other cases except when referring to London Overground in a legal context (ie contracts), when 'Rail for London Ltd' should be used

Note:

- 'North London line' is now 'Overground Richmond/Clapham Junction – Stratford'
- 'West London line' is now 'Overground Willesden Junction – Clapham Junction'
- 'DC line/Watford Euston DC' is now 'Overground Watford Junction – Euston'
- 'Gospel Oak to Barking (GOB)' is now 'Overground Gospel Oak – Barking'
- In summer 2009, 'East London line' will become 'Overground Dalston/Highbury & Islington – West Croydon/Crystal Palace/New Cross'

continued >>

London Overground (LO) **continued >>** All directional references should be referred to as the destination they are travelling towards, for example the ‘Overground Richmond/Clapham Junction – Stratford’ can be referred to as the ‘Overground to Richmond’, the ‘Overground to Clapham Junction’ and the ‘Overground to Stratford’

London Underground (LU) Use ‘LU’ (not LUL) as an abbreviation in all cases except when referring to London Underground in a legal context (ie contracts)

London Underground Ltd (LUL) Use ‘LUL’ as an abbreviation only when referring to London Underground in a legal context (ie contracts). Use ‘LU’ as an abbreviation in all other cases

longer-period Travelcard Do not use. However, there are some instances when references are made to longer period Travelcard season tickets

See **season ticket**

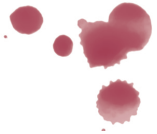
Low Emission Zone (LEZ)



LL

A-Z style rules

Mm



| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Mayor of London | Use 'Mayor' (with capital M) on second mention |
| MB | Acceptable abbreviation for megabyte. Do not include a space between the number and the measurement: 2.2MB |
| measurements | Use lower case for standard measurements: kg; km; lb; mph but use upper case for KB; GB; MB. Exception: Spell out metres to prevent confusion with abbreviation for million Note: 1) Do not include a space between the number and the unit: 20km; 50kph; 100KB 2) Never add an 's' to measurements: 20km not 20kms |
| meet, met | Not meet with or met with |
| metric | Try to use metric in all instances (except obvious exceptions, eg miles) See also metres; measurements |
| metres | Write out in full to prevent confusion with million |
| Metropolitan Police (Met) | Referred to in the national media as the Metropolitan Police (or Met) not the Metropolitan Police Service (or MPS), so there is no need to include the word 'Service' or refer to it as the MPS Like 'police', the Metropolitan Police should be treated as a collective noun and followed by a plural verb: the Met are not the Met is |



Mm

million

Use 'm' for sums of money and measurable quantities: £10m; 1m litres of water

Note: Do not include a space between the number and the unit: £1m; 20m

Spell out million for people and countable nouns: three million commuters; 10 million tickets

See also **numbers**

minicab

Not mini-cab or mini cab

Use 'private hire vehicle' unless referring specifically to a minicab or minicab service

'Minicab' can be used at the first mention of private hire vehicles if it is helpful to readers: All private hire vehicles (including minicabs) are licensed by the Public Carriage Office

See also **private hire vehicles**

money

When referring to round sums of money, do not add '.00': £3, not £3.00; £10, not £10.00

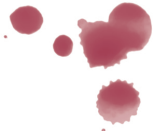
Use 'm' and 'bn' for sums of money and measurable quantities: £10bn; 1bn litres of water. However, spell out for people and countable nouns: three billion commuters; 10 billion tickets

Note: Do not include a space between the number and the unit: £20m; £10bn

See also **numbers**

A-Z style rules

Nn



| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| names | Use upper case for named departments, initiatives, networks, organisations, projects and schemes: Group Services; London Bus Initiative; Low Emission Zone See also capital letters; job titles; titles of reports/sections/sub-headings etc |
| National Rail | Use upper case in all instances Note: When National Rail is mentioned in conjunction with Oyster pay as you go, it needs to be accompanied by the statement: ‘National Rail only allows customers to pay as you go on some journeys. Ask your train operator for details’ |
| Network Railcard | |
| New Deal photocard | |
| New Deal programme | |
| New Deal scheme | |
| Night bus | Use upper case for ‘Night’ |
| none | How many companies are going to make a profit? None of them are When ‘none’ is meant to indicate ‘not one’, it is singular: None of them is bigger than any other |



Nn

numbers

In body text, write out numbers from one to nine; use figures from 10 upwards. Numbers between twenty-one and ninety-nine written in words should be hyphenated

Exceptions:

1) Never start a sentence or title with a figure. If a sentence or title begins with a number, it must be spelt out

2) Chapter/section headings do not need to be spelt out: Chapter 5; Section 2.1

Use 'm' and 'bn' for sums of money and measurable quantities: £10m; 1bn litres of water. However, spell out million and billion for people and countable nouns: three million commuters; 10 billion tickets

