

The Guardian and Observer style guide

Guardian and Observer style guide: B

'There is nothing in philosophy which could not be said in everyday language.' **Henri Bergson**

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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



baccalaureate

📷 Illustration: Jakob Hinrichs

b

bit or binary digit

B

byte, usually made up of 8 bits

See [byte](#)

BAA

formerly the British Airports Authority

Ba'ath party

it means renaissance or resurrection

Bab al-Mandab

a strait between Yemen on the Arabian side and Djibouti and Eritrea on the African side, linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden

Babybel

cheese

T

baby Bells

US regional telephone companies formed after the breakup of AT&T in 1984

baby boomer

people born in the period between the end of the second world war and the mid-1960s when there were increases in the number of births, particularly in the western world. The generation that preceded them, between about 1928 and 1945 are sometimes called the **silent generation**

Babygro

TM; a generic alternative is **babygrow**

Baby P

Peter Connelly, who died in Haringey in 2007, was known as Baby P or Baby Peter

babysit, babysitter

the noun “baby-sitter” came first (in 1937), and the verb “to baby-sit” was derived from it a decade later, an interesting example of back-formation

baccalaureate

abbreviation bac, but the new English baccalaureate is abbreviated to Ebacc

bacchanalia

originally wild festivals dedicated to the god Bacchus; now drunken revelry as found in most British towns on a Saturday night, lowercase with singular verb: the bacchanalia is likely to continue until we all pass out

Bacharach, Burt

US songwriter, born 1928

bachelor

now has a slightly old-fashioned ring to it, so probably better to say (if relevant) unmarried man; “confirmed bachelor” should definitely be avoided, as should “bachelor girl” (unless writing about swinging 60s movies)

backbench

newspaper or politics; **backbenches, backbenchers**

back catalogue, back yard**backdoor** (one word)

a digital encryption term for a way of bypassing normal authentication in a product

back door (two words)

the rear entrance to a house

back-scratching**backstory, backstreet**

bacteria

plural of **bacterium**, so don't write "the bacteria is"; even more important, don't confuse with viruses

Bad Sex awards**BAE Systems**

formerly British Aerospace

Bafta

British Academy of Film and Television Arts

bagel

not baigel or beigel

Baghdad**Bahá'í faith****bailout**

noun

bail out

a prisoner, a company or person in financial difficulty; but **bale out** a boat or from an aircraft

baked alaska**baker's dozen**

13

bakewell tart**balk**

obstruct, pull up, stop short; **baulk** area of a snooker table

Balkanisation**ballboy, ballgirl, ballgame, ballgown, ballpark****ballerina**

a ballerina dances leading roles; otherwise, she is a ballet dancer

ballot, balloted**Balochistan**

not Baluchistan or Baluchestan for the largest province of Pakistan. Baloch is the adjective for general use, but also refers to a specific ethnic group, so be wary of applying it to people; Balochi is a language

BAME

black, Asian and minority ethnic; spelled out in full at first mention, but where possible it is always preferable to be more specific and to avoid using BAME in

furniture. Other alternatives are person/people of colour, or minority ethnic people. However, when using an alternative always check that it doesn't change the accuracy of the story, eg the term minority ethnic in its broadest sense includes white people, such as Travellers and Gypsies, so if a story citing BAME research is actually only about people of colour, use of the term minority ethnic would be incorrect. Likewise, avoid using people of colour when the BAME research in question may include minority ethnic white people. (See also **black**.)

Band-Aid

TM; say plaster or sticking plaster; in the US, it's a bandage

B&B

abbreviation for bed and breakfast

band names

lc the: the Beatles, the Killers, the The; but uc equivalents in other languages, eg Les Nègresses Vertes, Los Lobos. Bands that do not take the definite article (although they are often erroneously given it) include Arctic Monkeys, Pet Shop Boys and Ramones; for most bands, this can be easily checked online.

Bands take a plural verb: Snow Patrol are overrated, Iron Butterfly were the loudest band of the 60s, etc.

