

ADR UK Style Guide

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

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Accessibility

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

Here are some general tips:

- Write in plain language suitable for a general reader and avoid unnecessary jargon. Keep sentences under 30 words where possible (average sentence length 15 words).
- Where you need to use specialist terminology, consider whether a definition would be useful to your audience.
- Use bullet point lists to break up complex information.
- Make all links descriptive. 'Read our new [report on Covid-19 cases in England](#).' is good. '[Click here](#) to read our new report on Covid-19 cases in England' is bad.
- Break up pages with headings and subheadings to help people navigate the information.
- Use acronyms consciously and with consideration for the audience. They make content inaccessible and off-putting to readers. Limit acronym use to commonly used names (ONS, NHS, MoJ) or if a phrase appears many multiple times in a document. Always write the first use in full.

ADR UK naming conventions

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

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

The first use in a document should include the abbreviated form, followed by the full form in brackets. Thereafter, only the abbreviated form should be used. Note that there should always be a space, (not hyphen) between ADR and the country name.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ADR UK / administrative data research-specific terminology

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

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

Data centre: with a space

Data owner and data holder: with a space

Data sourcing / sourcing data: as opposed to data acquisition / acquiring data

Datasets: no space

Decision makers, decision making: space, no hyphen

Grant holder: say this rather than award holder

IDS: Integrated Data Service

ONS Secure Research Service: no possessive apostrophe

Policymaking, policymaker: one word

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

Research Fellow: capital letters

Research fellowships: sentence case

Research project: lower case; refers to a specific project within a research theme or Strategic Impact Programme (SIP).

Research-ready data: hyphen, sentence case

Research theme: thematic groupings of research projects, e.g. health and wellbeing, used to group related work and Strategic Impact Programme together across the ADR UK partnership. Use this, instead of SIP, when speaking to the public about our areas of work.

Strategic Impact Programme (SIP): strong preference to only use this phrase internally, or with very engaged stakeholders – not with the public or the uninitiated. Spell out in full on first use; subsequently SIP. Research programme may be an acceptable substitute.

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

Numbers and dates

Billion: one thousand million rather than the old British million million

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

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

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

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

Dates: 21 July 2016 (day month year; no commas) and 21 July-6 August, 6-10 August. Avoid 2nd and 21st as this can cause formatting issues.

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

Euro: currency; plural euros and cents.

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

- Use the same format for ordering, e.g., first, second – ninth, followed by 10th, 11th etc.
- Use the same format for money, e.g., £23 million rather than £23m.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Punctuation and formatting

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

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

Headings and subheadings: use sentence case, unless

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

Links: do not use 'click here' or 'to find out more'. The link text should describe what the content is (see 'Accessibility').

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

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

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

"You are eligible to attend if you are:

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

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

"Research themes:

- Crime and justice
- Health and wellbeing"

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

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

"You are eligible to apply if:

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

Quotation marks:

- Use double quotes at the start and end of a quoted section, with single quotes for quoted words within that section.
- Place full stops and commas inside the quotes for a complete quoted sentence; otherwise the full stop goes outside.
- When beginning a quote with a sentence fragment that is followed by a full sentence, punctuate according to the final part of the quote, e.g. The Minister called the allegations "blatant lies. But in a position such as mine, it is only to be expected."

- Avoid 'that' before quotes. Use colons to introduce a quote when appropriate – so “NAME SURNAME said: “This is a promising development”,” not “NAME SURNAME said that: “this is a promising development”.”
- Try to avoid using quotation marks for names or unfamiliar terms, but use single quotation marks if it is necessary.

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

Semicolon: worth using, only correctly.

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

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

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

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

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

Grammar and spelling

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

Adviser: spelt with an “e” not an “o”

Occurred: with two “r”s

Panellist: with two “l”s

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

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

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

-ze: use -se, even if spellcheck tells you otherwise

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

Political / government terminology

Brexiteers: use Brexiteers rather than Brexiteers

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

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

Departments and their abbreviations:

Treasury

Cabinet Office (but the cabinet)

Home Office

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

Department for Education (DfE)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU)

Department for International Development (DfID)

Department for International Trade (DIT)

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

Department for Transport (DfT)

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)

Ministry of Defence (MoD)

Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

Office of the Leader of the House of Commons

Northern Ireland Office

Scotland Office not Scottish Office

Wales Office not Welsh Office

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

EU: spell out in full for first mention only

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

EU27: not EU-27 or EU 27

European commission: the commission after first mention; do not abbreviate to EC

First Minister: both words upper case

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

Foreign secretary: "f" and "s" upper case

General election: lower case

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

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

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

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

Hon members: of parliament (all words lower case)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

New Labour: capitalised, but old Labour (only L capitalised)

No. 10: with a full stop

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

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

Parliamentary Labour party: PLP after first mention

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

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

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

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

Referendum: plural is referendums not referenda

Revenue & Customs: or HMRC. Either is acceptable shorthand for HM Revenue and Customs, formed in 2005 from a merger of the Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise

Taoiseach: for Irish PM

UKIP: capitalise when abbreviated and not normally necessary to write party name in full

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

White paper: both words lower case

Inclusive language

BAME or BME: Try to avoid this term. If it must be used, write it in full in the first use Black, Asian and minority ethnic.

Black: always capitalised when describing ethnicity

Countries:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Child sexual abuse: never child sex

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

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

Developing countries: or low- and middle-income countries, not “third world”

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

Domestic violence: Always include helpline numbers.

