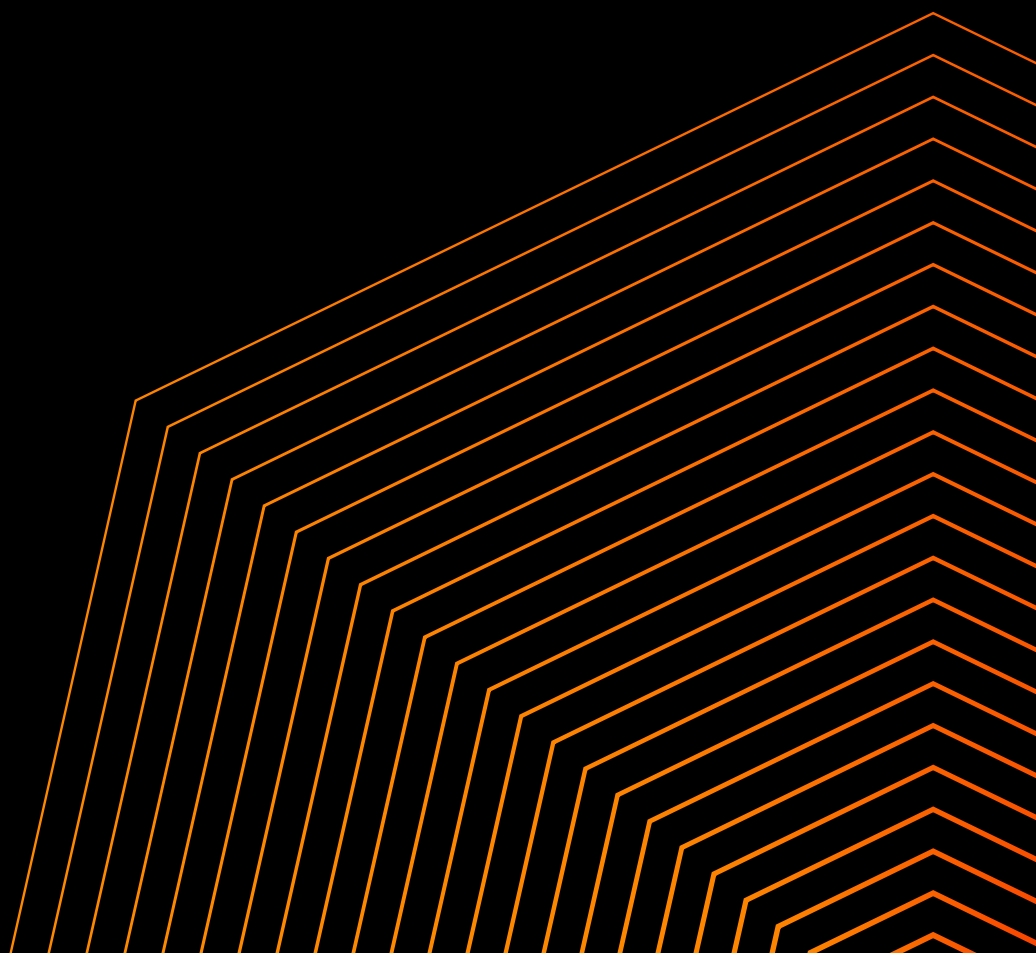




Royal Academy  
of Engineering

# Editorial style guide



# Introduction

The editorial guidelines for the Academy outline the required usage of English for online and printed materials covering common issues relating to grammar and application. Following the style guide ensures that we talk to our audiences with clarity and one voice. It helps develop and maintain a consistent identity for the Academy.

Different documents necessarily adopt different styles as appropriate for their audiences. A formal report would not be expected to be in the same style as a flyer aimed at young people. However, the correct use of grammar, punctuation and spelling always applies.

Our corporate typeface for all published documents is Montserrat. When this cannot be used, documents should be set in Arial. Font size 12 is considered to be the minimum size at which people can read comfortably.

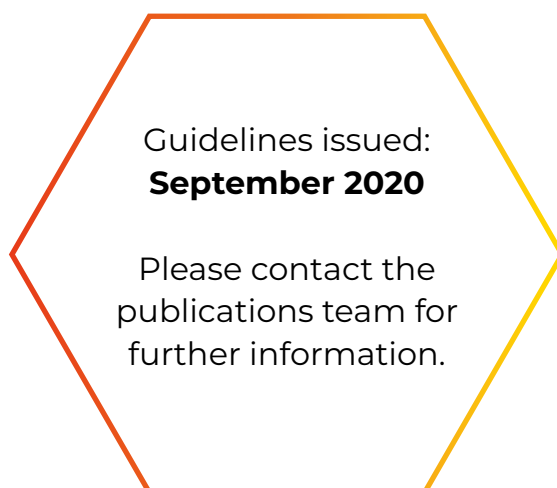
Please refer to the Academy's brand guidelines for more detailed advice on design, tone, typography, and use of other elements of the Academy's visual identity, which can be found on the [intranet](#). Please do also use the [image library guidance notes](#) when choosing which images to use.