Try to include diacritical marks if bands use them in their name, no matter how absurd: Maxïmo Park, Mötley Crüe, Motörhead, etc; for a comprehensive list see the excellent "[metal umlaut](#)" entry on Wikipedia

Bangalore

do not use; the city's official name has been changed to Bengaluru

bank holiday

bank holiday Monday, etc

Ban Ki-moon

former UN secretary general; Ban on second mention

banknote

Bank of England

the Bank on subsequent mentions

Bank of Scotland

BoS on second mention

banks

that aren't banks but share certain characteristics with banks are two words: **blood**

bank, food bank, time bank

banlieue

French for suburbia, not suburb: strictly singular, but a French reader points out that

the Petit Robert dictionary listed “**les banlieues**” among its “**nouveaux mots**” in 2006; the French for suburb is faubourg (literally, “false town”)

Bannau Brycheiniog

is the official name but you should probably also tell the reader that it was formerly known as the Brecon Beacons. You can subsequently use the informal name, the Bannau

bao

not bao buns, which is tautologous (“bun buns”). Bao can be used as both singular and plural

bar

(legal) she was called to the bar; (political) of the House of Commons

Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC)

An organisation that is independent of the Bar Council

barbecue**Barclays Bank****barcode****barmitzvah, batmitzvah****Barnardo's**

children's charity, formerly Dr Barnardo's; it no longer runs orphanages

barolo

wine

Baron Cohen, Sacha

the man behind Ali G and Borat

Baron-Cohen, Simon

a professor of developmental psychopathology at Cambridge University and cousin of Sacha

barons, baronesses

are lords and ladies in our publications: Andrew Adonis at first mention, Lord Adonis (not “Baron Adonis”) on second mention, thereafter Adonis; similarly Sayeeda Warsi, then Lady Warsi (not “Baroness Warsi”), then simply Warsi

Barons Court**baroque****barracks**

the army has barracks, the RAF has airfields

Barroso, José Manuel

former prime minister of Portugal, subsequently president of the European Commission

Barts

abbreviation for St Bartholomew's hospital, London

Base jumping

extreme sport; the acronym stands for four categories of object from which you can jump, if so inclined: building, antenna, span and earth

Basel

not Basle

basically

this word is unnecessary, basically

basket case

originally referred to quadriplegics who had suffered catastrophic wounds in the first world war; now a cliché used mainly to describe currencies or countries of which a newspaper disapproves. Either way, the phrase is best avoided

Basque Country**bas-relief****bated breath**

not baited

Battenberg

(not Battenburg) German family name that became Mountbatten; battenberg cake lc

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home

no apostrophes

Battersea power station

unless you are referring to the Battersea Power Station tube station

battle

Avoid when referring to people who have a disease, such as cancer. It is overused and many people who have had illnesses over which they have little or no control find it inappropriate

battlebus**Battle of Britain****Bauhaus****BBC One, BBC Two, BBC Three, BBC Four****BBC Radio 1, 2, 3, 4, 4 Extra, 5 Live, 6 Music**

BC

1000BC but AD1066

be-all and end-all**bearing children**

Such phrases as “she bore him two sons” and “he had two children by” are outdated and sexist. We said of Wendi Deng that she “went on to bear [Rupert Murdoch] two children”. As a reader complained: “Surely an expression which implies that a woman has a child for a man has no place in the Guardian ... How about ‘they had two children’?”

We also said that the late David Frost had “three sons by Carina Fitzalan-Howard” and referred to Mick Jagger’s “two sons by Jerry Hall”, as if the mothers were racehorses. Men have children with, not by, women

beau

plural **beaux**

Beaufort scale

measure of wind speed created in 1806 by Sir Francis Beaufort.

There are 13 classes, as follows: 0 calm, 1 light air, 2 light breeze, 3 gentle breeze, 4 moderate breeze, 5 fresh breeze, 6 strong breeze, 7 near gale, 8 gale, 9 strong gale, 10 storm, 11 violent storm, 12 hurricane.

