

The Guardian and Observer style guide

Guardian and Observer style guide: U

'Critics search for ages for the wrong word, which, to give them credit, they usually find.' **Peter Ustinov**

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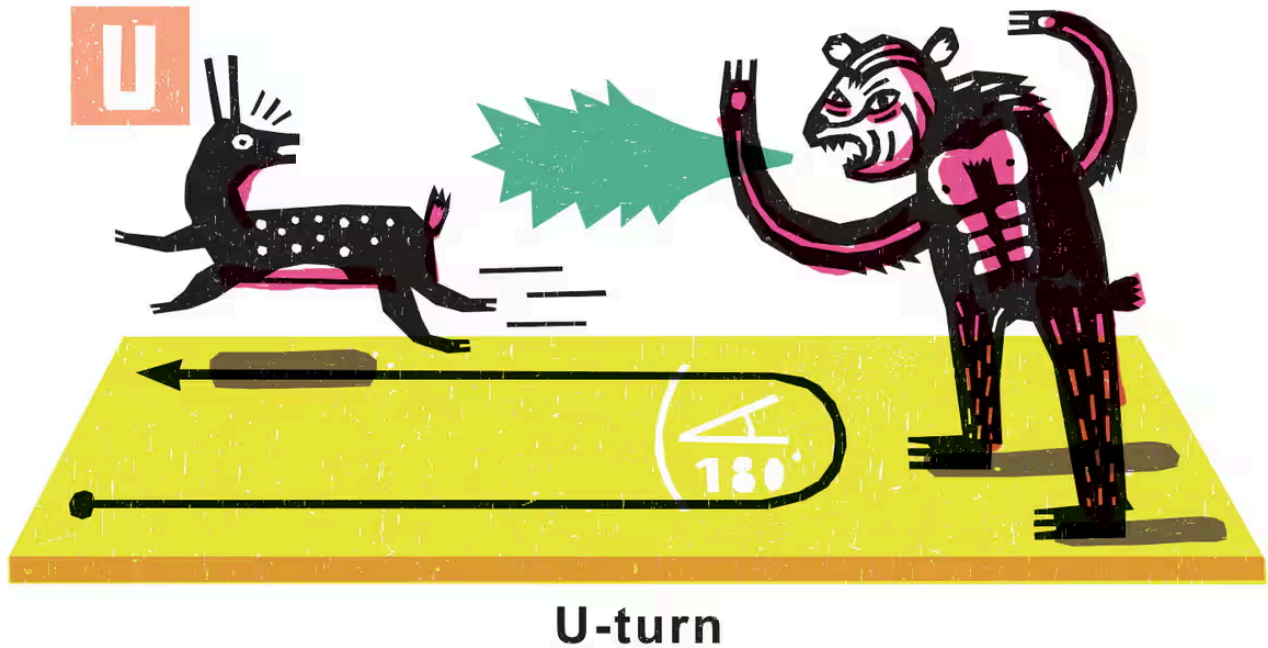


Illustration: Jakob Hinrichs

uber

no accent if you are saying something like uber-hip (although uber in this sense is uber-used); use the umlaut if you are quoting German

Über

app-based taxi company

U-boat

uc

abbreviation for UPPERCASE but often used to mean initial capital letters

Ucas

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

UCLan

abbreviation of the University of Central Lancashire

UK or Britain

in copy and headlines for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

(but note Great Britain comprises just England, Scotland and Wales)

Ukip

It's not normally necessary to give its full name, the UK Independence party

Ukraine

no "the"; adjective **Ukrainian**

Ukraine place names

Kyiv not Kiev; **Donbas** not Donbass; **Odesa** not Odessa; **Luhansk** not Lugansk; **Lviv** not Lvov; **Kharkiv** not Kharkov; **Dnipro** (for the city and the river); **Hostomel** not Gostomel; **Mykolaiv**; **Zaporizhzhia**; **Berdiansk** not Berdyansk; **Borodianka** not Borodyanka; **Trostianets** not Trostyanets; **Chornobyl** not Chernobyl; **Izium** not Izyum; **Enerhodar** not Energodar; **Balakliia** not Balakliya; **Mariinka**

ukulele

not ukelele

Ulaanbaatar

capital of Mongolia

Ulster

Avoid as an alternative term for Northern Ireland, which in fact comprises six of the nine counties of the province of Ulster. The only acceptable use is when it is in the name of an organisation eg a political party or sports team

ultra-low emission zone

or Ulez for short

Uluru

not Ayers Rock

-ums

Latinate -um neuter endings that are a part of the language (eg stadium) take an -s plural. Exceptions: bacteria, which retain the Latin plural and take a plural verb, as do media, but note that spiritualists are mediums