This guide does not supersede specific instructions for formal government and parliamentary responses. If you are writing for such documents they should conform to style guides issued for these particular purposes.

Before you start writing, please read this guide for an overview of style issues you should look out for. You can then use it as a reference guide while you are writing. Even if you disagree with some of the rules in the guide, please use the Academy's version to maintain consistency while raising your questions/concerns with the publications team.

The Academy uses the *Collins English Dictionary* as its standard.

**Please ensure that all external documents with the Academy logo are proofed by the publications team.**



# Engineering for a sustainable society and inclusive economy

**The Royal Academy of Engineering harnesses the power of engineering to build a sustainable society and an inclusive economy that works for everyone.**

In collaboration with our Fellows and partners, we're growing talent and developing skills for the future, driving innovation and building global partnerships, and influencing policy and engaging the public. Together we're working to solve the greatest challenges of our age.

## Tone of voice

Our tone of voice is accessible, confident, and focused. Confidence and ambition sits at the very heart of our brand. Our name must be synonymous with ideas, innovation and impact. While our work is unashamedly ambitious, we've got the people, the profile and the resources to achieve our aims.

When we're telling people about our work, it's vital that we're concrete about our objectives, so that the world can hold us to account. Always remember to tell people what we're doing, why that's important, and how we're going to achieve our objectives. So for instance, we might tell people that the engineering profession has a diversity problem (*what*), that unless we solve it we're missing out on a wealth of talent (*why*), and to address the challenge, we're inspiring over half a million young people from under-represented communities to explore a career in engineering (*how*).

Our tone of voice is defined by accessibility. How simple can we make the information that we're sharing? Simplifying information helps us to be more accessible, and gain a wider audience. It's also good practice to keep our comms short, to respect our audiences' limited time. Always begin by summarising information and allow people to choose to read more: simple and concise for top level introductions, authoritative and detailed once we've established a relationship with the reader.

With our focus on simplicity comes a new vocabulary. We recognise that our field is full of buzzwords and jargon and we need to cut through unhelpful language to help more people understand engineering. So instead of talking about convening or catalysing, we talk about getting the right people together and making things happen. If in doubt, write like you'd speak – while phrases like 'enterprise hub regional nodes' can seem acceptable on the page, they'd be awkward to say in person.

It's important that in we communicate our focus on diversity and inclusion. In practice, this means challenging policymakers to help us to inspire everyone in society to consider a career in engineering and encouraging companies to attract a wider pool of talent. But it also determines the style of language we use - see page 21.

## Tone of voice examples

The examples below demonstrate the tone that we're aiming for by comparing older text from the Academy website with an updated, more accessible version.

Before	After
The Academy is committed to building capacity and best practice in public engagement with engineering through its public engagement awards scheme, Ingenious and through collaboration with a network of public engagement practitioners.	We actively support building and increasing the connections between engineers and the public. We do this through the Ingenious awards scheme, and with the help and support of experienced communicators.
Engineering is the practical and creative application of science and maths. Engineers use the knowledge they have in a specific field to make things work, to improve things and to solve problems. Engineers can be involved in building, testing and designing: they might work on large products like aircraft; small products like smart phones; buildings or infrastructure; energy sources such as wind power or nuclear power; computing systems or software; transport; medicine; food; music; clothing and much more.	Engineers make things work, improve things, and solve problems.  They design, build, test and improve everything from aircraft to medicine, food to phones, and so much more. Engineering is the practical and creative application of science and maths.  To explore a career in engineering visit <a href="http://ThisIsEngineering.org.uk">ThisIsEngineering.org.uk</a> for inspiration and <a href="http://Tomorrow'sEngineers.org.uk">Tomorrow'sEngineers.org.uk</a> for careers advice and resources.
Managing risk and promoting safety is paramount in engineering practice. The Academy has published documents on how risks are managed and a safety culture is promoted. A series of reports were produced in 2003 on the methods for managing risk, and the complexities posed by managing risk in systems that involve people as operators and users.	Keeping people safe is a top priority for engineers. That means actively managing risks and promoting safe working practices.  We produced a landmark series of reports in 2003 on the best ways to manage risk in complex systems such as transport infrastructure, shipping and buildings.
The Academy's learning and teaching resources have been developed in partnership with school teachers and engineers primarily to engage Key Stage 3 students. The resources provide learning activities for use in a STEM club, for a STEM challenge day or to enhance and add context to the curriculum. An important aim of each resource is to enable teachers to engage their students with STEM through hands-on activity and stimulating engineering contexts.	The Academy produces an ever-growing library of free teaching resources, giving every child in the UK the opportunity to develop their science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills both within and outside of school. We've partnered with school teachers and engineers from some of the UK's leading companies to develop lesson plans and hands-on activities that show how engineering is tackling some of the greatest challenges of the 21 <sup>st</sup> century – from providing clean energy to communicating with satellites.

## Abbreviations

Abbreviations should not be used. Abbreviated terms commonly used within the Academy or the engineering profession may not be understood outside it.

