

ATHENA PRESS HOUSE STYLE FOR AUTHORS

INTRODUCTION

This document is an abridged version of the house style that our editors, typesetters and proof-readers use. It should help to explain why certain changes are made during the editorial process. If you would like further details please download the full House Style or consult the editorial department. Please be aware that all manuscripts will be put into a standard format before editing.

It should be noted that the following reference books should be used in addition to our house style:

The Concise Oxford Dictionary, Tenth Edition

The Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors

The Oxford Dictionary of Style

The Cambridge Guide to Copy-editing

Where there is any conflict between these resources on a specific point, the *COD* should be adhered to on the occasions where advice is not given in the house style.

For US English texts, refer to:

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition

The Chicago Manual of Style, Fourteenth Edition

POINTS OF HOUSE STYLE

LIST OF CONTENTS

As a general rule, academic texts should have a list of contents. Where fiction is concerned, the use of contents pages should be limited. It may be necessary to include a list of contents for a collection of poetry or short stories, but for a novel, it should rarely be needed, particularly if chapters are untitled.

CHAPTERS

Where chapters are titled, there is no need to number them.

QUOTATIONS

There are two main types of quotations: displayed (or indented) quotations are lengthy extracts that will be formatted to look distinctive from the surrounding text and which do not, therefore, require speech marks; non-displayed quotations are short extracts that remain within the body text but are enclosed in speech marks.

Quotation Marks

Use single quotation marks, with doubles inside singles, for UK English. In US English, this should be reversed.

Thus single quotation marks are used to indicate:

- i) that the author wishes to distance him/herself from the attitudes implicit in the word(s) being used (sneer quotes):
- ii) to indicate that although the author is using the word(s) he knows it is incorrect or being used incorrectly, often quoting from someone's earlier speech:
- iii) to draw attention to the word itself, esp. when talking about that word '——':

Thought Layout

Quotation marks should not be used to indicate thought, as this can be confused with speech. Instead, thought should be introduced or concluded with a comma.

Italics can be used as an alternative if it will be unclear to the reader that thought is being used but this should be applied consistently throughout the text:

BREAKS IN NARRATIVE

Narrative breaks are used to indicate a shift in time/space/scene where a complete chapter break is inappropriate.

A text might be littered with minor shifts in time or place, and these should be denoted by space only, with no asterisk.

A single centred asterisk with spacing before and after should be used to indicate substantial changes – usually to time *and* place.

CAPITALISATION

The following things only should have initial capitals:

- i) Proper nouns
- ii) Names and titles – e.g. Mr
- iii) Professions when the title is a part of their name – e.g. Judge Robert Jones; Robert Jones, the famous judge. Also when the title is used instead of the person's name – e.g. 'the President said'.

Please note: 'Helen went to fetch her mother' but 'Helen went to fetch Mother', the former being a common noun and the latter a proper noun.

In poetry please make sure the use of capitals is consistent, either as for prose or with initial capitals at the beginning of every line, depending on the author's preference.

APOSTROPHES

It's means it is.

Its means belonging to it.

Helen's means either belonging to Helen or Helen is, depending on the context.

Words ending in 's' when in the possessive should have apostrophe 's'. However, there are instances where the use of apostrophe 's' in this case can become confusing (where words have multiple syllables). See the extract below from Judith Butcher's *Copy-Editing* (p.155):

The inclusion or omission of the possessive s should be decided on the grounds of euphony; this means that some possessives will have an s and some will not, but systems differ. *Hart's Rules* (39th edn, p. 31) recommend that in English names 's should be used in all monosyllables and disyllables, in longer words accented on the penultimate syllable, and in other longer words where it sounds right; however, the s is usually omitted when the last syllable of the name is pronounced iz: Bridges', Moses' but James's, Thomas's.

The Oxford Style Guide addresses this problem in much more detail, and if you are uncertain about a particular word in this case, please refer to it.

Please pay attention to whether an 's' at the end of a word is plural or possessive. One of the most common mistakes is with children. Children is a plural noun; therefore 'belonging to children' or 'for children' is written children's. Also, 'their neighbour's door' when there is one neighbour and one front door; 'their neighbours' door' when there are two or more neighbours at one address and with one front door; 'their neighbours' doors' when there is more than one neighbour at more than one address.