Forces 13 to 17, used in China and Taiwan, cover cyclones and typhoons

beaujolais, beaujolais nouveau

wine; **Beaujolais** region where it is produced

Beaver scouts

for boys (and now girls) aged six to eight, when they are eligible to become **Cub scouts**

bebop, hard bop, post-bop

jazz genres

Be-Bop-A-Lula

Gene Vincent song

because

can be ambiguous: “I didn’t go to the party because Mary was there” may mean that Mary’s presence dissuaded me from going or that I went to sample the canapes

Becket, Thomas (1118-70)

murdered archbishop of Canterbury, not “Thomas à Becket”

becquerel

the activity of a quantity of radioactive material in which one nucleus decays in a

second; the time measurement is included, so it is wrong to say “becquerels per hour”

bedblockers, bedblocking

terms best avoided, unless quoting someone, because as one of our readers put it: “This neoliberal language dehumanises people to commodities and treats them as a transactional contract, rather than humans”

bedbug

Bedouin

bedroom tax

no need for “so-called” or quotation marks – it’s the bedroom tax. Belated attempts by the government to call it the “abolition of the spare room subsidy” should be treated with the contempt they deserve

beef wellington

Beeton, Mrs

(Isabella Mary Beeton, 1836-65) author of *The Book of Household Management*

begs the question

This phrase is almost invariably misused: it means assuming a proposition that, in reality, involves the conclusion. An example would be to say that parallel lines will never meet, because they are parallel.

The concept can be traced as far back as Aristotle, but HW Fowler, whose entry on begging the question is listed under the Latin **petitio principii** (assumption of the basis), defines it as “the fallacy of founding a conclusion on a basis that as much needs to be proved as the conclusion itself”, giving as an example “foxhunting is not cruel, since the fox enjoys the fun”.

Now used widely to mean “raises the question”, its traditional sense is being lost, which seems a sad fate for a phrase that might be useful or even – in a logical or philosophical context – essential

Beijing

Bekaa valley

not Beqaa, for the region in Lebanon

Belarus

adjective Belarusian

beleaguered

overused, even when we spell it correctly

believable

Belisha beacons

flashing orange lamps on black and white poles at zebra crossings, named after Leslie Hore-Belisha, the minister of transport who introduced them in 1934; have given way in many cases to **pelican crossings** (little red and green men)

bell-end**bellringing, bellringers**

no hyphens

Bell's whisky**bellwether**

sheep that leads the herd; something that indicates the direction in which a situation or events may be heading

belt and road initiative**benefactor, beneficiary**

are sometimes confused: the former gives something; the latter gets it

benefited, benefiting**“benefits tourism”**

and similar contentious phrases should normally be used only when quoting someone, rather than suggesting that we accept them at face value

Benetton**Bengaluru**

the name of the city formerly known as Bangalore

Benin bronzes

metal sculptures and other carvings made from at least the 16th century onwards that British troops looted in 1897 from Benin City. Benin City was the historical capital of the kingdom of Benin, which is now part of Nigeria and not to be confused with the modern-day republic of Benin

Berchtesgaden**Beretta**

Italian firearms manufacturer; **biretta** square cap worn by Roman Catholic clerics, black (priest), purple (bishop), red (cardinal)

berks and wankers

Kingsley Amis identified two principal groups in debates over use of language: “Berks are careless, coarse, crass, gross and of what anybody would agree is a lower social class than one’s own; wankers are prissy, fussy, priggish, prim and of what they would probably misrepresent as a higher social class than one’s own”

Berliner

newspaper format, narrower and shorter than a broadsheet, taller and wider than a tabloid; the Guardian switched to Berliner format on 12 September 2005

Berlin Wall**Bermuda**

the adjective is Bermudian (not Bermudan) and its citizens are Bermudians

Bernabéu stadium

the home of Real Madrid

Berne

not Bern

berserk

not beserk

Berwick-upon-Tweed

is in England, although Berwick Rangers play football in the Scottish League

bestseller, bestselling**Betaferon**

TM; the generic term for the drug is interferon-beta 1b

bete noire

no accents

betting odds

We frequently get this wrong. A brief explanation: long odds (eg 100-1 against, normally expressed as 100-1) mean something unlikely; shorter odds (eg 10-1) still mean it's unlikely, but less unlikely; odds on (eg 2-1 on, sometimes expressed as 1-2) means it is likely, so if you were betting £2 you would win only £1 plus the stake.