*February not Feb.*

*Tuesday not Tues.*

*Professor not Prof.*

Exceptions: *Mr Mrs Dr* (note that there is no full stop)

See also **Acronyms and Contractions**

## Academy

We are the Royal Academy of Engineering with no capital **t** on *the*, or, in the abbreviated version, the *Academy* (initial capital for 'Academy' only). In the first instance, use the *Royal Academy of Engineering* in full, then use *Academy* for subsequent mentions.

Where it is not possible to use the full title or use the abbreviation the *Academy*, the acronym *RAEng* may be used, but try not to use this when it is apparent that it is an Academy programme, for example on the website or in Academy-branded materials.

## Academy titles

See Appendix, page 26.

## Accessibility

See Accessibility of designed materials, page 23.

## Acronyms and initials

Phrases or titles abbreviated to acronyms or initials should be spelled out in full the first time they are used, followed by the short version in brackets. Thereafter, the abbreviation can be used.

The School of East Asian Studies (SEAS) offers four-year language-based courses in Japanese, Korean and Chinese. SEAS undergraduates can choose ...

Exception: where the abbreviation is better known than what it stands for (for example BBC, NATO, UN).

Acronyms must be written in capital letters, except in cases where an organisation's acronym officially features lowercase letters (for example *MoD*).

There is no need for full stops between the letters of the acronym.

There is no need to capitalise the words you are abbreviating if they would not

normally need capital letters - for example, personal protective equipment (PPE).

Add a lower case **s** without an apostrophe to make an acronym plural. Form the possessive of an acronym by adding '**s**: MoD's, BAE's. See also Abbreviations and Contractions

## **Addresses**

No full stops at the end of addresses.

No comma between the number and the street name.

Do not abbreviate *Road, Street, Avenue*.

It is a Royal Mail preference that the postcode is placed on a separate line.

Where the address is in a city or major town, do not include the county.

Royal Academy of Engineering  
Prince Philip House  
3 Carlton House Terrace  
London  
SW1Y 5DG

## **Ageing**

Include the **e**

## **Affect and Effect**

*Affect* means to act upon or influence, especially in an adverse way.

The heat *affected* the running of the tube.

His attitude *affected* the department's morale.

*Effect* means something produced as a consequence of a particular cause or agent.

One *effect* of the heat was that the tube became delayed.

The *effect* of his attitude was a decline in the department's morale.

## **A level**

Not A-level, unless it's being used as a modifier, such as A-level maths. This also applies to T level.

## **Ampersand (&)**

Use the word *and* instead, especially when writing for the web. R&D and D&I are acceptable exceptions to this rule or when & forms part of an organisation's name.

## **And**

Should not normally be used to begin a sentence. Exceptions can be made for informal materials such as social media or comms aimed at young people.

## Apostrophes (')

Apostrophes are used to denote possession or omissions in words and phrases.

### Possession

Where an object or objects belong to one person or thing, the apostrophe goes before the **s**:

The Academy's head office.

• Where an object or objects belong to more than one person or thing, then the apostrophe goes after the **s**:

The Fellows' certificates will be retained until the end of the dinner.

• Singular nouns ending in s are treated no differently and **s** should still be added:

The boss's lunch with the other chief executives was postponed.

• However, plurals of these nouns omit the **s** after the apostrophe:

The classes' timetables were confused.

• Where plural nouns that don't end in s are used - children, women, sheep - the apostrophe goes before the **s**:

The women's minibus runs until 11pm.

• The one exception to this rule is *its*:

The book was old; its cover was in tatters.

See also **It's or its**

Apostrophes are also used to show that letters are missed out of a word or phrase, usually to make it easier to pronounce.

*I'll* – I will

*they're* – they are

Never use an apostrophe to form a plural with numbers and letters:

*1990s* not *1990's*

*Three As* at A level, not *three A's* at A level

*SMEs* not *SME's*

Australasia

See *Oceania*.

## Around/about

Avoid using around when you mean about or on, for example:

Delegates at the event discussed policies *around* net zero.

In this case, delegates would be discussing the subject of net zero, but using around implies that they are discussing other similar topics, not net zero itself.

# B

## **Black**

When referring to groups of people in racial or ethnic terms, Black should be capitalised. White carries a different set of meanings and should not be capitalised.

## **Brackets**

Punctuation stays outside the brackets (parentheses) if the sentence is complete without the information inside. (A complete sentence that stands alone in brackets starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop.)

## **Benefited and benefiting**

Not benefitted/benefitting

## **Bullet points**

When writing for print, long lists should be bulleted. Shorter lists containing very detailed points can also be bulleted for clarity. Bulleted lists should not have fewer than three items; shorter list items can usually be better expressed in a full sentence.

If the list items comprise long clauses, long phrases or sentences written on separate lines, use a full stop or semi-colon after each bulleted item.

Don't use ending punctuation for single words or short phrases in a list. After the bullets use lower case initial letters. Where the bullets are followed by longer phrases or sentences, use an initial capital and full stops.

Lists (bulleted or numbered) should not use punctuation such as semi-colons and full stops, except at the end of the list where a full stop should be used (see first example). However, in a list where full sentence structuring is used each point should be treated as a sentence in its own right and ended with a full stop (see second example).