Do not include a space between numbers and units: 20km **not** 20 km; £10bn **not** £10 bn

Numbers larger than three figures require a comma: 1,000; 20,500

Decimals should generally be rounded to a maximum of two decimal spaces: 2.75 **not** 2.748

Do not use an apostrophe when referring to decades or plurals as this makes them possessive: 1980s **not** 1980's; under-16s **not** under-16's

See also **Plain English: Punctuation**

See also **dates; measurements; money**

A-Z style rules

Oo



off-peak Use lower case and include a hyphen when using adjectivally: an off-peak ticket

Use upper case and include a hyphen when using in conjunction with a product:
Travelcard (Off-Peak)

older person's Freedom Pass Use upper case when referring to the older person's Freedom Pass in text. It should only appear as lower case (freedom pass) on the official logo

Olympics Do not use. See **London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games**

Olympic Committee Do not use. Refer to **London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG)**

Olympic Family

Olympic Games

Olympic Park

Olympic Route Network

Olympic Stadium

Olympic Village



One Day Family Travelcard

Withdrawn January 2006

online

One word when referring to the internet or a website. Do not use 'on-line' or 'on line'

on to

But **into**

opt in/out

Verb: I would like to opt in

opt-in/out

Adjective: an opt-in clause

Overground

'Overground' (with a capital O) is acceptable colloquial shorthand for London Overground on second mention in internal communications and newsletters

See also **London Overground**

Oyster Auto top-up

Oyster card

Oyster daily price capping

Oyster Online

Oyster pay as you go

See **pay as you go**



Oyster photocard

5-10 Oyster photocard, 11-15 Oyster photocard, 16+ Oyster photocard, 18+ Student Oyster photocard and Veterans Concessionary Travel Scheme Oyster photocard are currently issued

Under-14 Oyster photocard, 14-15 Oyster photocard and child Oyster photocard are no longer issued but are still valid for use until their expiry date

Oyster Pre Pay

Name withdrawn January 2006

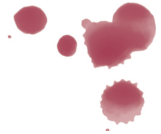
See **pay as you go**

Oyster Ticket Stop/s



A-Z style rules

Pp



paragraph Only use left aligned text (not fully justified)

Paralympic Games

passengers Refer to ‘passengers’ rather than ‘customers’ where possible

Where reference is also being made to TfL services that don’t carry passengers, use ‘passengers and people who use TfL’s/our services’

pay as you go Do not hyphenate and always use lower case as Oyster pay as you go is not a brand name

Note: Use ‘credit’ or ‘balance’ when referring to Oyster cards with a stored pay as you go balance. Do not use ‘pay as you go travel value (cash)’, ‘pay as you go cash value’ or ‘cash balance’

See also **National Rail**

pay as you go credit Use to describe Oyster cards with a stored cash value

Note: Do not use ‘pay as you go travel value (cash)’ or ‘pay as you go cash value’

PDF Accepted abbreviation for Portable Document Format

Note: When using online, include the file format and file size as part of the link to aid accessibility: [Underground map \(PDF 850KB\)](#)



Pp

peak Use lower case except when using in conjunction with a product: Travelcard (Peak)

Penalty Charge Notice (PCN)

per cent Two words. Do not use % except in tables or advertising copy (eg posters)

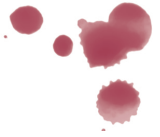
period ticket Do not use
See **season ticket**

personal pronouns Personal pronouns can be used to establish a conversational tone and prevent repetition of 'TfL':
We are planning to invest £10bn over the next five years; If you would like more information, please contact us
See also **tone**

photocard

Platform for Art Do not use. Now **Art on the Underground**

plurals Avoid the common error of adding an apostrophe when making a word or abbreviation plural as this makes it possessive: under-16s **not** under-16's; DVDs **not** DVD's; 1990s **not** 1990's
See also **Plain English: Punctuation**



Point-to-Point season ticket

Previously 'short-distance season ticket'. A Point to-Point season ticket refers to a season ticket that is valid between two named stations only

police

Use lower case unless referring to a specific force: the British Transport Police; call the police

Note: Police is a collective noun that is usually preceded by 'the' and followed by a plural verb: the police are **not** the police is

See also **British Transport Police;**
Metropolitan Police

possessives

For proper nouns ending in '-s', add 's':
St James's Park

Do not confuse with plurals, especially when referring to ages or decades:

under-16s (plural)
under-16's (possessive)

Take care with plural nouns: use women's **not** womens'; children's **not** childrens'; people's **not** peoples'