Take care using the phrase “odds on”: if Labour is quoted by bookmakers at 3-1 to win a byelection, and the odds are cut to 2-1, it is wrong to say “the odds on Labour to win were cut last night” - in fact, the odds against Labour to win have been cut (the shorter the price, the more likely something is expected to happen).

It gets more complicated when something is genuinely odds-on, ie bookmakers quote a price of “2-1 on”: in this case, if the Labour candidate is quoted at 2-1 on and becomes an even hotter favourite, at 3-1 on, the odds have shortened; if Labour loses popularity, and 2-1 on becomes, say, 7-4 on or evens, the odds have lengthened

between 15 and 20

not “between 15 to 20” or “between 15-20”

Bevan, Aneurin

(1897-1960) Labour health minister from 1945 to 1951 and architect of the NHS. Also known as Nye Bevan. In a 1948 speech he described Tories as “lower than vermin”

Beverly Hills

Bevin, Ernest

(1881-1951) Labour foreign secretary between 1945 and 1951 who helped to create Nato. Not to be confused with Nye Bevan

Beyoncé

beyond the pale

not pail; this pale is derived from the Latin palus, a stake as used to support a fence (cf palisade); hence the figurative meaning of beyond the pale as being outside the boundary, unacceptable

biannual or biennial?

As no one can agree which of these means twice a year, and which means every two years, it's best not to use them at all; "twice a year" or "every two years" are unambiguous.

The same applies to bimonthly and biweekly: say "every fortnight", "twice a month" or "every two months", and so on. It's remarkable that no one has sorted this problem out; nearly a century ago, HW Fowler was already calling it "a cause of endless confusion"

bias, biased

Bible

cap up if referring to Old or New Testament, lc in such sentences as "the stylebook is my bible"; the adjective biblical is always lc

Bible belt

biblical quotations

Use a modern translation, not the Authorised Version. From a reader: "Peradventure the editor hath no copy of Holy Writ in the office, save the King James Version only. Howbeit the great multitude of believers knoweth this translation not. And he (or she) who quoteth the words of Jesus in ancient form, sheweth plainly that he (or she) considereth them to be out of date. Wherefore let them be quoted in such manner that the people may understand"

biblical references

like this: Genesis 1:1; II Corinthians 2:13; Revelation 3:16 (anyone calling it "Revelations" will burn in hell for eternity)

bicentenary

a 200th anniversary; **bicentennial** its adjective

biceps

singular and plural (there is no such thing as a bicep)

bid

Use only in a financial or sporting sense, eg Royal Bank of Scotland's disastrous bid for ABN Amro, Barcelona have put in a bid for Rooney, etc; or when writing about an auction. Say in an attempt to, in an effort to, rather than "in a bid to"; in headlines, move is a useful alternative

big

usually preferable to major, massive, giant, mammoth, behemoth, etc

big bang

lowercase, whether you are talking about the origin of the universe, around 14 billion years ago, or deregulation of the City of London in 1986

Big Ben

strictly speaking, the Palace of Westminster's famous clock tower is called - since 2012 - Elizabeth Tower, but it's acceptable to call it Big Ben, as most people do. You will, of course, know that the name Big Ben originally referred to the largest of the clock's five bells

big industries

big tobacco, big pharma, big six energy companies etc; lower case and no quote marks

'big society'

A project briefly championed by David Cameron and described by the late Simon Hoggart as "surely the vaguest slogan ever coined by a political leader. Nobody knows what it means." Use quotation marks on first mention

bill

lc, even when giving full name; cap up only if it becomes an act. But ...

Bill of Rights

collective name for the first 10 amendments to the US constitution

billion

one thousand million: in copy use bn for sums of money, quantities or inanimate objects: £10bn, 1bn litres of water; otherwise billion: 6 billion people, etc; use bn in headlines

bin Laden, Osama

Bin Laden on second reference. He had been stripped of his Saudi citizenship, so can be described as Saudi-born but not as a Saudi

bin Salman, Mohammed

the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, the king's heir apparent. On second mention call him Prince Mohammed, not Bin Salman. Please don't call him MBS

biodegradable, bioengineering, bioethics, biofuel

but bio-based economy, bio-products

biodiversity

use **wildlife** instead to convey more clearly that the subject involves living things