The engineer believed that the bridge:

- was not strong enough to withhold any weight
- was not constructed according to any safety standards
- should be demolished immediately.

The engineer adhered to the following principles:

- The bridge was not strong enough to withhold any weight.
- The bridge was not constructed according to any safety standards.
- The bridge should be demolished immediately.

## **But**

Should not be used to begin either a sentence or a paragraph. Exceptions can be made for informal materials such as social media or comms aimed at young people.



# C

## Capital letters

Engineering should have a lowercase **e** unless it starts a sentence or is included in a title or name.

Subject areas and job titles are all lower case.

Exceptions: Proper nouns, official titles (books, films and so on) and course titles written in full.

Professor Bob Boucher is the vice-chancellor.

Professor Bob Boucher, Vice-Chancellor, said...

Final policy decisions are made by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Bob Boucher.

BA (Honours) History. Students study history in relation to ...

Programme is not capitalised unless it's part of a full course title.

Honours Degree Programme in Computer Science.

This programme covers units in ...

Department names use capitals when part of a title, but the word department always uses lowercase d, unless it begins a sentence.

Staff in the department can answer your emails within three days.

Welcome to the Department of Engineering Affairs.

Small words (in, at, of, the, for, and, on) are never capitalised even in titles.

*Engineering for Growth*

Use lower case **g** for all references to government.

Green Paper/White Paper — these are capitalised with and without the paper's title. Industrial strategy is lowercase, unless it is capitalised as part of a title (such as Building our Industrial Strategy Green Paper).

Diversity and inclusion and research and development are lowercase but both can be abbreviated after first mention: D&I and R&D.

See also **Headings and titles**

## Captions

Figure and photograph captions appearing in publications should adhere to the rules outlined for standard text (provenance should be established for all images used, which should be suitably credited).

On the Academy website, all images must have captions (alt tags that are visible when you hold your cursor over them). This is to fulfil web accessibility standards.

See the Image library guidance notes on the intranet.

## **Century**

20<sup>th</sup> century, 10<sup>th</sup> century. Use lower case **c**.

## **Collective nouns**

Nouns such as *committee*, *family* or *government* take a singular verb or pronoun when thought of as a single unit, but a plural verb or pronoun when thought of as a collection of individuals:

The committee gave its approval to the plans.  
The committee enjoyed biscuits with their tea.

## **Colon (:)**

Colons are used to indicate the beginning of lists in sentences:

Research topics include: gender and politics in France, French cinema, 20<sup>th</sup>-century literature.

There is no need to separate this list with semicolons.

Colons can also be used to separate statements in a sentence, when the second statement explains the first:

The chemistry department has some of the best facilities in the country: its laboratories are state-of-the-art.

## **Colours**

All colours used in relation to the Academy, whether on the printed page or online, must be Academy palette colours. Avoid the use of colour in a way that might render the text difficult to read for visually impaired people or that overpowers the design.

See the Academy's visual identity guidelines on the intranet.

## **Commas**

Commas should be used sparingly, to structure and organise sentences clearly. An abundance of commas within a sentence indicates that it should be broken up into two or more sentences. Use serial commas in lists of three or more items to prevent ambiguity. For example:

Delegates from the UK, France, Germany, and Italy attended the conference.

## **Compass points**

Area names, including points of the compass, should carry a capital letter. Points of the compass not used as part of an area name should not carry a capital letter.

The meeting was held in the *West Midlands*.

The meeting was held in the *south of Scotland*.

Capital letters should be used if it is an accepted name for an area, for example the North East

### **Compliment or complement**

You pay someone a *compliment*. You have a full *complement* of students.

A book review may be *complimentary*. Two types of medical treatment can be *complementary*.

## **D**

### **Dates and times**

Use *25 July*, not July 25 or 25th July. Omit the day of the week and year, unless needed for clarity.

Use am and pm, not the 24-hour clock. Use full stops not colons as separators.

9.30am not 09:30

11.30pm not 23:30

(Note there is no space between the number and *am* or *pm*.)

### **Degrees**

Degree class: *First, 2:1, 2:2, 3rd*. Use First, never 1st. Use a capital when referring to a *First*, but lower case for first-class degree. Never use first degree, as this can be confused with an undergraduate degree, for example the first degree taken.

She was awarded a First in biology.

He was awarded a 2:1 in English.

She obtained a first-class degree in chemistry.

Degree types: bachelor's, master's.

### **Diversity and inclusive language**

See **Diversity and inclusion**, page 21.

### **Due to**

*Due to* is often used incorrectly when *because* or *because of* should be used instead. *Due to* should be used when you can substitute it for *attributable to*, *caused by* or *resulting from*.

The organisation's low productivity was *due to* staff shortages

The organisation's low productivity was *caused by* staff shortages

The event was cancelled due to the rain

The event was cancelled caused by the rain – *incorrect*

The event was cancelled because of the rain – *correct*

## E

### **Eg**

Try avoiding the use of eg. It can often be replaced by *including*, *for example* or *such as*.

The sentence: We hold events on a range of topics, eg technology, science and engineering.

Becomes: We hold events on a range of topics, including technology, science and engineering.

