



COPY-EDITING GUIDELINES

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These guidelines have been constructed using a variety of sources. My thanks particularly go to BlueSci alumni Helen Stimpson and Jonathan Zwart, who worked on previous editions of this document. Also, the style guide below is a work in progress; pleased do suggest both amendments and new inclusions.

Tim Middleton, BlueSci President, October 2011

GENERAL ADVICE FOR COPY-EDITORS

The purpose of copy-editing is to check facts, ensure articles read smoothly and apply our house style in order to achieve consistency. We want the magazine to look as professional as we can make it. This means as few typos as possible and a coherent style across different issues of the magazine.

No two copy-editors will make the same set of corrections. It is also easy for two editors to miss a correction. Ideally, at least three people should copy-edit each article. Use different coloured ink and initial and date the top of the first page.

Don't sweep uncertainty under the carpet. If in doubt, ask or check. If still in doubt, flag it up on the copy. If you disagree with a previous copy-editor's correction, consider carefully changing it.

Use your brain. If you know something to be factually incorrect, misleading, unclear or unethical, tell the Issue Editor.

RESOURCES

OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY (OED)

<http://www.oed.com>

This is the place to start with all spelling queries (except on 's' and 'z'—we use the English 'specialised' rather than the American 'specialized'). Cambridge subscribes to the OED so you should be able to access it online when in Cambridge, or externally via a VPN connection.

TIMES STYLE GUIDE

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/tools_and_services/specials/style_guide/

This is a comprehensive and invaluable resource. This should be the first port of call for any questions not answered by the style guide below.

BLUESCI STYLE GUIDE

Addenbrooke's	Should always be 'Addenbrooke's Hospital'.
Apostrophe	A good rule is: replace with the genitive, put the apostrophe at the end, and then remove the genitive, e.g. the Romans ditches; the ditches of the Romans; the ditches of the Romans'; the Romans' ditches (the final form is the correct one).
Approximately	Don't use a symbol. 'Approximately' rather than '~'.
Author's Details	When giving details about an undergraduate author, '2nd year undergraduate' is fine, as opposed to writing out 'second year undergraduate'.
<i>BlueSci</i>	In italics and all as one word, but with a capital B and a capital S.
Book Names	Names in italics.
Capital Letters	For usage after a colon, see <i>colon</i> .
Centuries	The style is: 3 rd century BC, 19 th century etc; and adjectivally with a hyphen: 20 th -century architecture.
Colon	Do not use a capital letter after a colon unless the word is a proper noun (i.e. would be capitalised ordinarily).
Company Names	Shouldn't be in italics or quotation marks. Just use a capital letter at the start.
Compound Words	Refer to the OED in the first instance. Exception: a third year scientist rather than a third-year scientist.
Contractions	Standard contractions, such as 'don't', 'I'll', 'I'm' or 'you're' are fine. More informal ones or overuse of the standard ones is best avoided. This is a bit subjective, but go with what feels sensible.
Dashes	Use a hyphen between words (heart-wrenching), an <i>en</i> dash in a number range (1990–1995) and an <i>em</i> dash to separate a phrase in a sentence with no spaces (...sixty-four-crayon Crayola box—including the gold and silver crayons—and would not let me look closely at the box). Never put spaces on either side of a dash.
Dates	Day, month, year, e.g. 28 th July 2004.
Departments	Department of Biochemistry not Biochemistry Department.

Diseases	Do not have a capital letter unless they are named after a person, e.g. hepatitis or Parkinson's.
Dr	No full stop afterwards. The same applies to any contraction ending with the original end letter.
Drug Names	Not italicised. Begin with a capital letter if it's a registered name, e.g. Prozac. However, generic names like aspirin or paracetamol don't start with a capital letter. No need to use registered trademark or copyright symbols.
e.g.	Avoid this. Write out 'for example' instead.
Ellipsis	Use just three dots... If it's at the end of a sentence, follow it with a space. If it's in the middle of a sentence, don't use a space.
Email Addresses	Use generic rather than personal email addresses where possible.
etc.	Do not use this!
Exclamation Marks	Only to be used in very exceptional circumstances. Most of the time, avoid them.
Farther or further?	Use "farther" for physical distance and "further" for metaphorical or figurative distance.
Films	Names in italics.
Full Stops	These are followed by a single space.
Gene Names	In italics. Be careful: genes have the same name as the protein they encode. The name of the gene should be in italics, but the protein shouldn't be. If in doubt ask a biologist!
i.e.	Avoid this. Write 'that is' instead.
Initials	Without full stops i.e. THB, not T.H.B.
Inverted Commas	See <i>quotation marks</i> .
Ions	'Calcium ions' rather than 'Ca ²⁺ '.
Journal Names	Names in italics.
Less Than	'Less than' rather than '<'.
Measurements	See <i>units</i> .
More Than	'More than' rather than '>'.