See also **plurals; Plain English: Punctuation**

practice

Noun: it is standard practice; piano practice

practise

Verb: he practises piano every day; she is a practising doctor



Pp

Pre Pay Name withdrawn January 2006. See **pay as you go**

price capping Use **Oyster daily price capping**

private hire operators This term refers to operators of all private hire vehicles, including minicabs, executive cars, limousines, chauffeur services and any other vehicle licensed for private hire use

Note: It does not include taxis (black cabs)

private hire vehicles This term refers to minicabs, executive cars, limousines, chauffeur services and any other vehicle licensed for private hire use

Note: It does not include taxis (black cabs)

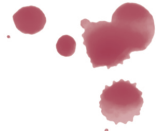
Public Carriage Office (PCO)

Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

public holiday Always use lower case

A public holiday can refer to any national holiday, including Bank Holidays

See also **Bank Holiday**



**Public Private
Partnership
(PPP)**

p-val

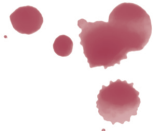
Do not use when referring to Oyster card readers.
Use **yellow card reader** instead



Pp

A-Z style rules

Qq



quotation marks Use single quotation marks in all cases

Use double quotation marks if using a quote within a quote

If a quote runs on longer than one paragraph, include quotation marks at the beginning of each subsequent paragraph but only at the end of the final paragraph

Place full stops and commas inside quotes when they are complete sentences, otherwise place them outside: 'I want to buy a ticket,' said Mr Smith; When he said 'I promise', he didn't really mean it



Qq

A-Z style rules

Rr

® Do not use the ® symbol unless legally required to

race and ethnicity

Avoid giving offence and include references to race only when it is relevant. The words ‘black’ and ‘Asian’ should not be used as nouns, but adjectives: ‘black people’ rather than ‘blacks’; an ‘Asian woman’ rather than ‘an Asian’ etc. However, it is acceptable to be specific if it is relevant: local Somalian community; Bangladeshi community leaders

Note: The terms ‘Oriental’, ‘half-caste’, ‘non-white’ and ‘coloured’ are not acceptable in any circumstances

See also **Asian; black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME)**

Rail & River Rover ticket

rail replacement bus service

Realtime

One word when referring to TfL’s Realtime travel information service. Two words if using generally: real time (n); real-time (adj)

red route

Not Red Route (with upper case Rs)



Rr

relive Not re-live

re-open Not reopen (without hyphen)

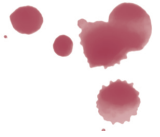
re-route

roadworks

Routemaster

A-Z style rules

Ss



**7 Day
Travelcard**

**16+ Oyster
photocard**

**16-17 Oyster
photocard** No longer issued after September 2007 so this term should not be used. Use **16+ Oyster photocard** instead

**St James's Park
station**

schemes Use lower case unless the word 'scheme' is included as part of a title: Fleet Automated Scheme

-ise endings Use 'ise' instead of 'ize': emphasise, realise (not emphasize, realize). The only exceptions are capsized and proper nouns (eg company names)

seasons Lower case: spring; summer; autumn; winter

season ticket Previously 'period ticket'. Refers to any ticket valid for seven days, one month or a longer period up to one year

**sentence
spacing** Use a single space at the beginning of sentences as double spaces can be problematic for visually impaired readers and people with learning difficulties

See also **paragraph; Plain English: Accessibility**



Ss

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| service guide | Use lower case unless referring to a named document: a range of service guides is available; the Riverboat Spring/Summer Service Guide is out next week |
| sexuality | <p>Include references to sexuality only when it is essential. The words ‘gay’, ‘bisexual’ and ‘transgendered’ should not be used as nouns, but adjectives: ‘gay people’ rather than ‘gays’; ‘a bisexual man’ rather than a ‘bisexual’. The term ‘lesbian’ is an exception as it can be used as a noun or adjective</p> <p>Note: Do not use the term ‘homosexual’ as it is a medical term and so considered inappropriate. Use the term ‘gay’ instead: a gay man or lesbian</p> <p>See also gender; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community; transgendered</p> |
| short-distance season ticket | Does not exist. Use Point-to-Point season ticket instead |
| smartcard | |
| Smarter Travel Unit (SMU) | Formerly Travel Demand Management (TDM) |
| South East | <p>When referring to London and the South East of the country</p> <p>See also London</p> |

Speech marks See **quotation marks**

station Use lower case: Marble Arch station. However, it is often not necessary to use the word ‘station’ at all: the Northern line is suspended between Euston and Waterloo

See also **bus station; interchange**

step-free access Use when referring to either step-free or level access but include context to prevent misunderstanding:

Step-free access to platform/s

Step-free access to train/s

Step-free access to platform/s and train/s

Strategic Road Network (SRN)

strategy Use lower case unless the word ‘strategy’ is included as part of a title: Integrated Transport Strategy

