

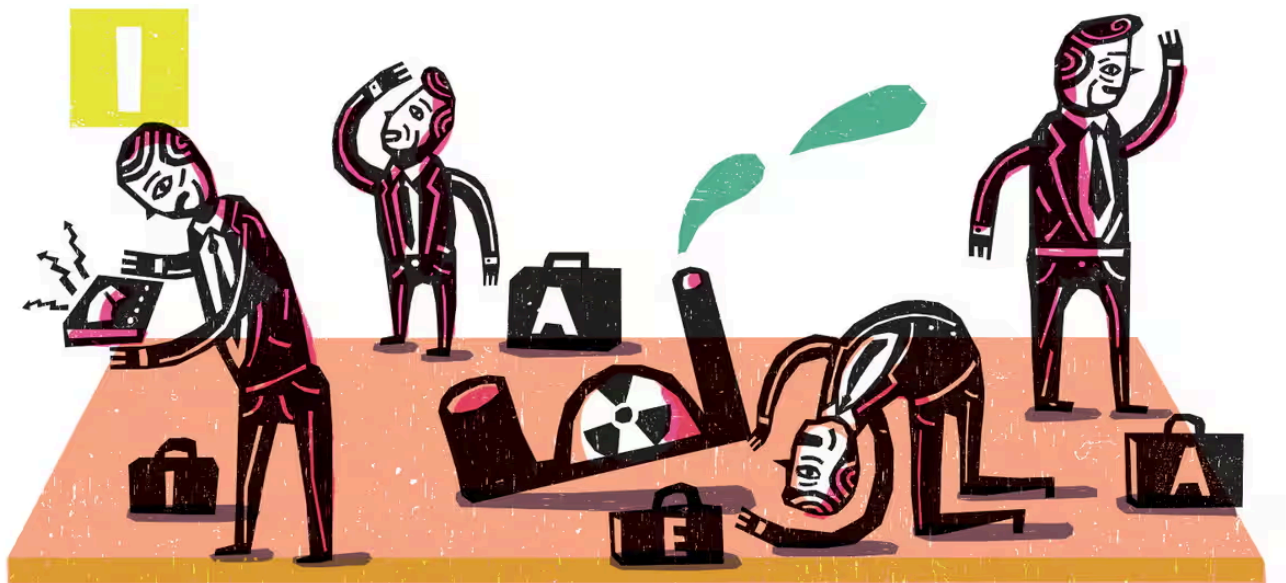
The Guardian and Observer style guide

Guardian and Observer style guide: I

'The true purpose of language is to reenforce [sic] the divisions between society's tribes, or at least to make things difficult enough to understand so that the riff-raff keeps out.' **Andy Ihnatko**

Fri 20 Nov 2015 17:46 GMT

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z



International Atomic Energy Agency

Illustration: Jakob Hinrichs

Iannucci, Armando

ice age

ice-cream

Icelandic names

Icelandic people are referred to by their first names on second mention eg the former prime minister Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, then Jóhanna thereafter. This is because last names are typically patronymic, indicating the person is the son or daughter of the father, and are not, like most western last names, an indication of family lineage eg Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir is Jóhanna, the daughter (dóttir) of Sigurðar Egill Ingimundarson. There are occasional exceptions to this so it is always worth checking.

iconic

in danger of losing all meaning after an average three appearances a day in the Guardian and Observer, employed to describe anything vaguely memorable or well-

T

known - from hairdressers, storm drains in Los Angeles and the Ferrero Rocher TV ads to Weetabix, the red kite and the cut above the eye David Beckham sustained after being hit by a flying boot kicked by Sir Alex Ferguson. Our advice, even if our own writers rarely follow it, is to show a little more thought, and restraint, in using this term

icons

A selection of the things described in the Guardian as “iconic” in a heady fortnight in 2010:

Archaeopteryx

bluefin tuna

Castro’s cigar

David Beckham wearing an anti-Glazer scarf

Grace Kelly in casual wear

Imperial War Museum

Nigel Slater

Mad Men

Variety

the John Hughes films Breakfast Club, Ferris Bueller’s Day Off and Weird Science

Shepard Fairey’s Obama Hope design

the parliamentary constituency of Hove

Brandenburg Gate

Bach’s St Matthew Passion a community-owned wind turbine

Kraft cheese slices

salmon farming

the blue and white stripes of Cornishware pottery

Penarth Pavilion, Cardiff

the Norwegian church and Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay

a multimillion-pound arena in Leeds

a “rock-built engine house at Bottalack near St Just”

the Royal Albert Hall wind turbines (“iconic renewable energy technology”)

Wembley Arena

the video for Kylie Minogue’s Can’t Get You Out of My Head

ID cards

now “consigned to history”, at least in the UK

Identitarian Movement

uppercase for the particular far-right organisation in Austria known in German as **Identitäre Bewegung Österreich**, but use lowercase if you are referring in broader terms to identitarianism or identitarians

ie

no full points or commas, ie like this

if not can be ambiguous: does “it is the most beautiful castle in France, if not the whole of Europe” mean “and maybe in the whole of Europe” or “but not in the whole of Europe”?

