

# SWVG style guide

## General principles

### Design

- The SWVG logo goes in the middle of the top of the first page **except** on headed letters, where it goes on the right.
- The SWVG font is Calibri.
- 12 point font in all documents and printed material (larger for headlines – see below).
- Justify (align) text to the left. Do not centre or right hand justify. This applies to headings too.
- Use single spacing.
- Set spacing between paragraphs of text at 6pt. Don't add an extra line.
- Printed material - posters, flyers, leaflets - have their own design rules so these rules do not apply to them.

### Writing

- Write in short sentences in plain English. (See the Plain English Campaign for help How to write in plain English; The A-Z of alternative words)
- Break up text into paragraphs, with headings.
- Avoid exclamation marks and unnecessary capital letters. See 'capitalisation' below). Never use CAPITALS for emphasis. They make it harder to read and for those used to social media, it feels like shouting. Bold and italics are both acceptable ways to emphasise.
- Never use underlining for emphasis – it risks confusion with hyperlinks.
- Avoid unnecessary full stops – so it is Dr Jones, Mrs Simpson, e.g., etc.

### Headings

- Use headings to break text up and to help the reader follow your argument.
- Headings should be in bold, not underlined nor in italics.
- If you have headings and subheadings, increase their size by 2pt as you go.
- If you want a bigger gap above or below a heading, change the spacing to 12pt. Don't add an extra line.

**Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group** *Working with asylum seekers and refugees*

**Patrons:** Miriam Margolyes OBE, John Pilkington, Dr Shirley Firth

**Registered 2019 as a charitable incorporated organisation:** 1183558

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## A-Z of rules

### Accents

Use on foreign names but not on accented words that have passed into English like café.

### Acronyms

Use the abbreviated form of a title without explanation only if there is no chance of any misunderstanding eg **UN, Nato, BBC**. Otherwise, spell it out in full at first reference, or introduce a label eg **the public sector union Unite**.

Where you would normally pronounce the abbreviation as a string of letters - an initialism - use all capitals with no full stops or spaces eg **FA, UNHCR, NUT**. However, use lower case with an initial cap for acronyms where you would normally pronounce the set of letters as a word e.g. **Aids, Nafta, Nasa, Opec, Apec**.

### Asylum seeker

Use "someone / people seeking sanctuary" in preference to "asylum seeker" unless you need to be specific about their status. Avoid the word 'client' because its meaning is unclear. Some asylum-seekers are in touch with SWVG but do not have a visitor.

### Brackets

Use square, not round brackets, for interpolations within quotes eg: **Reacting to the news, Mr Smith said: "He [President Brown] must not back down."**

### Britain

(aka **Great Britain**) is made up of England, Scotland and Wales; **the United Kingdom** also includes Northern Ireland. **The British Isles** also include the Republic of Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. However, it is a term that can be frowned on in Ireland, so if using it ensure it is employed correctly.

### by-election and by-law

with hyphen

### Capitalisation

A few titles are always capped up, whether you name the person or not eg the Queen, the Pope, Archbishop of XX but our style generally is to minimise the use of capital letters.

Political job titles have initial caps only when the title is next to the name, in whatever order. Thus: **The Foreign Secretary, Harold Thomas, said...**

Any post mentioned without reference to the post-holder should be in lower case eg **The prime minister will be out of the country for several days.**

Also use lower case for all jobs outside politics, with or without a name eg **the director general of the BBC, Michael Graves, has praised the England cricket captain.**

Use initial cap Parliament with reference only to (a) Westminster in any context, and (b) the Scottish and European Parliaments where you are giving the full title. Otherwise, lower case eg Mrs Gordon will face questions in Parliament. There is to be an emergency session of the Scottish Parliament. They say they will halt proceedings of parliament in Strasbourg.

Use caps for Department of Education but not for the education department.

## Christian

Do not use "Christian name" when you mean "given name".

## Citizens Advice

ie initial caps and no apostrophe. Changed its name in 2015 from Citizens' Advice Bureau.

## Collective nouns

Use singular verbs as often as possible unless it sounds odd. But the police are always treated as plural.

Groups of people: avoid terms like 'the blind' or 'the disabled' and write 'blind people' etc. Use 'business people' or 'firefighters', not a description like 'businessmen' or 'firemen' unless they really are all men.