Street Management Re-branded London Streets in 2007

Student Oyster photocard Do not use. Refer to **18+ Student Oyster photocard scheme**



Ss

Student-rate Bus Pass

Use when referring to the **18+ Student Oyster
photocard scheme**

Student-rate Travelcard

Use when referring to the **18+ Student Oyster
photocard scheme**

Surface Transport

A-Z style rules

Tt

**3 Day
Travelcard
(Off-Peak)**

**3 Day
Travelcard
(Peak)**

No longer used. **See Anytime 3 Day
Travelcard**

24-hour

Include a hyphen when using as an adjective:
24-hour travel, 24-hour alert, 24-hour service

taxi

Use only when referring to licensed taxis (black cabs) or Motor Hackney Carriages

Note: This term must not be used when referring to private hire services or vehicles (including minicabs)

See also **black cab; minicab; private hire vehicles**

Taxicard

**terms and
conditions**

Not Terms and Conditions (with upper case C) or Terms & conditions (with ampersand)

**telephone
numbers**

Use: 020 XXXX XXXX or, when dialling from overseas, +44 (0) XXX XXX XXXX

Note: Only include numbers for dialling from overseas when a message is directed specifically at an overseas audience



Tt

TfL Pension Fund Use 'Fund' (upper case F) on second reference

TfL Road Network (TLRN)

TfL Student discount scheme

that/which Generally, 'that' defines while 'which' informs: This is the house that Jack built; this house, which Jack built, is now falling down

See also **which**

third person For external documents use the third person, ie 'TfL aims to...'. For internal, more informal documents, the first person is often acceptable, ie 'we aim to...'

Ticket Stop/s

ticket office

time Use the 24-hour clock in all circumstances (unless legally required to use the 12-hour clock): 08:00; 12:15; 00:01

titles of sections/sub headings etc

Use upper case for the first letter of the first word and proper nouns only; Finance and Planning induction pack **not** Finance and Planning Induction Pack

Do not use ALL CAPITAL LETTERS or italics as they are more difficult to read, especially for visually impaired readers. They also imply shouting when used online

™

Do not use the ™ symbol unless legally required to

tone

It is important to strike a balance between a tone that is authoritative and formal and one that is friendly and engaging

Make sure it sounds like it comes from an individual, not an anonymous organisation

Write as if you are speaking

Use plain English, avoid jargon, technical language or ‘management speak’

For external documents use the third person, ie ‘TfL aims to...’. For internal, more informal documents, the first person is often acceptable, ie ‘we aim to...’

touch in/touch out



Tt

touchscreen
ticket machine

trade names See **brand names**

tram Use lower case when referring to trams as a mode of transport: Children can travel free on trams
See also **London Tramlink**

Tramlink Do not use. See **London Tramlink**
See also **London Tramlink; tram**

transgendered Do not use 'transsexual'. Instead, use 'transgendered' as an adjective: a transgendered person
Note: Always refer to individuals by the gender by which they identify themselves
See also **gender; sexuality**

Transport for London (TfL) Never TfL (with italicised f)
Spell out in full on first mention in body text, including the abbreviation TfL in brackets. For all subsequent mentions, it is acceptable to use the abbreviation
Note: The abbreviation may be used in document and section headings

continued >>

Transport for London (TfL)

Treat as singular: TfL is **not** TfL are; TfL has **not** TfL have

>> **continued**

TfL can be described as London’s integrated transport authority. It is also a functional body of the Greater London Authority. Do not describe it as a government body or authority

Transport for London Road Network (TLRN)

Transport Policing and Enforcement Directorate (TPED)

Do not use. Now **Community Safety, Enforcement and Policing (CSEP)**

Travel Assistance Scheme

Travelcard

See also individual entries: **Student Travelcard; Discount Travelcard**

Travel Demand Management (TDM)

Now the Smarter Travel Unit (STU)

Travel Information Centre (TIC)



Tt

TravelOptions

Tube 'The Tube' (with a capital T) is acceptable colloquial shorthand for the London Underground

Tube Guru Not Tubeguru

A-Z style rules

Uu

Underground ‘The Underground’ (with a capital U) is acceptable colloquial shorthand for London Underground

See also **Tube**

under-14s Requires a hyphen in all cases. This is true whenever referring to age groups: under-14s; under-18s; over-60s

Note: Avoid the common error of adding an apostrophe when making a word or abbreviation plural as this makes it possessive: under-16s **not** under-16’s

See also **plurals**

Under-14 Oyster photocard No longer issued after January 2008. It remains valid but the current schemes are **5-10**

Oyster photocard and **11-15 Oyster photocard**

URL Accepted abbreviation for ‘uniform resource locator’. It refers to the web address of a particular page