Igbo

not Ibo, for the ethnic group in Nigeria

IJ

If a Dutch word starts with IJ then both letters are always capped (there is a waterway called the IJ so a lot of places have IJ in their name, eg IJsselmeer, IJmuiden, etc)

illegitimate

should not be used to refer to children born outside marriage (unless in a historical context, eg “the illegitimate son of Charles the Good”)

I’m a Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here!

iMac, iPad, iPhone, iPod, iTunes

The trend for sticking an “i” in front of new products to make them seem whizzy began in 1997, when Ken Segall, a creative director at Apple, came up with the iMac name when the computer was in development. “The i meant internet,” Segall says. “But it also meant individual, imaginative and all the other things it came to stand for.” Apple’s founder, Steve Jobs, initially pooh-poohed the name

Imax

cinemas, so named in 1968

immaculate conception

has nothing to do with the birth of Jesus: it is the doctrine that Mary herself was conceived by her mother (St Anne) without the stain of original sin. The virgin birth is the doctrine of Christ’s birth without a human father. This is one of our most frequent errors

immigrate

to arrive in a country; **emigrate** to leave one

Hence immigrant, immigration, emigrant, emigration

Immigration and Nationality Directorate

may be called “the immigration service”

immune to

not immune from

impact

is best used as a noun, not a verb: “could potentially impact” is more eloquently and concisely expressed as “might affect”; affect or have an effect on are invariably preferable to “impact” or “impact on”

impacted

a tooth

Imperial College London

(no commas) is no longer part of the University of London

impinge, impinging**imply or infer?**

To imply is to suggest; to infer is to conclude.

Homer: "What are you inferring?"

Lisa: "I'm not inferring anything. You infer; I imply."

Homer: "Well that's a relief."

Many people use infer when they mean imply, and they are in good company:

Milton, Sir Walter Scott and Mervyn Peake in *Titus Groan* all did it

impostor

not imposter

impracticable or impractical?

Reference books typically define the former as "not practical", and the latter as "not able to be done". In other words: for all practical purposes, they mean the same thing; use impractical, as it's shorter

impressionism, impressionist

painting

in

can lead to ambiguous headline constructions such as "Marconi chief in board clearout" - is the chief clearing out the board or being cleared out with them?

in or on?

in the team (UK), on the team (US).

The once widely used "in Oxford Street", "in the high street" etc appear to have been largely supplanted in recent years by on Oxford Street, on the high street, etc

in/out referendum**inadmissible**

not -able

"incel"

use sparingly, and in quotes at first mention

inchoate

Nothing to do with chaos, it means newly formed, whether describing someone's literary skills or the universe shortly after the big bang

incidence

frequency or amount, eg a high incidence of incidents

incident

has political connotations, so attack or clash is often preferable; within a couple of years of the massacre in Tiananmen Square the Chinese government was referring to it as an “incident” or even “alleged incident”

income support, income tax

lowercase

independent inquiry into child sexual abuse (IICSA)**Independent Office for Police Conduct**

the new name for the **Independent Police Complaints Commission**

index

plural **indexes**, except for scientific and economic **indices**

INDIA

a coalition of more than 20 political parties in India, contrary to our usual style on acronyms

Indian ink

in the UK; **India ink** in the US

india rubber**Indian placenames**

Bombay is now known as **Mumbai**, Madras is now **Chennai**, Calcutta is now **Kolkata** and Allahabad is now **Prayagraj** (though make clear it was formerly Allahabad until the new name is more widely known)

indie

music, films, etc; **Indy** abbreviation for the Indy 500 car race and the Independent, a newspaper (now online only)