If eg is used, there should be no full stops. Use a comma before.

### **Ellipsis ( ... )**

Ellipsis marks indicate a pause in speaking or an omission of one or more words. Ellipsis marks should not be used unless they are part of a direct quotation.

“The top 10 manufacturers ... have all got protocol software in their product lines.”

### **Email**

The word is not hyphenated.

If an email address comes at the end of a sentence it should not be followed by a full stop. This avoids any confusion about whether the full stop is part of the address.

See also Web addresses

### **Etc**

Try to avoid using etc – use *including*, *include* before a list.

### **Exclamation mark (!)**

Avoid use of exclamation marks. They can appear patronising when addressing a young market. Marketing literature often overuses exclamation marks to cover up for a poor writing style.

## F

### **Fellows/Fellowship**

Use a capital F when referring to Academy Fellows or to the Academy Fellowship.

When an individual mentioned is a Fellow of the Academy, try to include this fact at the first mention. This can take the form of placing FREng after their name, or simply pointing out that they are a Fellow. This rule holds for the President of the Academy.

Note: Where an individual is a member of both the Academy (FREng) and the Royal Society (FRS), the FREng goes before the FRS.

When referring to Enterprise, Policy or Research Fellows, ensure that the descriptor is included to avoid confusion, and refer to the fellowship with a lower case f.

### **Focusing/focused**

Preferred spelling above. Not focussing, focussed.

### **Fonts**

The Academy uses Montserrat as its house font. Publications of any kind should only use this font. *Ingenia* is the exception, using Myriad Pro as its standard font. Where Montserrat is not available, Arial should be used.

See the Academy's visual identity guidelines on the intranet.

### **Fractions**

A fraction that stands alone is spelled out and hyphenated, even when one of the numbers is higher than 10.

Two-thirds of the students

One-twentieth of the population

### **Full stops**

Use frequently and split long sentences into shorter ones. Shorter sentences make text easier to read. Use one space, not two, after full stops. Do not use full stops after headings, subheadings and paragraph headings.

## **G**

### **Government**

To avoid confusion and maintain consistency always write *government* with a lower case **g**.

### **Global North, Global South**

Not global North, global south.

## **H**

### **Headings and titles**

Report titles, headlines and subheadings: Try to use an initial capital for the first word only.

How to get a place at university

not

How To Get A Place At University

Report, film and journal article titles in body copy should be italicised.

Fellows receive a copy of *Ingenia* each quarter.

Do not use full stops after headings, subheadings or paragraph headings.

**Honours**

See Postnominals or Titles

**Hyphen (-)**

Hyphens can be used to join together two words to form an adjective. This avoids confusion in expressions such as black-cab driver or short-course teacher. When the combination involves an adverb (words ending in ly) a hyphen is not used.

- Work-based learning
- Full-time study
- The course is broadly based
- The course is completed through full- and part-time study
- Family run company

Prefixes generally do not require a hyphen:  
deionised, nonhazardous, ongoing, unknown.

These words need no hyphenation:

cooperate	microbubbles	semicolon
coordinate	multidisciplinary	startup
cyberattack	multinational	subheading
cybercrime	nanotechnology	teamwork
cybersecurity	nationwide	timescale
groundbreaking	onsite	troubleshooter
healthcare	policymaker/making	undergraduate
lifecycle	postgraduate	upskill
lifelike	reuse	wellbeing
longstanding	roundtable	workforce

These words do need a hyphen:

decision-makers/making	off-putting	spin-out
off-site	problem-solver/solving	Wi-Fi

Use two words:  
time frame, cyber safety



## ie

Try not to use ie. If used, there should be no full stops. Use a comma before. You should replace ie with that is or by rearranging your sentence where possible.

## internet

Always lowercase.

net, website, the web: all lower case.

Exception: World Wide Web

## Internet of Things

When abbreviated, it should have a lowercase o: IoT

## -ise or -ize

Use *-ise* rather than *-ize* in words such as *organise*, *specialise* and *finalise*. An exception is *capsize*.

## Italics

Italics can be used for foreign words (unless they have entered common English language), titles of newspapers, magazines, books, films and plays. *Engineering the Future* and *This is Engineering* are always in italics, as is the public engagement scheme *Ingenious* – see Appendix.

Newspaper titles should be written in italics with an uppercase ‘The’ where appropriate (*The Times* but the *Daily Mail*).

There was a review of *Gone with the Wind* in the *Guardian*. See Newspaper titles.

## It’s or its

*It’s* means *it is*.

*Its* means belonging to *it*, as in *his* or *hers*.

The Academy is conveniently located; its offices are within five minutes of the Houses of Parliament.

## J

## Jargon

Avoid jargon, business-speak and marketing hyperbole, such as:

*The company has had a tremendous amount of interest in its fantastic new product.*

## L

## Latin plurals

Some are so common that many people don’t know they are plurals: alumni, data,

criteria.

However, many single forms look pedantic and off-putting.

fora – use *forums*  
formulae – use *formulas*  
stadia - use *stadiums*  
syllabi – use *syllabuses*

*Media* is the plural of medium. The news media *are*, not *is*.