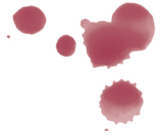
See also **website addresses**



Uu

A-Z style rules

Vv



validator Do not use when referring to Oyster card readers.
Use **yellow card reader** instead

**Victoria Coach
Station (VCS)**

**Veterans
Concessionary
Travel Scheme**

**Visitor Oyster
card**

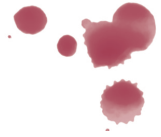
**visually
impaired** See also **disability; blind**



Vv

A-Z style rules

Ww



Walkfinder

web Lower case

website Not web-site or web site

website addresses **TfL website:** When using the TfL website as a hyperlink in the body text of electronic documents, include the www: www.tfl.gov.uk. However, when using it elsewhere, or together with the website logo (as a design element), the www must be dropped: tfl.gov.uk

Other websites: When referring to the address of a specific web page (including a site's homepage) in body text, write out the full address, but do not include <http://> unless the address begins with something other than www: www.london.gov.uk **but** <http://thesaurus.reference.com>

West London Tram (WLT)

which/that Generally, 'that' defines while 'which' informs: This is the house that Jack built; this house, which Jack built, is now falling down

As a general rule, use 'which' for descriptive clauses and place it between commas: The station, which has been closed for a year, will re-open on Monday

while Not whilst



Ww

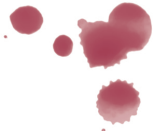
**work/life
balance**

A-Z style rules

Xx

A-Z style rules

Yy



years

A forward slash can be used when listing years in reports or titles: 2005/06 (no spaces on either side)

Do not use an apostrophe for decades unless they are possessive: the 1960s; a 1960s' station

See also **dates; numbers; plurals**

yellow card reader

Use when referring to Oyster card readers

Note: Do not use **validator** or **p-val**

youngsters

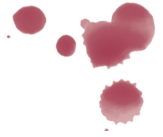
Use 'young people' in place of 'youngsters' as it can be interpreted as patronising



Yy

A-Z style rules

Zz



-ize endings Use 'ise' instead of 'ize': emphasise, realise (not emphasize, realize). The only exceptions are capsized and proper nouns (eg company names)

Zip The name for Oyster photocard for young people that allow them to travel free or at a discounted rate

Zone/s Use upper case only when referring to specific zones: Zones 1-3, the station is in Zone 3. Use lower case if writing generally: single-zone tickets; two zones

See also **Congestion Charging zone;**
Low Emission Zone



Zz

Section 3

Plain English

Plain English: Key principles



Writing in plain English doesn't mean over-simplifying your message or patronising your readers. Instead, it means using everyday words in place of jargon or acronyms to help readers understand your message quickly and more easily.

- Write sentences that are no longer than 20-25 words
- Include only one main idea in each paragraph
- Establish a conversational tone by imagining you are speaking to someone
- Avoid jargon, acronyms and impersonal corporate language (See **Plain English: Jargon and legalese**)
- Use bullets and vertical lists to break up text and make information more accessible
- Use simple words rather than their longer equivalent: 'If' not 'in the event that' (See **Plain English: Superfluous words and phrases**)
- Don't try to include every single detail – only write what readers need to know
- Write in the active, not passive voice. 'A hit B' is more direct than 'B was hit by A'
- Ask yourself: Will your audience understand your message or can it be simplified further?
- Don't be afraid to give clear instructions: 'Please send it to us' is more direct than 'I would be grateful if you could please send it to us'



Plain English: Key principles

- Use sub-headings to present information in a logical manner
- When including hyperlinks in electronic documents, don't mention that you are providing a link (ie 'click here'). Instead, describe the information you are linking to: [Learn more about the xxx scheme](#)
- Include images to illustrate ideas and make content more reader-friendly
- Keep your readers in mind. Remember, if you're bored or confused by what you've written, they probably will be too

Plain English: Accessibility



To aid accessibility by readers with learning difficulties or visual impairments, the text and design of all communications materials should follow the guidelines below:

- **Type size**

The size of type (or point size) is a fundamental factor in legibility. Use a minimum of 12pt for all printed documents. Where possible, use 14pt as this increases the accessibility of documents to visually impaired readers

- **Type styles**

Avoid setting text in italics or all capital letters as these make it more difficult for visually impaired readers to recognise word shape. Underlining should also be avoided to prevent confusion with hyperlinks

- **Reverse type**

If using white or coloured type, make sure the background colour is dark enough to provide sufficient contrast

- **Text alignment**

Text should be left aligned. Avoid justifying text as irregular word spacing can make it more difficult to read. Variable spacing can also make text appear distorted

- **Sentence spacing**

Use a single space at the beginning of sentences as double spaces make text more difficult to read. Variable spacing can also make text appear distorted



Plain English: Accessibility

- **Line length**

The ideal line length is between 60–70 characters (except when using columns) as very long or very short lines tire the eyes and make reading more difficult