Indigenous

uppercase I for people, but indigenous for flora and fauna

Indigenous Australians

the preferred term for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Indigenous people in Canada

the preferred term for Canada’s Aboriginal people. Avoid the terms Indigenous Canadians and Indians, and where relevant be specific about an individual’s First Nations, Inuit or Métis heritage

indispensable

not indispensable

Industrial Revolution

industrial tribunals

have not existed since 1998, when they became employment tribunals; they still appear in the pages of the paper with embarrassing frequency despite regular corrections from the readers' editor

infer or imply?

to infer is to deduce something from evidence; to imply is to hint at something (and wait for someone to infer it)

infinite

means without limit, not just "very big"

infinitives

[See split infinitives](#)

inflammable

means the same as **flammable**, which we prefer; the negative is non-flammable

inflammatory

speeches, etc

information commissioner

but **Information Commissioner's Office**

initials

no spaces or points, whether businesses or individuals, eg WH Smith, AJ Strauss

injunction

the verb is **enjoin**, not "injunct"

Inland Revenue

[See Revenue & Customs](#)

inner city

noun two words, adjective hyphenated: inner-city blues made Marvin Gaye wanna holler

innocent civilians

the adjective is superfluous

innocuous

innuendo

plural **innuendoes**

inoculate

not inoculate

inpatient

but **in-tray**

inquiry

not enquiry

inshallah

means “God willing” in Arabic

insidious or invidious?

The former means subtly or gradually harmful (“an insidious disease”); easily confused with the latter, which means likely to arouse resentment (“she put herself in an invidious position”)

insignia

are plural

insisted

overused, especially in political reporting, perhaps to imply that you don’t believe the speaker; “said” should normally suffice

install, instalment**instil, instilled, instilling****Institute for Fiscal Studies****Institute for Government**

not “Institute of Government”

Institute for Public Policy Research**insure**

against risk; **assure** life; **ensure** make certain

insurgents, insurgency

[See terrorism/terrorists](#)

intense

extreme; **intensive** thorough

“The search, which aroused intense opposition from local people, was intensive”

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change**International Atomic Energy Agency**

not Authority; abbreviate to IAEA after first mention

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Ican, not ICAN

international date line**International Institute for Strategic Studies****International Space Station (ISS)**

international sport

a French midfielder (for example) has French nationality; a France midfielder plays for France

International Union for Conservation of Nature

IUCN after first mention; formerly the World Conservation Union

interned

imprisoned; **interred** buried (yes, we have got them confused)

internet

net, web, world wide web [See websites](#)

Internet of Things

abbreviation IoT; also known, but less widely, as Internet of Everything

Interpol

International Criminal Police Organisation (and a New York band)

interpreter

works with the spoken word; often confused with **translator**, who works with the written word

Interrail**intifada****into or in to?**

If you go into a room or look into something, it's one word; if you call in to complain, listen in to someone's conversation, or go in to see them, it's two.

On to is two words [See on to](#)

introducing people

Do not use the following construction to introduce a speaker or a subject: "Foreign secretary Philip Hammond said ... " Use the definite article and commas to separate the job from the name, like this: "Philip Hammond, the foreign secretary ... " (there is only one person with this specific post).

Commas are not used if the description is more general and could apply to more than one person, like this: "The health minister Norman Lamb said ... " (there are several health ministers); or like this: "The Liberal Democrat MP Norman Lamb said ... " (after the 2010 election, there were 57).

Another example: "Michael Billington, the Guardian's theatre critic, gave his verdict ... " is correct; "The theatre critic Michael Billington gave his verdict ... " is fine as well

introductory words

at the start of a sentence such as "However", "Nonetheless", "Instead", should be followed by a comma

Inuit

not Eskimos; an individual is an **Inuk**

invalid

means not valid or of no worth; do not use to refer to disabled or ill people

invariable, invariably

unchanging; often used wrongly to mean hardly ever changing

inveigh attack; **inveigle** coax

“Labour MPs inveighed against Tony Blair for inveigling them into the plan to invade Iraq”

invitation noun

invite verb; so you do not send someone an “invite”

iPad, iTunes**IPCC**

the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

iPhone 6S, iPhone 6C plural **6Ss, 6Cs****iPod**

only when you are sure it is an Apple iPod; the generic term is MP3 player or digital audio player

Ipsos

pollsters. No longer called Ipsos Mori

Iran

rather than “the Islamic republic”

Iraqi placenames

Amara, Baiji, Baghdad, Baquba, Basra, Diwaniya, Dohuk, Erbil, Falluja, Haditha, Hilla, Kerbala, Kirkuk, Kut, Mosul, Najaf, Nassiriya, Nineveh province, Ramadi, Rutba, Samarra, Samawa, Sulaimaniya, Tikrit (note that these transliterations do away with al- prefixes and the final H)