Although strictly a plural, data can take a singular verb, so *data is*. The singular of data, datum, is very rarely used.

Try not to mix Latin and English in the same phrase. For example: 12 times a year or 12 times per annum, not 12 times per year.

### **Learned**

Preferred spelling above. Not learnt.

### **Like or such as**

*Like* is used when comparing persons or things and describing the similarities between things or persons while *such as* is used to give specific examples especially when the objects of comparison are definite.

When citing examples, use *such as*.

Materials *such as* titanium and steel are more useful to the engineers.

When comparing something, use *like*.

She wants to work for a big engineering company, like Rolls-Royce or Airbus.

## **M**

### **Measurements**

SI units of measurement (metric system) should be used in preference to the imperial system unless use of the latter is the accepted norm - such as mph. For example:

Metres not feet  
Kilometres not miles

Numbers and measurements should be separated by a non-breaking space, for example 100 kilometres. Measurements should be written out in full rather than abbreviated, for example 100 kilometres not 100 km.

### **Metre/meter**



Metre for the unit of distance, but meter for the measuring device.

## Million

Million should be written in full as million and not shortened to M. The word million should also stay on the same line as the number. For example:

In 2012, building work started on the £500 million state-of-the-art manufacturing centre  
not  
In 2012, building work started on the £500 million manufacturing centre

The same rule applies to billion.

## N

### National Academies

Use capital letters when referring to the National Academies.

### net zero

In lower case, not Net Zero or Net-Zero.

### Newspaper titles

Generally in italics and with lower case 'the'; the *Financial Times*. Exceptions to this rule are *The Times* and *The Economist*.

See also **Italics**

## Numbers

Zero to nine are written as words and 10 onwards in figures, except when:

a sentence begins with a number (or reword the sentence to avoid the problem)  
the numbers have technical significance or need to stand out for quick comprehension (such as tables, statistics, money, times, ratios, academic grades)

in a range of two or more related numbers at least one is lower than 10.  
The accommodation sleeps eight to twelve people.

For ranges of numbers, do not combine between with a hyphenated range; use *and* instead.

So: *between one and ten or between 30 and 40*  
Not: *between 1–10 or between 30–40*

If writing a range of numbers, use *to* instead of an en dash

So: *there were 20 to 30 attendees at the event*

Not: *there were 20–30 attendees at the event*

Where a number from one to nine is part of a phrase or title that you didn't create, stick with the convention:

*Key Stage 2*

If there is no symbol available for foreign currencies, write out the name with no capital letters. If dollars are other than US, this needs to be stated: New Zealand dollars or NZ dollars.

For larger numbers, use the following formats:

2,000

10,000

100,000

Add a comma after each temporal clause.

*But* one million, one billion and so on.

See also **Dates and times**

## O

### **Oceania**

A preferable term to Australasia, for the continent/geographic region that encompasses Australasia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

## P

### **Paragraphs**

Paragraphs should be kept short, especially when writing for the web. If you are writing for a younger audience, bear in mind that large blocks of text are off-putting and will probably not be read.

### **Percent**

Use the percentage symbol % rather than percent. Note: this may require writing a value that is between zero and nine in numerics instead of the accepted full word.

### **Plain English**

Aim to be as clear and concise as possible. Using plain English does not mean you are dumbing down your text, rather you are delivering your message in the clearest way possible. For more information and tips, go to [www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)

See also **Writing tips**, page 24.

### **Postnominals**

No full stops or commas between postnominals. By convention, national honours are

followed by FREng and, if appropriate, by FRS/FRSE/FLSW. Academy style does not include postnominals for other institutional fellowships (such as IMechE, IChemE) or academic qualifications (such as MSc, PhD). For Academy Fellows, check the online [List of Fellows](#) for correct postnominals.

Dr William Wilkinson CBE FREng FRS

See also **Titles**

### **Principle or principal**

It is a point of principle. Our principal objective is engineering excellence.

It is a principled organisation. He is the principal point of contact.

### **Programme**

Not program, unless referring to a computer program. Programme is not capitalised unless it's part of a full course title.

## Q

### **Quotation marks**

Use double quotation marks for speech and single quotation marks for emphasis or to highlight a term. Use a colon before the speech.

It was then dubbed the 'infinity footbridge'.

The professor said: "The major challenges facing the world today all depend critically on engineering solutions."

## R

### **References/footnotes — for guidance only**

If using numbered references, in the footnote it can be presented as: title, author, date, page (if applicable). For example:

*Assessing the economic returns of engineering research and postgraduate training in the UK*, Technopolis, 2015, p2

Report and book titles should be italicised. A title is preferred over a web link, but this can be used if it cannot be avoided (when the publication is hosted online, the designer can add hyperlinks to titles so that it clicks straight through to the online version of the reference).

### **Royal family**

Her Majesty or His/Her Royal Highness would require capitalisation but royal family should be written in lower case.

## S

## Semicolon (;)

Use to separate two related ideas in a sentence, where a comma is simply too weak.

In 2020 the Academy introduced a new strategic plan; a copy can be found on the website.

It joins two related independent clauses (each could be a sentence on its own).