- **Hyphens and split words**

Splitting words over lines should be avoided as it disrupts the reading flow and can also be confusing

- **Navigational aids**

Leave a space between paragraphs and sections as dividing the text gives the eyes a break and makes reading easier

- **Contrast**

The better the contrast between the background and the text, the more legible the text will be. Black text on a white background provides the best contrast

- **Images**

Avoid placing text over images as it can be both easy to miss and difficult to read

Plain English:

Punctuation



Apostrophe (')

These can be used to:

- Show the omission of letters: we'll (we will); don't (do not); it's (it is or it has)
- Show possession:
Singular: Place the apostrophe before the s to show possession by one person/body: the Mayor's decision; the company's history
Plural: Place the apostrophe after the s to show possession by more than one person/body: the teachers' room; the directors' decision

Note: 1) The possessive form of 'it' is 'its', not 'it's': The cat licked its paw. **2)** A common error is to form the plural of a noun by adding 's' to the singular form eg: a dozen DVD's; several Tube's. This is wrong and should be avoided as it makes the word possessive

Colon (:)

These can be used to:

- Introduce a list
- Introduce a quotation: Mr Smith said: 'I don't like beetroot'

Comma (,)

These can be used to:

- Indicate a short pause: Having finished the newspaper, I sat down to work



Plain English: Punctuation

- Separate listed items: He ordered apples, oranges, grapes and bananas
Note: A comma is not required before ‘and’ at the end of a list unless one of the listed items includes another ‘and’: We ordered chocolate cake, cheese and biscuits, and ice cream
- Separate clauses: The boy, who hated my sister, was very rude
- Separate a series of adjectives: A long, rambling, pompous letter
- Prevent confusion. Compare:
Paul hit Harry, and George then ran away
Paul hit Harry and George, then ran away

Dash (–)

These can be used to:

- Separate an explanatory or related comment: The union members agreed to the new terms – even the shortened lunch breaks – but said that if their holiday pay was affected they would walk out
- Emphasise a point or indicate a change of thought: What he said was true – or so I thought

Full stop (.)

These can be used to:

- Show that a sentence has ended
- It is no longer used after abbreviations, so use Mr not Mr. and eg not e.g.

Plain English: Punctuation



Hyphen (-)

These can be used to:

- Create compound nouns: father-in-law; under-16s
- Link compound adjectives: blue-chip company; up-to-the-minute news
- Prevent confusion. Compare:
 - The station has no smoking areas (ie there are no areas where smoking is allowed)
 - The station has no-smoking areas (ie there are designated areas where smoking is not allowed)
- Differentiate between verbs and nouns:
 - Set up (v): please set up a meeting
 - Set-up (n): it was a set-up

Semi-colon (;)

These can be used to:

- Separate items in a list if the elements within it already include commas: Members of the band include Ben Jefferson, singer; Tony Williams, drummer; Edward Ellis, trumpeter
- Separate two independent thoughts that would otherwise be linked by a word such as **and** or **but**: A heart attack is a medical emergency; prompt care is required



Plain English: Tone

It is important to strike a balance between a tone that is authoritative and formal, and one that is friendly and engaging.

Make sure it sounds like it comes from an individual, not an anonymous organisation. Write as if you are speaking.

Use plain English, avoid jargon, technical language or 'management speak'.

For external documents use the third person, ie 'TfL aims to...'.
For internal, more informal, documents the first person is often acceptable, ie 'we aim to...'.



The fundamental elements of good writing are traditionally taught to journalists but, in fact, are valuable to anyone who has to communicate in writing to a wider audience.

Good advice

George Orwell, in an essay on journalistic style, once offered this advice:

- Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print
- Never use a long word where a short word will do
- If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out
- Never use the passive where you can use the active
- Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent
- Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous

In other words...

- Avoid clichés and other well-worn expressions
- Where there's a choice, use the shortest, simplest word
- Cut out anything that does not truly add to the story. Every word should earn its place
- Construct sentences as simply and directly as possible



Plain English: Basics of good writing

- Use active in preference to passive construction: ‘The passenger paid the taxi driver’ is better than: ‘The taxi driver was paid by the passenger’
- Avoid jargon – particularly corporate jargon – and technical or other obscure terminology

Orwell’s advice is 60 years old but it is as relevant to communicators today.

Getting the message across

This may sound like a brilliant flash of the blindingly obvious but it’s worth making the point: As a communicator your job is to convey information.

Whatever that information – whether news or not – and whoever the intended audience – internal or external – our best chance of conveying it successfully lies in keeping it **clear**, **simple** and **concise**.

Always bear in mind: **Your readers don’t have to read it.** You may have spent considerable time and effort over something. But if it is confusing, over-complicated or just too long and boring, the readers will quickly turn to something else. And you will have wasted your time.