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

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

Ethnic: never say ethnic when you mean ethnic minority, which leads to such nonsense as “the constituency has a small ethnic population”

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

Gypsies: are recognised as an ethnic group under the Race Relations Act, as are Irish Travellers, hence capped up.

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

LGBT+: use instead of LGBT

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

Minorities: try to use as adjective rather than noun

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

Non-binary: use preferred pronouns, otherwise use “they”

Non-white: do not use

Older people: preferable to “elderly people” or “the elderly”. Do not use “OAPs” or “Old People”.

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

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

Sexuality: as a rule, avoid using someone’s sexuality as a noun (e.g. a homosexual) and mention only if relevant to the story. Same applies to transsexuality (transgender, transexual person etc.)

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

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

Trans: short for transgender, which is one word. But ‘trans man’ and ‘trans woman’ are separate words

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

Uneducated: better to use ‘with no formal education’

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

Working class: noun; working-class adjective

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

Other vocabulary

Agenda: use agenda rather than agendum

Average: distinguish between mean and median

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

Chair: use Chair instead of Chairperson or Chairlady

Co-fund: hyphenated

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

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

Covid-19: capital C and then lower case.

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

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

Customs, Revenue & Customs: treat as singular

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

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

Diplomatic service: both words lower case

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

Émigré: with accents

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

Exploitative: rather than exploitive

Focused: one s

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

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

Food bank: with space

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

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

GMT: Greenwich mean time acronym should be capitalised

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

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

Headteacher: not headmistress or headmaster

Healthcare: one word, not “health care”

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

The Highlands: of Scotland, capitalise “h” but not “the”

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

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

HM: or Her Majesty for the Queen, not HRH

Holland: should not be used to mean the Netherlands (of which it is a region), with the exception of the Dutch football team, who are conventionally known as Holland

Holyrood: home of Scotland’s parliament, in Edinburgh. Not necessarily a synonym for the Scottish government, which is run by the largest party or coalition in Holyrood

Homebuyers, homeowners: one word

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

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

Humanity, humankind: not mankind

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

Index: plural indexes, except for scientific and economic indices

Ireland, Irish Republic: not Éire or southern Ireland or the south

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

Joint-funded: hyphenated

Judges: “Judge John Smith said” or “the judge, John Smith, said” are both fine; “judge John Smith” is wrong. Note that UK supreme court judges (or justices as they style themselves) are Lord This or Lady That – hence Lady Hale, not “Lady Justice Hale”. To call her Lady Justice Hale is to demote her to a court of appeal judge – who are (confusingly) Lord Justice This or Lady Justice That, e.g. Lady Justice Halletta

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

Kings College, Cambridge: (with comma)
King’s College London (without)

Lower case: not lowercase

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

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

budget to replace the minimum wage for workers over 24.

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

Loyalists: lower case (Northern Ireland)

Magistrates court: lower case, no apostrophe

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

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

Master’s: lower case and with apostrophe

Media: The media, including social media, are plural, so television could be described as your favourite form of media (avoid using medium)

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

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

More than: preferable to “over”

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

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

No one: not no-one

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

Orkney: not “the Orkney Isles” or “the Orkneys”

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

Patients: discharged, not released

Peacekeeper, peacetime: lower case, one word

People: use people not persons

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

Police ranks: Use abbreviation at first mention, then just surname, e.g. DCI Jane Tennison, thereafter Tennison

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

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

The press: lower case, treat as singular

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

Prisoners: preferable to inmates

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

Protester: not protestor

Private schools: rather than public schools

QC: use after name without a comma

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

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

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

Recur: not reoccur

Redundancy: jobs are made redundant not people

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

Regime: no accent

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

Remembrance Sunday: capitalised

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

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

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

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

Royal Courts of Justice: capitalised

Royal family: both words lower case

Royal commission: both words lower case

Scandinavia: only refers to Denmark, Norway, Sweden. The phrase “Nordic nations” is broader and includes Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland.

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

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

Serious Organised Crime Agency: can use abbreviated to SOCA

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

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

Small-c conservatism: all lower case

SOAS: formerly the School of Oriental and African Studies, Soas not SOAS

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

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

Spokesperson: rather than spokesman or spokeswoman

Stimulus: use stimuli as a plural

Students' union: lower case, even in full name

STV: single transferable vote

tax avoidance: is legal whereas tax evasion is illegal

Taxpayer: but council tax payer (lower case)

Think tank: two words

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

Treaties: lower case e.g. ‘treaty of Versailles’

The Troubles: capitalised

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

TUC: stands for Trade Union Congress (so do not write TUC congress)

Turnover: in business, one word

Universities (and colleges of further and higher education): caps for institution but lower case for departments

UCAS: The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

Union: lower case when referring to the ‘future of the union’ etc.

Union jack and union flag: interchangeable

Unionists: (Northern Ireland) lower case except in the name of a party, e.g. Democratic Unionist party

Universal credit: both lower case, UC abbreviated

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

V: for versus, not vs: England v Australia

Valuation Office Agency: (VOA after first mention) an executive agency of HM Revenue & Customs, it compiles business rating and council tax valuation lists for England and Wales but not Scotland, where the job is done by the Scottish Assessors

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

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

War: war crime, war dance, war game, war zone but warhead, warhorse, warlord, warpath, warship, wartime. Phrases like “war on terror” or “war on drugs” always in inverted commas.

Web, webpage, website, world wide web

Wellbeing: one word and no hyphen

World Bank: separate words, capitalised

Worldview: lower case, one word

Younger offenders institute: all lower case

Zero-hours contracts: all words lower case with hyphen