COLLECTIVE NOUNS

A collective noun – e.g. public, family, government – takes the singular: e.g. 'The Government is expected to win the vote by a considerable majority.'

CONTRACTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

In UK English conventions, when contractions – i.e. the *first and last letters* of a word – are used – e.g. Mr or St – no period is required but note that when 'Mount' is contracted (often on maps) a period is used: e.g. Mt. St Helens.

When abbreviations – i.e. the *first letters or syllable* of a word – are used – e.g. Rev. or Prof. – a period is required. Periods are not required in acronyms – e.g. MPs. Also, please note that when an acronym is used in the plural, MPs, it does not require an apostrophe: *MPs* means *more than one MP*; *MP's* means *belonging to the MP*; *MPs'* means *belonging to the MPs*.

In both US and UK English, all organisations, countries, etc. that are normally known by their initials – such as USA, RAF, UN, UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees), ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) or USAF – do not require periods.

HYPHENS, EN DASHES AND EM DASHES

It's important to differentiate between the hyphen [-], the en-dash [–] and the em-dash [—]. Though they are each covered in the house style, here are a few quick pointers. Hyphens are used for hyphenated words such as 'grown-up' and 'twenty-three'. They are also used in an attributive sense, such as 'a pre-apartheid South Africa' and 'four-year-old girl' (though note that 'the girl is four years old').

An en-dash is used in UK English for parenthetical asides, to replace an introductory colon or introduce a phrase at the end of a sentence. They should have a space on either side.

An em-dash is used to indicate interrupted speech or a deliberate deletion. These are always closed on at least one side.

In US English em-dashes are used in place of en-dashes and are closed on both sides.

Note that double quote marks should be used when something is quoted or emphatic quotes are used inside speech.

ELLIPSES

These should consist of three unspaced dots only, used to indicate trailing off or missing material from quotations or in speech. Ellipses function as terminating punctuation; therefore no full stop is required after an ellipsis.

EXCLAMATION MARKS

Only one exclamation mark should be used at any one time. Exclamation marks should not be used in conjunction with question marks.

SPACES

Single spaces should always be used between words and sentences. Double spaces should *never* be used.

ISE/IZE

It is Athena Press's house style to use '-ise' spelling for UK English texts. '-ize' endings are used for US English texts.

OK

OK should always be used: *not* Okay, Ok, or ok.

POLITICAL TERMS

Initial capitals should be used for terms denoting a generally understood politico-economic concept:

Third World

Initial capitals should also be used for specific events:

the Great War

World War I

First World War (note that 'first world war' is also acceptable should you wish to use it; consistency, as always, is paramount)

the Cold War (but 'a cold war')

Looser terms of imprecise definition, such as 'the developing world', 'the developed world', 'the industrialised countries', should not be capitalised.

NUMBERS

As a general rule, all numbers up to and including one hundred should be written out in words. However, common sense should be used on this point, as there is clearly a difference between the requirements of a novel and those of a scientific text, for example. The individual style of the text should be taken into account and consistency should be maintained throughout.

COPYRIGHT

See the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act for more information.¹

(Much of the information included in this section was provided by The Publishing Training Centre at Book House, Wandsworth.)

Copyright is a property right. To steal copyright is theft and is punishable by imprisonment.

There is no copyright in ideas when these are verbal, only when they are written down.

The basic rule of copyright is that it lasts for the duration of the author's life plus seventy years.

It is always safest to seek permission to reproduce material, simply as a point of courtesy. It should also be noted here that copyright in Crown and parliamentary works lasts for 125 years.

DEFAMATION

See Jones and Benson, Publishing Law, tenth edition for more information, or ask a member of the editorial team.

Defamation is libel (permanent form, usually written) and slander (spoken form).

This is a very sensitive area, since it is not necessary even to name a person in order to libel them. As long as an individual is recognisable to themselves or to someone else, that is enough to take the matter to court.

¹ http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1988/Ukpga_19880048_en_1.htm