Semicolons can also be used to help separate items in a list when some of those items already contain commas or the list is quite long.

The research areas were manufacturing and advanced materials; robotic, space and quantum technologies; healthcare; and smart infrastructure and clean technology.

## Startup

While it isn't incorrect to use *start-up* (and many big news outlets such as the BBC and *Guardian* do), tech publications and the industry tend to favour *startup*. However, *spin-out* should have a hyphen.

## sub-Saharan Africa

## Subscript

Ensure that numbers are placed in subscript where appropriate. Subscript is most commonly found when writing chemical formulas, such as  $\text{CO}_2$  or  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

## Superscript

See above. Avoid superscript when writing dates and ordinals (first, second, third, not 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>). Common examples acceptable of superscript include  $\text{m}^2$  (metres squared) and mathematical orders of power, such as  $9^{10}$ .

# T

## Teams

When writing for external audiences, refer to the Academy as a whole rather than as individual teams.

The Academy/ We recently launched a report on the gender pay gap.  
not

The D&I team recently launched a report on the gender pay gap.

## Tense

Don't swap between first, second and third person. When writing about the Academy, you can use *we*, *our*, *us*, but companies are usually singular so use *it* instead of *they*.

## That or who

Use *who* when referring to a person. Use *that* when referring to a class or type.

She is the only staff member *who* lives in Timbuktu.  
It was one of the inventions *that* won a silver medal.

It is acceptable to use *whose* to attribute possession to an object because there is no other appropriate English word.

The tree, *whose* leaves shook, did not bend in the wind.

### **That or which**

Use *that* for a restrictive clause (part of the sentence *that* you can't get rid of) and use *which* if it's non-restrictive (additional information that can be left out without changing meaning, *which* is often surrounded by commas).

### **Times**

See **Dates and times**

### **Titles**

*Professor* not Prof.

*Dr* not Dr. or Doctor.

Do not use *Mr*, *Mrs* or *Ms* in Academy publications unless necessary. They are used for formal text such as in the obituary section of the Academy newsletter.

Where individuals possess several titles, including Dame, Lord or Sir, these should follow any professional titles (such as Professor or Air Marshal). For clarification, follow the style in [List of Fellows](#) on the website.

Only list honours (such as KBE, CBE) and FREng/FRS on first mention of an individual's name.

## **U**

### **The US**

Not the USA, United States or America.

## **W**

### **Web addresses**

Web addresses should start with [www.](http://) omitting the <http://>

[www.raeng.org.uk](http://www.raeng.org.uk)

If a web address comes at the end of a sentence it should not be followed by a full stop. This avoids any confusion about whether the full stop is part of the address.

See also **Email**

## website

One word, the w is lower case unless it begins a sentence.

## Whilst/amongst

These are antiquated words. Use *while* or *among*.

## X

## X-ray

Upper case X.

# Diversity and inclusive language

Some of this guidance was adapted from enei's *Inclusive Communication: A guide for employers* (2018); CIBSE's [Inclusivity Guidelines for CIBSE members and staff](#) (2019); and government guidance on [inclusive communication](#).

## Disabilities

Avoid	Use
the deaf	deaf people, people with hearing impairments
people in wheelchairs, wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair	wheelchair users, person who uses a wheelchair
the disabled	disabled people, people with disabilities
able-bodied	non-disabled
suffers from, afflicted by, victim of	has [insert condition or impairment]
the blind, the visually impaired	blind people, visually impaired people, people with visual impairments
the handicapped, crippled	disabled person, person with a disability
mentally handicapped	learning disability

## Age

Avoid	Use
elderly people, the elderly, old people, aged	Older people, mature
girls, boys (when referring to young adults), youngsters	young people, young adults (18 to 25)
schoolchildren	pupils, students

## People with convictions or people recently released from prison

Rather than ex-offender.

## Gendered language

The Academy uses non-discriminatory language. All written and verbal material must be given in a non-gender specific manner.

Avoid the use of man when referring to a person. Use he/she instead of he.  
For Academy posts, use Chair instead of Chairman, Chairwoman or Chairperson.

Avoid	Use
male, female	man, woman
mankind	humankind
spokesman	spokesperson
manpower	workforce, employees, staff
man-made	artificial
man hours	hours worked
manning	staffing
manhood	adulthood
headmaster, headmistress	headteacher
businessman, businesswoman	businessperson
statesman	leader
foreman	supervisor
male nurse, female professor	nurse, professor

## Ethnicity

*Ethnic minority*, not minority ethnic or visible minority.

*Black, Asian and minority ethnic* can be used as a grouping and is abbreviated to BAME.

Black should be capitalised, see **Black** for more information.

The categories recommended by the UK government are as follows:

### White

English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British  
Irish  
Gypsy or Irish Traveller  
Any other white background

### Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups

White and Black Caribbean  
White and Black African  
White and Asian  
Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic background

### Asian / Asian British

Indian  
Pakistani  
Bangladeshi  
Chinese  
Any other Asian background

Black / African / Caribbean / Black British

African

Caribbean

Any other Black / African / Caribbean background

Other ethnic group

Arab

Any other ethnic group

It is important to remember that these are categories and, as such, may not encompass every group. People may describe themselves as belonging to a particular group that may, or may not, be covered by one of these categories.