Know your audience

The first questions before you put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) must be:

- Who are the target readers?
- What do we need to tell them?
- What will they want to know?
- What do they already know (and therefore what else do we need to add)?

Put yourself in their shoes.

Knowing who the message is aimed at enables us to include the appropriate details, use the most suitable tone and terminology, and angle it for maximum interest and impact. It also helps us to identify the gaps in our information and go back to our sources with further questions if necessary.

Structuring the message

Journalists talk about news ‘stories’ – so called because they are constructed to interest the readers rather than presented as an unstructured list of facts. Trainees are sometimes advised to tell the story just as they might to friends in the pub. This means they start by grabbing attention with the most important facts – the point of the story – before substantiating it with more detail, observations and background information.



Plain English: Basics of good writing

There are plenty of ways to write a news story but the most common approach is:

1. Assert
2. Substantiate
3. Attribute

In other words: State the facts; expand and explain; support with quoted/reported speech (comment); background information.

This is often described as the news (or inverted) pyramid. It simply means the biggest, most important facts of the story appear at the top. The rest of the details then follow in descending order of importance.

The advantage of this approach is that it enables the readers to understand what the story is about straight away. They can then read on if they are interested or move on to something else if not, safely knowing they haven't missed out on the most crucial facts.

The pyramid is by no means the only way to get a message across, but it generally works well for the reasons stated. And it works for most kinds of written communication, not just journalists' news stories.



Important questions

A useful guide before you start writing is to ask yourself these six basic questions: **Who**, **What**, **When**, **Where**, **How** and **Why**.

These are the questions your readers will, subconsciously perhaps, want answered.

- What is this about?
- Who is responsible/involved?
- Where and when is this happening?
- Why is it being done?
- And how?

In almost any kind of message, the logical place to start is with **Who** and **What**. Some**body** is announcing some**thing**. Or some**thing** is about to be launched (by some**body**).

The **Where** and **When** should follow soon after, if relevant, along with simple explanations of **Why** and **How**.

It is important, of course, to make your introduction as interesting as possible – after all, you want your readers to read it! So, the opening sentence should:

- Start with the main point
- Grab attention
- Be short, crisp and concise (but not vague or cryptic)
- Avoid clutter (subordinate clauses, parentheses etc)



Plain English: Basics of good writing

- Make sense instantly (avoid questions, quotes, pronouns, abbreviations, unless well known)

Dos and don'ts and other observations

In no particular order...

- Write the piece, then return to the intro. Can you improve it? Can you write a title/headline from it?
- Read and re-read as you go. If you read it aloud, awkward words or disjointed sentences will immediately become clear
- With longer messages, prepare and plan before you start writing. A simple bullet-point plan will help to marshal your thoughts, even if you decide to jettison the plan along the way
- Have you answered the six basic questions?
- When quoting people, stick to 'says/said'. Avoid 'claims', 'admits', 'states', 'remarks', 'explains', 'points out'... unless they convey the precise meaning. 'Adds/added' – use to make an additional or qualifying point, not as an alternative to 'says/said'
- Journalese/tabloidese. Tabloids have a language of their own. But nobody really uses words like 'rap', 'probe' and 'axe' in everyday language – neither should we (see the section on jargon and legalese in this guide)
- Facetiousness, puns, wordplay: enjoyable if used sparingly and in the right circumstances – and if original. But if it isn't truly funny, forget it. Don't try for laughs

Basics of good writing



- Take care to separate fact from opinion. Both are important but comment and opinion should always be attributed
- First person/third person: Be consistent. ‘TfL has announced...’ or ‘We have announced...’ but not both in the same story unless one is a direct report of somebody’s comments (see **Plain English: Tone**)
- Get someone else to check the piece when it is finished. It’s no good relying on proofreading your own work – you are likely to miss your own mistakes
- And don’t rely solely on the computer spell-checker. It won’t distinguish between ‘its’ and ‘it’s’ or ‘there’ and ‘their’. Nor can it check the accuracy of your facts!