## Commas

Used properly, commas can eliminate ambiguity and make blocks of text more digestible - especially important when you are converting the spoken word into copy.

But they can also create unnecessary clutter and may often be avoided, eg by not including a definite article with a title (**Foreign Secretary Erica Simmons protested...** rather than "The Foreign Secretary, Erica Simmons, protested...").

Neither are they needed where you are using a "job description" - whether it fits more than one person eg **Footballer David Jones has been taken to hospital** or one specific individual eg **England football captain Roy Rover has...**

If you use commas when giving both name and label, there must be a comma at the beginning and the end. eg: **Caroline Horrill, leader of Winchester Council, said....**

## Contractions

Do not use contractions such as "don't", "isn't", "can't" (except in direct quotes). Spell it out: do not, is not, cannot etc.

## Councillor

Always lower case. Refer to county, borough, town and parish councillors by their usual honorific ie Mr/Mrs/Ms, rather than Coun or Cllr.

## Currencies

We say: 50p; £5; £60; £3m; £500m; £6bn; £20bn; £15tn

## Direct quotes

Use double quotation marks.

Punctuation: with complete sentences, the closing quotation marks go after the full stop. With a single word or phrase, the quotation marks go before the full stop. Where part of a quote has been omitted, use triple dots with a space **after** the last dot eg: "**The quality of mercy is not strained... it is twice blest.**"

## Infinitives

The infinitive form of a verb eg: "to go" is usually best without a word in the middle eg: "to boldly go". But there is no ban on split infinitives. Use them when they are the best way of saying what is to be said.

## MP

(Member of Parliament) ie both in capitals, no full-stops, no gap. Plural: **MPs**. It should be lower case "member" in sentences such as **She is one of two new members from Hampshire.**

## Neither

usually takes a singular verb eg: **Neither Mr Brown nor Mrs Green was at the meeting.** The exception is where at least one of the alternatives in the sentence is a plural - in which case the verb is also pluralised eg: **Neither Mr Brown nor the opponents of the measure are going to pursue the issue.**

## Newspaper titles

Use lower case for the definite article at the start of a newspaper title, whether or not it is part of the masthead. Hence, **the Sun, the Daily Telegraph, the Times.** In newspaper reviews **only**, the title (but not the definite article) is in bold at first mention.

## No-one

ie with a hyphen.

## Numbers

For the most part, we use words for single-figure numbers, digits for anything above nine ie **eight, nine, 10, 11** - except with abbreviated units of measurement eg: **3kg** and with percentages eg: **4%**.

This applies to heights, weights etc, unless the following unit is an abbreviation eg: **They walked two miles (3.22km); The troops are 20 miles (32km) from Baghdad; The child weighed less than two stone (12.7kg) at the time of his death.**

Never start a sentence with digits eg: **Fifty MPs have been expelled; Four per cent of the patients have died.**

In headings we can use numerals even for numbers below 10, as in **Boy, 8, hurt in rollercoaster crash** or **Pound falls to 5-year low.**

## **Parliament/parliament**

The initial capital is always retained when referring to Westminster. Otherwise, it is used only in an official title eg: **The Scottish Parliament was the scene of a fierce debate.** But: **The parliament in Edinburgh is to be recalled for an emergency session.** And: **The Dutch parliament sits in The Hague.**

The adjective **parliamentary** should always be lower case, unless it is part of a proper name.

## **Parliamentary Commissioners/Ombudsmen**

As with ministerial job titles, use capitals when used in conjunction with the name of the office-holder. Otherwise, lower case. So: **Philip Jones was appointed Parliamentary Commissioner to succeed Elizabeth Smith** and **The constituents complained to the parliamentary ombudsman that they had been inadequately represented by their MP.**

## **People**

“people” not “individuals”.

“humanity” or “people” not “mankind” or “man”.

## **Percentages**

Our usual style is to use digits - even with numbers we would normally write out as words eg: **8%**, but a percentage should be expressed in words if it comes at the beginning of a sentence eg: **Ten per cent of the budget will be devoted to the war effort.**

There is no such thing as a percent, so don't say "half a per cent" - it should be **a half per cent** or **half of one per cent.**

And there is a distinction between percentages and percentage points. If an exam pass rate goes up from 80% to 100%, this is a **rise of 20 percentage points** - and **not** "a rise of 20%" - because 20% of 80 is 16. Be aware that official sources often get this wrong.