The general principles to think about in any written communication are:

- Aim to use examples that reflect a broad range of identities and perspectives.
- Avoid labelling people whenever possible. If you must use a label, remember to call people what they prefer to be called. If in doubt just ask people what their preferred terminology is.
- Differences such as marital status, age, sexual orientation, racial and ethnic identity or the fact that a person has a disability should not be mentioned gratuitously. Think about whether they are relevant before you use them.
- Don't make assumptions about people's national origin or religious or linguistic background.
- Avoid the terms 'non-white' and 'coloured' as these display white ethnocentrism – deviation from the supposed norm.
- Use the term 'immigrant' appropriately: in the UK, it is often used incorrectly of people who are British nationals and have been born in the UK.

These terms are subject to change. If clarification is needed try Wikipedia: 'disability-related terms, with negative connotations' or [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

## Accessibility of designed materials

### Images and colours

- Avoid using photos that contain a lot of detail or in which the foreground and background are not well contrasted.
- Avoid putting text over images wherever possible.
- Images should be labelled or given a title.
- Contrast dark type against a light background as a general rule.

### Text

- Avoid using blocks of capital letters in titles or body text.
- Avoid italics, underlining, simulated handwriting and decorative typefaces.



- Font size 12 is considered to be the minimum size at which people can read comfortably.
- Make sure that sections and chapters are clearly defined with headings.

See also the visual identity and image library user guidelines on the intranet.

## Writing tips

### Nominalisations

Nominalisations are abstract nouns, formed from either a verb or adjective. When used instead of verbs or adjectives:

sentences become longer and more wordy  
the writing can become dull and sound as if nothing much is happening  
the verbs used are weak (was, were) and reduce impact

Try to avoid using them. Examples of nominalisations are below.

Use	Avoid
Fail	Failure
Introduce	Introduction
Arranged	Arrangement
Creative	Creativity
Reasonable	Reasonableness
Precise	Precision
We <b>discussed</b> the job situation	We had a discussion about the job situation
The government <b>failed to solve</b> the problem.	There was a failure by the government to solve the problem
The company needs to <b>consider reducing</b> costs.	The company needs to consider a reduction of costs
The team's role is to <b>define problems and resolve them.</b>	The team's role is to perform problem definition and resolution
The insurers have <b>notified</b> us that they wish to reassure the tenants' policy.	Notification has been received from the insurers that they wish to reissue the tenants' policy

### Active writing

Similarly to nominalisations, passive writing can make sentences longer and more wordy, and writing can become dull.

Writing in the active voice means constructing sentences where the subject acts or is doing.

Many students attended the event  
Researchers covered topics including...

Writing in the passive voice means constructing sentences where the subject is being acted on.

The event was attended by many students  
The topics that were covered by researchers included...

### Latinate words

While it isn't wrong to use Latinate words in your writing, they can make sentences longer and overcomplicated. Try to stick to words that are sharper, shorter and more concise.

Instead of...	Try...
Utilise	Use
Endeavour	Try
Assistance	Help
Exhausted	Tired out
Necessity	Need
Aggregate	Total
Rigorous	Hard / thorough
Variation	Mix
Facilitate	Enable / make possible
Subsequent	After
Terminate	End
Voluminous	Big / large
Configuration	Pattern
Convene	Bring together

### Simpler writing

Try to use as few words as possible – don't use three when one will do the job just as well.

Avoid	Use
a number of	several / some
afford an opportunity	provide / give
as a means of	for
at this point in time	currently / now
due to the fact that	because
during the period	when / between

has a requirement for	requires / needs
in a timely manner	soon
in accordance with	comply / following / under
in advance of	before
in regard to	about
in the event of	if
in the near future	soon
no later than 1 June	by 1 June
pertaining to	about
provides guidance for	guides
under the provisions of	according to
until such time as	until
with reference to	referring to / regarding
a large proportion of	a larger / a lot of
in conjunction with	with / alongside
with the exception of	except
prior to	before
in excess of	more than
commence	start
consequently	so
additional	extra
in order to	to

## Appendix

**Academy titles** – if abbreviated, please write out in full at first mention.

Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation (Africa Prize)  
 Connecting STEM Teachers (CST)  
 Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Group (DILG)  
 Graduate Engineering Engagement Programme (GEEP)  
 Education for Engineering (E4E)  
 Engineering Leaders Scholarships (ELS)  
 Engineering the Future (EtF)  
 Frontiers of Engineering for Development  
 Frontiers of Development  
 Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)  
 Global Grand Challenges Summit (GGCS)  
 Higher Education Partnerships in sub-Saharan Africa (HEP SSA *with a space*)  
 Industrial Fellowships *not* Industrial Fellowships Scheme

*Ingenia*

*Ingenious*

Leaders in Innovation Fellowships (LIF)

(2020) MacRobert Award *not* MacRobert award (2020)

National Engineering Policy Centre

Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering (QEPrize)

Royal Academy of Engineering (the Academy)

*This is Engineering*