Birds Eye

TM; two words, no apostrophe, named after the frozen food pioneer Clarence Frank Birdseye II (1886-1956)

birdwatchers

also known as birders, not “twitchers”; they go birdwatching or birding, not “twitching”

Birkbeck, University of London

comma, but no “college”

Biro

TM; say ballpoint pen

birthdays

are for people. Institutions, events etc have anniversaries

birthplace, birthrate, birthright**Birtwistle, Sir Harrison**

British composer (not Birtwhistle)

bishops

the Right Rev Clifford Richard, bishop of Wimbledon, at first mention; thereafter just Richard or the bishop

bismillah

means “in the name of God” in Arabic

bitcoin

plural bitcoins

bite-size

not bite-sized; very few things are the same size as a bite

bitterest

use of this word by the Guardian in 2006 provoked [a bitter controversy](#) among readers, many of whom (rightly) pointed out that there is nothing wrong with it

black

should be used only as an adjective when referring to race, ie not “blacks” but “black people” or whatever noun is appropriate. There is debate about the capitalisation of black, with some using it as a physical descriptor, others to describe a specific cultural group, therefore while generally lower case, if a subject, writer or editor of a story prefers to use Black then that choice should be respected. (See also **BAME**.)

blackberry

fruit; plural blackberries

BlackBerry

handheld wireless email device; plural BlackBerrys

black cab-driver

a black person who drives a cab

black-cab driver

a person who drives a black cab

Black Country**the Black Forest**

for the place, but black forest gâteau

black holes

referring to a fiscal “black hole” gives the impression there is an inexorable compulsion to fill the gap. As governments are able to run a deficit if they choose, this can be misleading. There are other, less politically loaded alternatives, such as “shortfall” or even, simply, “hole”

black market or black economy

hidden or parallel economy are preferable

black-on-black violence

is banned, unless in a quote, but even then treat with scepticism (imagine the police saying they were “investigating an incident of white-on-white violence between Millwall and West Ham supporters”)

blackout**Blackpool Pleasure Beach**

a giant funfair, not a beach, so do not illustrate with a picture of donkeys on the sand

Blade Runner

not Bladerunner

Blanchett, Cate**blase**

no accent

bleeper

pager; not to be confused with **beeper**, a thing that goes “beep” (eg on a microwave)

blitz

as in the London blitz of 1940-41, and various other blitzes (eg Liverpool, Sheffield)
an abbreviation of Blitzkrieg (German for “lightning war”)

blog

(noun) collection of online articles, **blogpost** single article; (verb) action of publishing a blogpost: “I just blogged about that”

blokeish

rather than blokish

blond

is the adjective, male and female: John has blond hair, and Jane’s hair is also blond.

As nouns, blond is male (John is a blond) and blonde is female (Jane is a blonde), but they sound old-fashioned and sexist nowadays (“Gentlemen Prefer Blondes”) so it’s best to say simply that someone is blond

blood bank**bloodsports****bloody mary**

vodka and tomato juice

Bloody Sunday

Take care when writing about the death toll: 13 died in Derry on 30 January 1972, but a 14th victim died from a brain tumour several months later, so we should use a phrase such as “which led to 14 deaths”

blowjob**Bluetooth****Bluffer’s Guide**

TM; beware of using phrases such as “a bluffer’s guide to crimewriting”, a headline that led to a legal complaint

blunder

one (of many) mentions of this word led to the following comment from a reader: “The term ‘blunder’ is used most frequently when referring to mistakes made in public services and this only serves to fuel the view commonly propagated by rightwing newspapers that the role of the public sector should be diminished and its functions handed over to private companies. I’m sure the Guardian does not endorse this view, but its use of language may imply that it does”

Blu-ray

TM; full name is Blu-ray Disc (not Disk), abbreviation BD

Blu-Tack

TM

boat or ship?

large, ocean-going vessels, eg liners, tankers and warships, are ships rather than boats, which is a term better suited to small vessels such as fishing boats, dinghys,

lifeboats etc. Remember that “a ship can carry a boat, but a boat cannot carry a ship”.