Checklist:

- Know your audience. Who are the readers; what will they need to know?
- Decide what the story/message is about – and get straight to the point
- Keep it as short and simple as possible. Remember: clarity, brevity, simplicity, precision
- Have you answered the six basic questions?
- Have you followed the TfL style guide?
- Have you included contact details if required?
- Get someone else to check your story



Plain English: Jargon and legalese

Simplicity is the key to understanding. Short words in short sentences get your message across quickly and easily

Note: Some legal terms have specific legal meanings/implications that may be lost if replaced with plain English alternatives. If you have any questions about the use of legal terms, please contact TfL Legal

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| accede | agree, allow |
| accordingly | so |
| accustomed to | used to |
| ad hoc | informal, unplanned |
| additional | more, extra |
| approximately | about |
| ascertain | learn, discover |
| assist, assistance | help |
| attain | reach |
| attempt | try |
| bona fide | good faith, genuine, honest |
| cease | stop, end |
| commence | start, begin |
| component | part |
| concerning | about |



| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| consequently | so |
| constitute | make up, form |
| defer | postpone |
| determine | decide |
| discontinue | stop |
| enable | allow, permit |
| endeavour | try |
| establish | set up, create, find out |
| et al | and the others, and the rest |
| ex gratia | without obligation |
| expire/expiration | end |
| forthwith | immediately, now (state a time limit) |
| forward | send, give |
| further and better particulars | requests for information |
| generate | make |
| grant | give |
| henceforth | from now on |
| in camera | in private |
| initially | at first |

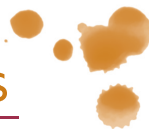


Plain English: Jargon and legalese

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| institute | begin, start |
| inter alia | among other things |
| manufacture | make |
| minor/infant | child |
| modify | change |
| notify | tell |
| numerous | many |
| obtain | get, receive |
| per annum | a year |
| possesses | has, owns |
| purchase | buy |
| regarding | about, on |
| request | ask |
| subsequently | later |
| terminate | end, stop |
| utilise | use |
| verify | check, prove |

Plain English:

Superfluous words and phrases



Another way of saving time and avoiding confusion is by discarding unnecessary words. Information can often be made simpler – and less corporate – if words that either add nothing or mean the same thing are replaced with simpler alternatives.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|
| a large proportion of | many |
| appropriate measures | measures, steps |
| at this moment in time | now |
| by virtue of the fact that | because |
| close scrutiny | scrutiny |
| consensus of opinion | consensus |
| despite the fact that | although, despite |
| due to the fact that | as, because |
| for the duration of | during, while |
| for the purpose of | to |
| future plans | plans |
| in accordance with | as, in line with |



Plain English: Superfluous words and phrases

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| in conjunction with | and, with |
| in the absence of | without |
| in the event that | if |
| in order to | to |
| in the majority of | most, usually |
| leaves much to be desired | poor |
| on account of the fact that | because |
| on behalf of | for |
| revert back | revert |
| the fact that | that |
| was of the opinion that | thought |
| with the exception of | except |
| with reference/ regard/respect to | about, concerning |

Plain English: Frequently misused words



Words that sound very similar can mean very different things. Here is a list of frequently misused words. If you are not confident about their meaning, look them up or use an alternative.

| | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| affect | effect |
| alternate | alternative |
| appraise | apprise |
| biannual | biennial |
| complementary | complimentary |
| continual | continuous |
| dependent | dependant |
| discreet | discrete |
| disinterested | uninterested |
| distinctive | distinguished |
| enquiry | inquiry |
| explicit | implicit |
| flounder | founder |
| flout | flaunt |
| fortuitous | fortunate |
| inflammable | inflammatory |
| licence | license |



Plain English: Frequently misused words

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| loathe | loat |
| luxuriant | luxurious |
| meter | metre |
| peddle | pedal |
| practice | practise |
| practical | practicable |
| principle | principal |
| refute | rebut |
| regretful | regrettable |
| resistant | resilient |
| stationary | stationery |
| systematic | systemic |

Plain English:

Useful books and websites



There are numerous books and countless websites on using English. The following list includes a selection of useful reference guides, eg dictionaries, encyclopedia, maps and conversion calculators.

AskOxford: Compact Oxford English Dictionary and online guide to better writing

www.askoxford.com

Cambridge Dictionaries Online

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org>

Dictionary.com

<http://dictionary.reference.com>

Encyclopedia Britannica

www.britannica.com

Jargon Buster: Definitions for grammar and literary terms by Oxford Dictionaries

www.askoxford.com/asktheexperts/jargonbuster

Maps and directions

Google maps: <http://maps.google.co.uk>

Streetmap: www.streetmap.co.uk

Metric conversion calculator

www.metric-conversions.org/conversion-calculators.htm

Online currency converter

www.xe.com/ucc

Plain English Campaign

www.plainenglish.co.uk



Plain English: Useful books and websites

Roget's Thesaurus: Online edition

<http://thesaurus.reference.com>

The Economist Style Guide

www.economist.com/research/StyleGuide

Also published by The Economist Books, London, 2003

The Guardian stylebook

www.guardian.co.uk/styleguide

Also published by Guardian Books, 2004

The New Fowler's Modern English Usage

www.bartleby.com/116

Also published by RW Burchfield, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996

The Times Style and Usage Guide

www.timesonline.co.uk/styleguide

Also published by Tim Austin, Collins, London, 2003

Wikipedia: online encyclopedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
