



# ENGLISH STYLE GUIDE





**SCOUTS**<sup>®</sup>  
Creating a Better World

© World Scout Bureau Inc.  
COMMUNICATIONS  
May 2018

World Scout Bureau  
Global Support Centre  
Kuala Lumpur

Suite 3, Level 17  
Menara Sentral Vista  
150 Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad  
Brickfields  
50470 Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

Tel.: + 60 3 2276 9000  
Fax: + 60 3 2276 9089

worldbureau@scout.org  
scout.org

Reproduction is authorized to  
National Scout Organizations and  
Associations which are members of  
the World Organization of the Scout  
Movement. Credit for the source  
must be given.

# **ENGLISH STYLE GUIDE**

# CONTENTS

---

BRITISH ENGLISH	6
PUNCTUATION	7
Stops	7
Comma	7
Colon and semi-colon	7
Percentage mark	8
Apostrophes for possessives	8
Ellipsis	9
Hyphenation	10
DATES	11
TIME	11
COMPASS POINTS	12
SEASONS	13
LISTS	13
QUOTES	14

BOOK TITLES	14
NUMBERS	15
RANKING	16
RANGES	16
FIGURES	17
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	17
JARGON AND BORROWED WORDS	19
CAPITALS	19
HEADINGS AND SUBHEADINGS	20
CONTRACTIONS	21
ACCENTS	21
SINGULAR OR PLURAL	22
WEB ADDRESSES/URLS	23
PHONE NUMBERS	23



## EN British English

British English is used for all official documents and publications. The one exception to this rule is in the spelling of the word “organisation” (singular and plural) where the American form “organization” with a “z” should be used, e.g. the World Organization of the Scout Movement, National Scout Organization, and Member Organization.

In all other instances, use suffixes such as -ise/-yse/-isation instead of -ize/-yze/-ization.

# ?! Punctuation

## Stops

Full stops (.), question marks (?), and exclamation marks (!), are always followed by only a single space.

## Comma

We use the Oxford comma for reasons of clarity. It is used before “and” or “or” and normally appears at the end of lists.

**For example:**

The Jamboree attracted participants from countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

## Colons and semi-colons

Apart from dashes (-), punctuation marks such as the colon (:) and semi-colon (;) come immediately after the preceding word.

Colons do not require the next word to start with a capital. They should also come immediately after the preceding word.

**For example:**

World Scout Education Congress: this was held in Hong Kong, at the BP International House.

## Percentage mark

Comes immediately after the preceding figure (20%) and is not spelt out.

## Apostrophes for possessives

The following are examples of how we should use apostrophes for possessives:

### Singular possessive

**For example:**  
the World Scout Bureau's report

### Singular possessive ending with s

**For example:**  
the census' reliability

### Plural possessive

**For example:**

the organisations' response = the response of the organisations (plural)

**Compare with:**

The organisation's response = the response of the organisation (singular)

Plural possessive ending with 's', e.g. Scouts' dedication

Plurals of abbreviations do not take an apostrophe, e.g. NSOs.

### Ellipsis

Use an ellipsis to show that some text is missing, usually from a quotation.

**For example:**

The WOSM Secretary General said: "We are in the business of creating opportunities..."

## Hyphenation

Hyphens should be used sparingly, but to good effect.

**For example:**

cross-cultural  
decision-making  
non-violence  
self-confidence  
well-being  
a three-day trip  
a 17-year-old Scout  
two four-hour sessions

These commonly used words are not hyphenated:

**For example:**

email  
grassroots  
website

Never hyphenate words in capitals.

Numbers take hyphens when they are spelled out. Fractions take hyphens when used attributively, but not when used as nouns.

**For example:**

twenty-eight  
two-thirds completed  
an increase of two thirds



## Dates

Always write dates in the following sequence, day-month-year. Don't use "st", "nd", or "th" in dates, just state the day, month, and year. Don't precede the number with "the".

**For example:**

21 November 1946

**For decades, use figures:**

60s or 1960s



## Time

Use the 24-hour system, write times with a colon between the hours and minutes, without adding "hrs" or "o'clock."