Boat Race

Oxford v Cambridge

Boddingtons

popularly known as Boddies, it remains the cream of Manchester, despite the closure of the Strangeways brewery

bodge or botch?

To botch a job is to make a mess of it; to bodge means something very similar, but with the added sense that you botched it by trying to cut corners or save money - think of the Bodgers and their novelty 1976 single, (Don't Do It Right) Bodge It!

Bodø

town in Norway, just inside the Arctic Circle

bodybuilder, bodybuilding**body fluid, body hair, body heat**

describe part of the body

bodily contact, bodily functions, bodily secretions

describe something the body does

boffin

tabloid word for scientist

Bogarde, Dirk

(1921-99) British actor

Bogart, Humphrey

(1899-1957) American actor

bogey

golf, ghost, so bogeyman

bogie

trolley, truck

Bogotá

capital of Colombia

Bolívar, Simón

(1783-1830) Venezuelan-born Latin American revolutionary hero; not Simon Bolivar, Simón Bolivar, Simon Bolívar, or Simón Bólivar - all of which appeared in the paper in the space of a year

bolognese

sauce, not the French spelling bolognaise

bolshie

rather than bolshy

Bombay

is now known as Mumbai

bombay duck

not a duck, but a fish

Bombe

(not Bomb) machine created by Alan Turing at Bletchley Park to break the Enigma code

bona fide, bona fides**Bondi beach**

but the suburb is **Bondi Beach**

Bonfire Night

also known as Guy Fawkes Night

Bonham Carter, Helena**bon vivant**

not bon viveur

boo-boo

mistake; **Boo Boo** cartoon bear who lived with Yogi in Jellystone Park

bookcase, bookkeeper, bookseller, bookshelf**Booker prize**

no longer the Man Booker prize

bordeaux

wine from Bordeaux

border and protocol delivery group**bored with, bored by**

are preferable to bored of, although usage seems to be changing, particularly among younger people.

The distinction can, however, be useful: compare “bored with Tunbridge Wells” (a person who finds Tunbridge Wells boring) and “bored of Tunbridge Wells” (a bored person who happens to live there, perhaps a neighbour of “disgusted of Tunbridge Wells”)

Boris

Some people (Arnie, Maggie, Iggy) have forenames that make them instantly recognisable, and Boris Johnson is one. This makes his name tempting for headline

writers. Fine in its place, on (say) a sketch or colour piece, but use sparingly and with due regard to tone; in web stories, we should normally use his full name

born out

of necessity; **borne out** by the facts; **borne back** ceaselessly into the past

borstals

named after a village in Kent, these institutions were replaced by youth custody centres in 1982, four years after being immortalised by the Sham 69 single Borstal Breakout

borscht**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

for the former Yugoslav republic, not Hercegovina

Bosphorus

not Bosporus

Boston Strangler**both**

unnecessary in most phrases that contain “and”; “both men and women” says no more than “men and women”, takes longer, and can also be ambiguous

Botox

a brand name; botulinum toxin is normally more appropriate in copy, although we recognise that the temptation for headline writers to say “Never mind the Botox” may sometimes prove irresistible

Botswana, Botswanan

country and people; **Tswana** is the language and largest ethnic group

bottleneck**Boudicca**

not Boadicea

bougainvillaea**bouncebackability**

invaluable word coined by the football manager Iain Dowie and since, thanks to the wonders of Twitter, translated by Guardian Style followers into French (**la rebondissabilité**) and German (**die Rücksprungsfähigkeit**)

Boundary Commission**bourgeois**

adjective; **bourgeoisie** noun

Boutros Boutros-Ghali

former UN secretary general

bow tie**Boxing Day**

a public holiday on or soon after 26 December in many countries; in the Irish Republic it is known as St Stephen's Day, and in South Africa as the Day of Goodwill

box office, box set**boy**

male under 18

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS)

when referring to the the movement

boyband, boyfriend**Boy's Own****brackets**

If the sentence is logically and grammatically complete without the information contained within the parentheses (round brackets), the punctuation stays outside the brackets. (A complete sentence that stands alone in parentheses starts with a capital letter and ends with a stop.)

“Square brackets,” the grammarian said, “are used in direct quotes when an interpolation [a note from the writer or editor, not uttered by the speaker] is added to provide essential information.”

