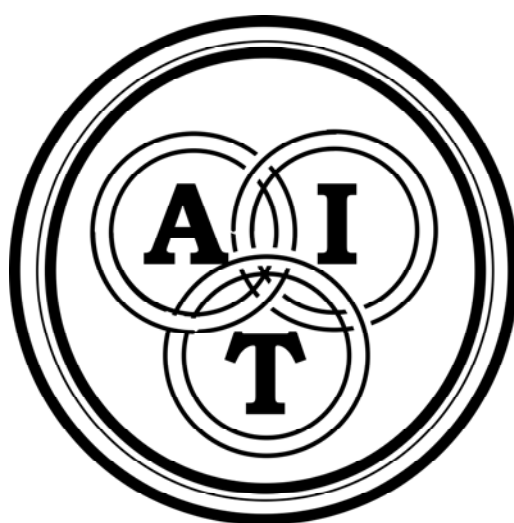


Alliance Internationale De Tourisme



Guidelines on
ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS
applied at the AIT

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1. Introduction

This is a list of conventions to be used by those writing in English or translating into English at the AIT. These conventions are a guide to the linguistic norms preferred in written English at the AIT, but do not deal with terminology.

The matters dealt with in this guide concentrate on those areas which are most likely to cause difficulty or areas in which it would be desirable to have a certain consistency. In no way is it exhaustive, and for the purpose of simplicity has been kept to a manageable size.

2. Spelling

Use Standard British English spelling, as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary and the Oxford Guide to the English Language.

e.g. write:

colour not *color* (*labour*, etc.)

programme not *program* (except when program is used with reference to computers)

organize, *legalize*, etc.

Doubled consonants

There is sometimes confusion as to whether a consonant should be doubled in an inflected verb form. The dictionary usually gives guidance, otherwise the rule of thumb is: double the consonant where the stress is on the immediately preceding syllable; if the stress is not on that syllable, do not double the consonant.

Thus:

focus, *focusing*, *focused*

benefit, *benefiting*, *benefited*

offer, *offering*, *offered*

but:

permit, *permitting*, *permitted*

fulfil, *fulfilling*, *fulfilled*

refer, *referring*, *referred*

3. Punctuation

Unlike in French, in English there is never a space between punctuation and the word that precedes it.

a) Colons

Use lower case after a colon.

b) Commas

Commas (and all punctuation) can be overused. Try to use commas only when necessary to avoid ambiguity. The use of commas is different in English and French. Commas are not used to indicate a pause in the reading of the sentence or to separate clauses. As a general rule there is no need to separate time clauses at the beginning of the sentence with a comma:

e.g. *In 1898 a small group of cyclists founded the...* (a comma would not change anything)

Nor is there usually a comma separating subject and verb:

The original report published by the Working Group, was amended several times.

There is a trend away from putting commas in addresses and at the beginning and end of letters (i.e. after *Dear Mr Jones* or *Yours sincerely/faithfully*).

Commas are also used to set off speech:

"You are going to London," he said.

He asked, "Why are you going to London?"

c) Full stops (periods)

No full stop is used after a contraction, e.g. *Ltd, Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr, St (Saint), vs*

A full stop is used after a true abbreviation, e.g. *Inc., fig., St. (street), etc.*

No full stops in weights, measures or numbers, e.g. *lb, kg, oz, bn, m*

No full stops in acronyms (*NATO, GATT*), or in a sequence of capitals alone (*BBC, MA, UK, USA*).

Full stops are used where all letters are lower case and each letter stands for a word: e.g., *p.a., (pp. and ff. only take one full stop).*

A full stop is only used at the end of a true sentence, not in titles of articles or tables, etc.

d) Quotation marks

Double quotation marks (") are used to designate speech, single ones (') to set off a word in a sentence or a quote within a quote.

The full stop (including the question mark and exclamation mark) comes either inside or outside the double quotation marks, depending on whether it belongs to the quotation or to the sentence. A good general rule to follow is that if the quoted words make a complete sentence the full stop is included within the quotation marks:

When asked for his opinion, he merely stated that the meeting was "useless".

He said, "I think this meeting is useless."

NB Do not use French quotation marks (« »). They don't exist in English!

e) Apostrophe

The apostrophe is used to indicate the omission of a letter as in *don't* or a possessive: *the car's wheels, the boss's office*. If the plural ends in 's' the possessive apostrophe is added just after it without an extra 's' as in: *ladies' shoes*.