Umist

the former University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology merged with the University of Manchester in 2004

umlaut

In German placenames, ae, oe and ue should almost always be rendered ä, ö, ü. Family names, however, for the most part became petrified many years ago and there is no way of working out whether the -e form or the umlaut should be used; you just have to find out for each individual

umm-ed and ahh-ed

UN

United Nations, but it is not normally necessary to spell it out

UN general assembly

should not be abbreviated to UNGA or Unga

UN high commissioner for human rights

currently Volker Türk, formerly Michelle Bachelet and, before her, Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini (Husseini after first mention); the agency is normally abbreviated to OHCHR

UN secretary general

currently António Guterres

UN security council**UNAids****unbiased****uncharted**

not unchartered

unchristian**uncooperative****under-**

prefixes are normally one word, eg underachieve, underact, underage, undercover, underdeveloped, undermanned, underprivileged, undersea, undersecretary, undersigned, undervalue, underweight

underestimate, understate

Take care that you don't mean overestimate or overstate. We often get this wrong - a typical example from the paper: "Qian's contribution to China's space and missile programme cannot be underestimated" (the writer meant the opposite)

underground, the

but London Underground for the name of the company

under way

not underway

uneducated

"with no formal education" may be more accurate

Unesco

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

unfollow, unfriend

is what you do to people you don't like on, respectively, X and Facebook

UNHCR

United Nations high commissioner for refugees; not commission, although the name stands for both the high commissioner, Filippo Grandi, and the refugee agency he heads

Unicef

United Nations Children's Fund

uninterested

means not taking an interest; not synonymous with **disinterested**, which means unbiased, objective

union

lc when debating the future of "the union" (England and Scotland)

union boss

is a phrase to avoid, except in quotes. Union leader or union chief is preferable

union flag, union jack

The Flag Institute has ruled that these two terms are interchangeable

unionists

(Northern Ireland) lc except in the name of a party, eg Democratic Unionist party

unique

one of a kind, so cannot be qualified as "absolutely unique", "very unique", etc

Unite

the UK's biggest trade union, formed in 2007 by the merger between Amicus and the Transport and General Workers' Union

United Kingdom

England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; no need to write in full: say Britain or the UK

United Kingdom Onshore Oil and Gas

abbreviation: Ukoog

United Reformed Church

not United Reform Church, as pointed out on a wearisomely regular basis in the corrections column

universal credit**Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

article 1, article 30, etc

universities

take initial cap, eg Sheffield University, Johns Hopkins University, Free University of Berlin

University College London

no comma; UCL after first mention

University of the Arts London

comprises Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins, Chelsea College of Arts, London College of Communication, London College of Fashion, and Wimbledon College of Arts

Unknown Warrior, tomb of the

not soldier

unmistakable**Unrwa**

stands for United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, but no need to give its full title

unskilled workers

used by the government when talking about stopping certain workers from migrating to the UK when the actual policy is based on income level rather than skill. As such, use **low-paid workers** instead, unless quoting someone

until

not “up until”

unveiled

pictures are, as are cars sometimes, but these days almost everything seems to be – so the government “unveiled a raft of new policies” (two clichés and a redundant “new” in six words) or a company “unveiled record profits”. There is nothing wrong with announcing, reporting, presenting or publishing

upbeat, upfront, upgrade, upstage, uptight

but **upside down**

upcoming

the coining and, even worse, use of such jargon words is likely to make many otherwise liberal, enlightened readers (and editors) wonder if there is not after all a case to bring back capital, or at least corporal, punishment for crimes against the English language; an editor once told his staff: “If I read upcoming in the Wall Street Journal again, I shall be downcoming and somebody will be outgoing”

upmarket

rather than the American English upscale

upriver, upstream**up to date**

but in an up-to-date fashion

US

for United States, not USA: no need to spell out, even at first mention; do not call it America, although its people are Americans

[See America](#)

usable

not useable

USAid**used**

He used to do something, not he did use to do something and certainly not he did used to do something (double imperfect); a column said “high street shops did, it’s true, used to be more varied” – something like “high street shops certainly used to be more varied” would have been better

user-generated content**US Navy Seals**

unless they are actual seals (marine mammals are used as minesweepers and underwater sentries)

utopian**U-turn****Uyghur, Uyghurs**

the Uyghur people, particularly of the Xinjiang region in China

Uzbekistan

adjective **Uzbek**

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