Ireland, Republic of Ireland, the Irish republic

not Éire or southern Ireland or the south

iridescent

one R

the Irish famine

is preferable to the “Irish potato famine” to describe the period of mass starvation and disease in Ireland from 1845 to about 1851. The Great Famine and the Great Hunger are other preferable terms

Irish Travellers

initial caps, as they are recognised as a distinct ethnic group under race relations legislation

iron age, iron curtain**Ironbridge, Iron Bridge**

The former, a village on the Severn in Shropshire, is home to the latter; they are part of the Ironbridge Gorge Unesco world heritage site

ironic, ironically

Do not use when what you mean is strange, coincidental, paradoxical or amusing (if you mean them say so, or leave it up to the reader to decide). There are times when ironic is right but too often it is misused, as in this typical example from the paper: “Santini’s Tottenham won 2-0 at Nottingham Forest, ironic really with the north London club having a big interest in Forest’s Republic of Ireland midfielder Andy Reid...” (not that sport are the only, or biggest, offenders).

As Kingsley Amis put it: “The slightest and most banal coincidence or point of resemblance, or even just- perceptible absence of one, unworthy of a single grunt of interest, gets called ‘ironical’.” The idiotic “post-ironic”, which Amis would be glad he did not live to see, is banned

Is

as in dotting the Is and crossing the Ts

Isa

individual savings account, but no need to spell it out

-ise

not -ize at end of word, eg maximise, synthesise (exception: capsise)

Islam

means “submission to the will of God”.

Muslims should never be referred to as “Mohammedans”, as 19th-century writers did. It causes serious offence because they worship God, not the prophet Muhammad.

“Allah” is Arabic for “God”. Both words refer to the same concept: there is no major difference between God in the Old Testament and Allah in Islam. Therefore it makes sense to talk about “God” in an Islamic context and to use “Allah” in quotations or for literary effect.

The holy book of Islam is the Qur’an (not Koran)

Islamic

a synonym for the Muslim religion when used as an adjective eg Islamic art. It should not be used to describe people.

Islamic State

at first mention, thereafter **IS**. The group was originally al-Qaida in Iraq. Also, **Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)**

Islamist

A person who believes in Islamism, ie, the organisation of government and society in accordance with laws prescribed by Islam. For example, the Justice and Development party (AKP) in Turkey and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt are Islamist parties; Islamic State and al-Qaida are Islamist groups, and their members are Islamist militants/fighters/terrorists.

Islamophobia

Isles of Scilly

an alternative is Scilly, but not Scilly Isles

isotopes

Do not abbreviate, eg carbon-14, uranium-235 (not U235, U-235, etc)

Israel Defense Forces

IDF after first mention

issue

not a synonym for problem (“she has stylebook issues”)

Italian royalty

Since the Italian monarchy was abolished through a referendum in 1946, we should not use titles such as king, queen, prince, and princess, even where descendants of the aristocracy continue to do so.

However, the Italian constitution allows the use of nobiliary particles acquired before 1922 as part of the surname. For example, the grandson of King Umberto II is named Emanuele Filiberto di Savoia, where “Di Savoia” is his surname. Other examples include Luca Cordero di Montezemolo (a businessman), referred to as Cordero di Montezemolo on second mention

italics

Use roman for titles of books, films, etc; the only exceptions are the Review and the Observer, which by special dispensation are allowed to ignore the generally sound advice of George Bernard Shaw:

“1. I was reading *The Merchant of Venice*. 2. I was reading ‘*The Merchant of Venice*’. 3. I was reading **The Merchant of Venice**. The man who cannot see that No 1 is the best-looking, as well as the sufficient and sensible form, should print or write nothing but advertisements for lost dogs or ironmongers’ catalogues: literature is not for him to meddle with.”

Use italics for foreign words and phrases (with roman translation in brackets); poetry and scientific names.

Never use italics in headlines or standfirsts

it's

shortened form of it is or has: it's a big dog, it's been ages since I saw her

its

possessive form of it: the dog is eating its bone

ITV, ITV1, ITV2, ITV3, ITV4**Ivory Coast**

not “the Ivory Coast” or Côte d’Ivoire; its nationals are Ivorians

Ivy League universities

Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth College, Harvard, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania, Yale

Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades

military wing of Hamas, which is commanded by Mohammed Deif. **Qassam Brigades** at second mention

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