The sentence:

Aardvark is spelt with two As

has no apostrophe because it indicates only a plural, same as:

In the late 1960s

f) Dash

There are three types of dash, called: the **hyphen** (-), the **en rule** (—), and the **em rule** (—). They differ in length and in usage.

The **en rule** is used principally to join two numbers (*the 1914–18 war*), but also to show a movement or tension between two words (*the Fischer–Spassky match, the London–Brighton route*) and is often equivalent to 'to' or 'versus'. It is also used for joint authors, e.g. *the Lloyd–Jones hypothesis* (two authors), distinct from *the Lloyd-Jones hypothesis* (one person with a double-barrelled name).

The **em rule** (dash) is used to mark an interruption in the structure of a sentence. A pair of them can be used to enclose a parenthetical remark: "*he was not – unlike his brother – much of a gossip.*"

4. Hyphening

a) Compound adjectives

Use a hyphen to link adjective with adjective (*red-hot*), noun with adjective (*sky-high*), adjective to participle (*easy-going*), noun with participle (*weight-carrying*), number with noun (*five-year period*), and adjective with noun (*top-rate, high-quality*).

Do not use a hyphen between an adverb and an adjective (*highly competitive*): the adverb naturally qualifies the word following it.

Exceptions: *well-*, *ill-* and a few other cases where an adjective and adverb form are the same and there might be confusion, (other adverbs and quasi-adverbs that are hyphenated: *little-known, much-needed, close-knit, oft-criticized, hard-fought*).

If in doubt, it is better to follow what you feel is right rather than trying to be grammatically correct.

b) Prefixes

A prefix is usually hyphenated when the second element begins with the same letter or when one may confuse it with another word or if it is likely to encourage mispronunciation:

re-enter

re-cover (to cover again) and *recover* (to return to health)

co-opt

However, certain very common words (*cooperate, coordinate, coexist*) are now considered to be entirely acceptable without the hyphen.

c) Points of the compass

Hyphen points of the compass, whether they are nouns or adjectives:

the south-east is opposite the north-west

south-easterly winds are dry

d) Fractions

Hyphen fractions:

two-thirds

four-fifths (both adjectives and nouns)

the boy is 10-and-a-half years old

e) Others

medium-term projects but *medium to long-term projects*

small and medium-sized companies

5. Capitalizing

In general, do not capitalize unless it is justified.

Region/Regional

When *Region* and *Regional* refer to the AIT Regions I, II, III, and IV, these words should be capitalized.

Titles

Capitalize titles when they are titles, i.e. before a person's name:

President Clinton

Queen Elizabeth

Paul Nouwen, President of AIT – (World) distinction unnecessary though it is necessary for *Rosario Alessi, President of AIT Region I.*

but:

The club has appointed a new president.

The two club presidents agreed to the arrangement.

The prime ministers of England and France have signed the agreement.

However, *Minutes* is capitalized, as is *Agenda*. It is also usual to capitalize *Chairman*, *Vice-Chairman*, and *Treasurer*.

Geography

Do not capitalize points of the compass unless they are part of a proper name:

South Africa, the North-West Territories, North America, South-East Asia,

but:

southern Africa, western Europe, central and eastern Europe.

However, do capitalize:

the West, Western companies (because here *the West* is being referred to as a geopolitical entity).

Note also:

the Continent and Continental,

but:

the continent of Europe, and continental Europe.

Titles and subtitles

Do not capitalize the following:

presidential

federal

government (but *the Clinton Administration* for the USA)

Capitalize the following:

Working Group (when referring to a specific group. *A working group would be set up but: the Working Group decided...*)

Directive

Agenda

Minutes

6. Word divisions

UK usage:

It is ugly to divide a word two letters from the beginning or two letters from the end and it makes the word difficult to read.

It is usually best to divide a word after a vowel e.g. *hypo-/thetic*

In present participles take over *-ing* e.g. *divid-/ing, sound-/ing*

but divide:

chuck-/ling, trick-/ling and similar words between the consonants.

Generally, when two consonants or vowels come together divide between them
e.g. *dark-/ness, appreci-/ate*.

Divide endings such as *-cian, -sion* and *-tion* as *Gre-/cian, ascen-/sion, subtrac-/tion*.

7. Names of people and places

Use the English place name if one exists, unless it appears very antiquated or obscure (such as *Argovia* for *Aargau*).