**For example:**

11:30

If using the 12-hour system, don't add ".00", and don't leave a space between the number and the "am" or "pm."

**For example:**

9am



## Compass points

No capitals for “north”, “north-west”, “north-western”, etc. unless it is a part of an administrative or political unit, or a distinct regional entity.

**For example:**

South Africa, Northern Ireland, southern Africa,  
northern France

Note, however, that “Central Europe”, “Southeast Asia”, and “Eastern Europe” are capitalised because the connotations are more political than geographic.

Compound compass points are hyphenated and, in official designations, each part is capitalised.

**For example:**

Asia-Pacific, South-West Germany,  
the North-West Frontier

Always abbreviate capitals without stops.

**For example:**

NW France



## Seasons

Some countries do not have four seasons, so specify the month or date. When referring to a season, do not capitalise the first letter.

**For example:**

spring, summer, autumn, winter



## Lists

Lists of bullet points (without main verbs) should be introduced by a full sentence and have the following features:

- introductory colon
- no initial capitals
- no semi-colon or comma after each item (very short items)

If all items listed are complete statements without a grammatical link to the introductory sentence, proceed as follows:

- introduce the list with a colon
- label each sentence with the appropriate bullet, number, or letter
- end each sentence with a full stop



## Quotes

Double quotation marks – “ ” – should be used for normal quotes, with single quotation marks – ‘ ’ – for further quotes or other relevant text within the quote.

**For example:**

The jury explained its decision as follows: “Brown won because he set a good example throughout his career.”

“The future of World Scouting is in safe hands,” he concluded. Davies said that “Scouting’s commitment to leadership shows our Movement at its best” and added that the oft-stated fear that it clashed with other activities was “plain wrong.”

The Secretary General said: “The President has informed me that he is ‘absolutely delighted’ with the progress achieved.”



## Book titles

Do not use quotation marks for the titles of books, documents, or anything else.

**For example:**

Scouting for Boys was published in 1908.

The World Safe from Harm Policy was approved at the 41<sup>st</sup> World Scout Conference.



## Numbers

Generally, numbers from zero to ten should be written in words and numbers, and those from 11 onwards in figures.

**For example:**

A total of seven countries.

Some 30 organisations participated in the event.

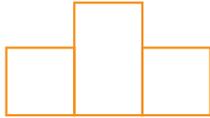
If possible, avoid beginning sentences with a figure. Try to turn the sentence around to avoid that. Sentences may, however, start with a year.

**For example:**

2013 has been an exciting time for Scouts all over the world.

A total of 32 National Scout Organizations were represented.

In all, 32 National Scout Organizations were represented.



## Ranking

Spell out words for “first”, “second” and so on up to “tenth”, use numbers and “st”, “nd”, “rd” or “th” for larger ordinal numbers. Remember to use superscript.

**For example:**

The first, second, and third prizes were won by the Scout group from Mexico.



## Ranges

Place a dash, “to”, or “and” between numbers and dates when stating ranges or time frames.

**For example:**

Rows 38–40 of the conference are at the back.

The World Scout Education Congress took place from 22 to 24 November 2017.

He served as Secretary General between 2007 and 2011.

010,101  
010.110

## Figures

For figures of more than three digits, use commas instead of apostrophes, decimal points, or spaces.

**For example:**

8,888  
25,147  
100,000,000



## Abbreviations and acronyms

For the names of programmes, places, and events, spell them out on the first mention and use their abbreviations from then on.

**For example:**

Adults in Scouting – AiS  
Asia-Pacific Scout Region – APR  
Interamerica Scout Region – IAR  
Jamboree On The Air-Jamboree On The Internet – JOTA-JOTI  
Kandersteg International Scout Centre – KISC  
Messengers of Peace – MoP  
Safe from Harm – SfH  
Scouts of the World Award – SW Award  
World Scout Committee – WSC  
World Scout Conference – WSCConf  
World Scout Education Congress – WSEC  
World Scout Environment Programme – WSEP  
World Scout Foundation – WSF  
World Scout Jamboree – WSJ  
World Scout Moot – WSM  
World Scout Youth Forum – WSYF

Many abbreviated status titles have traditionally used a full stop at the end, but this practice is gradually being dropped in favour of a simplified, cleaner look.