## **Picture captions**

Picture captions should be one or two lines long - ideally one on desktop. Avoid going to three on mobile. Occasionally captions in picture galleries might be longer.

The wording should follow the geography of a picture, from left to right eg: if Smith is on the left and Jones on the right, the caption should not say "Jones and Smith".

A caption should not be a literal description of the picture - that is the function of an alt tag. It's important to give the reader enough information to understand what they are looking at independently of the alt tag, while also adding value eg: **Smith and Jones: Lifelong friends.**

## PM

Can be used to mean "prime minister" in headlines, but should be written out in stories.

## Political parties

The word "party" has a capital P when it belongs to a title eg: **the Labour Party** but is lower case if the full name is dropped eg: **The vote represented a new low in the party's fortunes.**

## Political titles

Political job titles - including all members of a government - have initial capitals only when the title is used next to the individual, in whatever order eg: **UK Prime Minister Glenda Goodwin Foreign Secretary David Jones; Harry Smith, the Home Secretary; Mr Curran, who has been prime minister since 2015.**

Any post mentioned without reference to the post-holder should be in lower case e.g: **The prime minister will be out of the country for several days.**

Similarly, **Leader of the Opposition** is in capitals only if accompanied by the name.

## Practice/practise

Use with care. The noun is practice; the verb is practise - eg: **The players hold a practice every Monday. They practise for two hours.**

## Private member's bill

ie lower case. Apostrophe before the "s" where only one MP is involved eg: **A private member's bill often falls at the first hurdle.** Otherwise, apostrophe after the "s" eg: **The ballot for private members' bills will be held on Monday.**

## Quotation marks

**These should be single:**

in headlines and cross-heads (eg: **UK 'to leave EU'**); in **promos** and for **quotes within quotes** eg: **Tom Bone said: "They say, 'The Labour Party is finished' before every election."** and inside quote boxes eg: **They sprayed 'go home' on our front door – Sandra Harris.**

In headlines where the attribution is clear, do not include unnecessary quote marks eg **Britain won't hold referendum, says PM** rather than Britain 'won't hold referendum', says PM.

**These quotation marks should be double:**

outside the categories listed above - on the ticker, in regular text, summaries and picture captions. Also, at first use of phrases such as "mad cow disease" or "road rage". But quotation marks will be single if the phrase comes inside a direct quotation eg: **The minister said: "The spread of 'mad cow disease' has ruined thousands of lives."** Either way, no punctuation is required after the first reference.

**No quotation marks** are required for film, TV or song titles. Use initial capitals to indicate that it is a title eg: **Madonna's early chart-toppers include Into the Groove and La Isla Bonita.**

When referring to a nickname or similar, it is either lower case and quotes or capitals and no quotes, eg **Mrs Thatcher was known as the Iron Lady.**

## **Semi-colons**

are best avoided. They are difficult to read on screen.

## **Spelling**

As a general rule, refer to the Oxford English Dictionary - and where there is an option choose the first use - hence, say **protester** and not "protector", **medieval** and not "mediaeval", **focused/focusing** and not "focussed/focussing").

One exception is that we use "...ise" rather than "...ize" – hence, **recognise** and not "recognize"; **specialise** and **not** "specialize". It is also our style not to use "x" in the middle of a word where there is an alternative spelling of "ct" - hence, **inflection** and **not** "inflexion"; **reflection** - and **not** "reflexion"; **connection** - and **not** "connexion".

## **TV**

ie capitals not "tv".

## **UNHCR**

ie all capitals. It refers to the office of **the UN High Commissioner for Refugees** - and **not** "the UN High Commission for Refugees", which does not exist. The **UN refugee agency** is a useful short form for intros, but it should be spelled out later in the story.

## **Unicef**

ie initial capital only (it stands for **United Nations Children's Fund**).

## **Underlining**

Never use underlining for emphasis – it risks confusion with hyperlinks. If necessary, use bold or italics.

## **web, the**

ie lower case.

## **website**

ie one word, and lower case.

**For further help, see <https://www.bbc.co.uk/academy/en/collections/news-style-guide>**

## Version control

		Notes
Version number	1	
Author	<i>Communications Group</i>	Main author Jenny Cuffe
Date approved by trustees	<i>February 2019</i>	With tiny tweaks by Chris Holloway Aug 2019
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