In Switzerland and other bilingual countries, unless an English name exists, it is usual to use the local language name rather than the equivalents, for example:

Ticino (not *Tessin*)

Bern (preferable to *Berne* though this is not wrong)

Graubünden (not *Grisons*)

but:

Zurich (not *Zürich*)

NB:

Lake Zurich

Lake Lucerne

Lake Geneva

and:

Geneva Canton

Vaud Canton

as well as:

Kent County

New York State

Note that *US* is used as an adjective; the country is the *USA*. The same holds true of *UN*, the body is called the *UNO*.

8. Currencies

In English the abbreviation or symbol for currency always precedes the amount.

Use a gap after an abbreviation:

Sfr. 5,000
DM 34,000

There is no gap after a symbol:

\$5,000 (but *US\$ 5,000* needs a gap)
¥200,000

Only use *US\$* if there is the possibility of confusion or offence.

It is not usually necessary to write *Sfr. 20.00* when *Sfr. 20* will do. However, in contracts, legal texts and other texts requiring absolute precision, do write *Sfr. 20.00* (but never *Sfr. 20.-*).

When currencies are written as words, they are not capitalized:

the dollar
the ecu

but:

Ecu 20,000

and:

Deutschmark
Swiss francs

9. Words and figures

Use commas (e.g. *12,340* and *2,657*) this can be important when distinguishing the year *2020* from *2,020* — the context does not always make it clear. Use *million* and *billion* whenever there is space, otherwise '*m*' or '*bn*'. — '*Mio*' and '*bio*' do not exist in English as abbreviations of *million* and *billion*.

NB	a thousand x a thousand = a million	English and US
	a thousand x a million. = a billion	
	a million x a million = a trillion	
	mille x mille = un million	French
	mille x un million = un milliard	
	un million x un million = un trillion	

Per cent is written as two words. The noun is *percentage* (so do not write '*this is expressed as a percent*').

1993–94, rather than *1993/94* as in German

Write 1992–93, not 92–93 or '92–'93

Where there is an en rule between figures do not repeat currency symbols, or a percentage sign, etc. (but do leave gaps out):

£400–500

5–6%

However, if there is a word between the figures, the symbol should be repeated:

either 5% or 6%.

Write numbers out in full up to *nine*. Use figures from *10* upwards. However, be consistent, so write for example: '*7, 9, 18, 21, and 48*' where these appear together. Do not begin a sentence with an arabic numeral e.g. *87 people survived...*, write *Eighty-seven*.

When used with a symbol, numbers should nevertheless be written in figures:

3–4%, rather than *three to four%*.

Always use figures when talking about pages or where there is a unit of measurement:

4 tonnes or *p. 6*

NB a thousand kg = 1 metric ton or 1 tonne not 1 ton

10. Dates

Write:

Friday 21 October 1996 (no comma, no '*th*', no '*st*')
this is less clumsy than *Friday, October 21, 1996*.

Always avoid forms with only figures or abbreviations in text:

9.10.96 or *9/10/96*,

it could be confusing owing to differences in date/month positions in the USA/Scandinavia and the rest of the world.

When talking about decades, write either:

the sixties or *the 1960s*,

there is no apostrophe before the '*s*' as it is not there to mark a possessive.

11. Italics

Truly foreign words (i.e. not anglicized) need to be in italics (e.g. *Bundesland*)
Italics are used for the titles of books, journals, ships, pieces of music, paintings, plays.

Do not italicize: 'ad hoc', 'status quo', 'Bundesbank', and other words which are either anglicized or very commonly used.

12. Pages

p. for *page*, not *pg*

pp. for *pages*

f. or *ff.* for '*and following page*' or '*and following pages*'

In a text write *p. 4* rather than *page 4*

pp. 2–4 or *pp. 2 ff.*

13. Gender

In general, try to use non-sexist language. However, it should be natural, so try to avoid his/her combinations by formulating the sentence differently or using the plural where this is in keeping with the text. Avoid at all costs *they* or *their* in reference to a singular noun:

The participant should ask ~~their~~ spouse for support. (!)

14. Consistency

When making lists with bullets make sure that:

- after a colon the first letter remains lower case;
- there is a semi-colon at the end of each point;
- the end of the list closes with a full stop.

With long lists make sure that this consistency is adhered to as it can happen, especially with lists submitted from different sources, that there are differences which make the document inconsistent.

This applies to spelling as well: a document where *recognize* is spelt with an 's' in one paragraph and spelt with a 'z' in the following paragraph not only distracts the reader but also reflects badly on the publication. However, with a word such as

organization, which can be an integral part of the name of the organization in question, spell it the way preferred by the organization: e.g.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an organization with 29 member countries.