**For example:**

Mr Ortega, Mrs Smith

Other abbreviations like Ms, Prof, Dr, MSc, PhD, etc. should be treated in the same way. Use Dr when a person is a medical doctor. For someone with a PhD, state "PhD" at the end of her/his name.

The use of the ampersand (&), is perfectly acceptable in titles or headings, but should only be used within the text body if it is a recognised title, e.g. Ernst & Young, Deloitte & Touche. Otherwise the word "and" should be spelled out.

Both e.g. (for example) and i.e. (in other words/that is to say) are preceded by a comma.

**For example:**

Many countries were represented at the conference, e.g. Albania, Canada, Cyprus, Israel, Mongolia, and the Philippines.



## Jargon and borrowed words

Try to avoid jargon and cliché like “thinking out the box”, “working in silos”, etc. Try to write in clear and simple English.

As far as possible, try not to include terms from other languages, unless the English equivalent of a particular term does not exist. When using these terms, there is no need to express them in italics.

**For example:**

ad hoc  
en masse  
de facto  
de rigueur



## Capitals

Official titles must be capitalised when referring to a unique organisation, individual, or event.

**For example:**

World Scout Committee Chairperson  
World Scout Education Congress  
International Labour Organization

For words such as “organisation”, “president”, and “director”, use small or capitalised first letters according to the context. If reference is made to associations, presidents, or directors in general, without attention to a particular one, then a small letter should be used.

However, if reference is or has been made to a particular organisation, president, or director, then capitals should be used.

**For example:**

The presidents of both countries were invited to the World Scout Conference.

Two separate World Scout Committee subgroups are involved.

The President of the French National Scout Organization said that he was delighted with the conference.

Use lower case wherever possible as this is a more modern approach.



## Headings and subheadings

Use an initial capital letter and complete the heading or subheading in lower case, except for proper nouns.

**For example:**

World Scout Committee meets in Slovenia

Strong support for Scouting received from all National Scout Organizations



## Contractions

Contractions such as *it's*, *doesn't*, *couldn't*, etc. should not be used in regular text, or when paraphrasing or reporting what has been said. However, they may be used in direct quotes, to be fully accurate and to retain the tone of the quote.



## Accents

With Anglicised words, there is no need for accents in foreign words that have been absorbed into the English language.

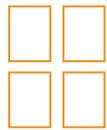
**For example:**

Hotel, debacle, elite, regime

Keep the accent when it makes a crucial difference to pronunciation.

**For example:**

Café, communiqué, fiancée, protégé



## Singular or plural

Collective nouns take the singular form when the emphasis is on the whole entity:

**For example:**

Scouting supports the anti-racism campaign.

The World Scout Committee is considering the matter.

The plural form is used when the emphasis is on the individual members:

**For example:**

Scouts are encouraged to promote dialogue as a way of life.



## Web addresses/URLs

Omit “http://”, “www”, and any trailing slash at the end of a URL, unless it does not work without it. Check before you omit.

**For example:**

scout.org



## Phone numbers

Use spacing between parts of numbers to make it easier to read. For example: international code, area code, phone number.

**For example:**

Kuala Lumpur	+60 3 2276 9000
Geneva	+41 22 705 1100



**SCOUTS**<sup>®</sup>  
Creating a Better World

© World Scout Bureau Inc.  
COMMUNICATIONS  
May 2018

World Scout Bureau  
Global Support Centre  
Kuala Lumpur

Suite 3, Level 17  
Menara Sentral Vista  
150 Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad  
Brickfields  
50470 Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA

Tel.: + 60 3 2276 9000  
Fax: + 60 3 2276 9089

[worldbureau@scout.org](mailto:worldbureau@scout.org)  
[scout.org](http://scout.org)