Numbers	Write out as text if the number is nine or less, use digits from 9–999,999 (unless a measured unit, see <i>units</i> , or a percentage, see <i>per cent</i>). Then use 2 million, 45.6 million etc. (note the spaces). Use commas to separate thousands e.g. 26,000 or 2,000. Hyphenate when used as an adjective, e.g. a two-hour lecture. At the start of a sentence, write the number out in words.
Oxford Comma	Although this is largely an Americanism, this is also a case of common sense. If possible avoid a comma before the conjunction preceding the final item in a list. But if it is significantly clearer to use one, then it is a sufficiently grey area that it can be allowed!
Per Cent	Always use with digits rather than words i.e. ‘3 per cent’ not ‘three per cent’. See <i>numbers</i> . Use decimals rather than fractions. Always write out ‘per cent’ rather than % or ‘pc’.
Planets	Capitals, including the Earth, Jupiter and Mars, but not the moon, sun or stars.
PhD	This is where the capital letters go!
Publication Names	Names in italics.
Quotation Marks	Direct quotations must be in double quotation marks e.g. Helen asked, “where’s my notebook?” If the quote is a full sentence (as in the example) then the punctuation goes inside the quotation marks. If you quote part of a sentence, the punctuation comes after the final quotation mark e.g. Jon said he’d had a “disastrous day”. Use single inverted commas when so-called could be substituted for the marks e.g. ‘designer babies’ are controversial—but use them sparingly. If they are used, continue to use inverted commas whenever this phrase crops up in the rest of the article. Single inverted commas should also be used for quotations within quotations.
‘S’ or ‘Z’	See <i>spelling</i> .
Scepticism	‘Scepticism’ is an attitude of doubt towards something (in the UK), whereas ‘skepticism’ is a formal philosophical stance.
Scientific Names	When employing Latin terminology, use a capital letter for the first word and lower case thereafter e.g. <i>Homo sapiens</i> . They should also be italicised in all but the most well known cases. And if anything deserves italics, a common name is needed so people know what’s being talked about.
Semi-colons	Up to you; just try not to overdo it.

Spelling	The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) is the default for all spelling-related queries. However, there is one major exception: surprisingly the OED tends to default to 'z' over 's'. We use 's' e.g. specialised. Remember, we're British! So it's foetus, not fetus, and sulphur not sulfur. Be careful that spell-check is set to UK and not US.
Symbols	Don't use them! 'Less than' rather than '<', 'more than' rather than '>' and 'approximately' rather than '~' etc.
That	The standard rule requires that you use 'that' only to introduce a restrictive (or defining) relative clause, which identifies the person or thing being talked about; in this use it should never be preceded by a comma. 'That' defines the subject and is not preceded by a comma; 'which' describes the subject, and is preceded by a comma. If you're unsure, you should use 'which' if the following text is not essential to the sentence and 'that' if it is. Examples: "The American universities that have high levels of funding do better research." ... "The American universities, which have high levels of funding, do better research."
Times	We do not use a 24-hour clock. Times should be given as 6.30pm or 9am. Note that there are no spaces or full stops.
Titles	All words except articles, conjunctions and prepositions should have a capital letter at the start, and the first word should have a capital letter whatever it is. This applies to the titles of talks and events within text as well as the actual titles of articles.
TV Shows	Names in italics.
UK	No full stops.
Units	Write units out in full e.g. 300 nanometres. Actual measurements should always be given as digits even if they are less than 10 (see <i>numbers</i>), e.g. 6 centimetres or 0.02 metres. Use micrometre over micron. Use a space between the number and unit, except: 80% or 10°C.
Universe	Capital "U" in a planetary context and lowercase "u" in phrases such as "he became the centre of her universe".
University	University of Cambridge not Cambridge University. Use capital letters for University of Cambridge, University of Leeds etc. Use a capital 'U' when referring to the University of Cambridge as the University e.g. the magazine will be distributed across the University, but magazines are being distributed to several universities.
US	No full stops.
<i>Varsity</i>	In italics.

Which

See *that*.

Web Addresses

In italics. Simplify the link as far as possible. And remember to remove the hyperlink formatting!

'Z' or 'S'

See *spelling*.