Use brackets sparingly, particularly square ones: it's not necessary to add [David] in a football story when an interviewee refers to “Beckham”

braggadocio**braille****brain dead****Bramall Lane**

famous old football (and former cricket) ground, the home of Sheffield United FC

Constantin Brâncuși**brand**

“Wenger brands Ferguson a liar” and similar tabloidese should be avoided

Brands Hatch

no apostrophe

Brasília

capital of Brazil

breakup

one word (noun); but break up, two words (verb), eg “After we broke up I realised it

was the best breakup I'd ever experienced".

breastfed, breastfeeding

Brecon Beacons

now Bannau Brycheiniog

Bremner, Ewen

actor, not Ewan

Brexiter

only use Brexiteer if quoting someone

briar

bush, pipe

bric-a-brac

brickbat

is permissible only if you know what a brickbat is

bridges

initial capitals, eg Golden Gate Bridge, Waterloo Bridge

Bridgnorth

Shropshire

Bridgwater

Somerset

Brighton and Hove

a city and unitary council since 2000, and no longer in East Sussex

brilliant

"a word applied indiscriminately by the Guardian to anything new, no matter how ordinary" (2010 tweet from a reader)

brinkmanship

rather than brinksmanship

Brink's-Mat

Britain, UK

These terms are synonymous: Britain is the official short form of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Used as adjectives, therefore, British and UK mean the same. Great Britain, however, refers only to England, Wales and Scotland. Take care not to write Britain when you might mean England and Wales, or just England - for example when referring to the education system. [See Scotland](#)

Britart

Britfunk

British and Irish Lions

(rugby union); not “British Lions”

British Council**British empire**

but **British Empire Medal**

British Film Institute

BFI on second mention

British Isles

A geographical term taken to mean Great Britain, Ireland and some or all of the adjacent islands such as Orkney, Shetland and the Isle of Man. The phrase is best avoided, given its (understandable) unpopularity in the Irish Republic. Alternatives adopted by some publications are British and Irish Isles or simply Britain and Ireland

British Library**British Medical Association**

(doctors’ trade union), BMA on second mention

British national (overseas)

at first mention for Hongkongers who registered as such before the handover to China on 1 July 1997; BNO thereafter

British overseas territories

Parts of the former British empire that remain under the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the UK, though not part of it. Until 1983, they were known as crown colonies and the king remains head of state.

There are 14: Akrotiri and Dhekelia (Cyprus); Anguilla; Bermuda; British Antarctic Territory; British Indian Ocean Territory; British Virgin Islands; Cayman Islands; Falkland Islands; Gibraltar; Montserrat; Pitcairn Islands; St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha; South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands; Turks and Caicos Islands.

Abbreviation: BOTs

British Museum**British Sign Language**

abbreviate to BSL after first mention

British Transport Police**Britpop****Brits**

avoid using except when quoting people; Britons or British people should be used

Britvic

TM

Broadmoor

a secure psychiatric hospital, not a prison

Brontë

Charlotte, Emily, Anne and their brother Branwell; they grew up at Haworth (not Howarth) in what is now West Yorkshire

bronze age, ice age, iron age, stone age**brownie points****Brownies**

for girls aged seven to 10, at which point they may join the Guides

Brueghel

family of Flemish painters, including Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c1525-69) and his sons Pieter Brueghel the Younger (1564 or 1565-1636) and Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625); Pieter Bruegel the Elder dropped the H from his surname in 1559

Brum, Brummie**brussels sprouts****brutalise**

render brutal, not treat brutally; so soldiers may be brutalised by the experience of war

Brylcreem

TM

BSE

bovine spongiform encephalopathy; no need to spell out

BST

bovine somatotrophin (bovine growth hormone)

BST

British summer time

BTec**Buckingham Palace**

the palace on second mention

buckminsterfullerene

a form of carbon, named after the US engineer Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983)

buck's fizz

cocktail of champagne and orange juice, named after Buck's Club in London

Bucks Fizz

winners of the 1981 Eurovision song contest with Making Your Mind Up

budget, the

lc noun and adj, eg budget talks, budget measures, mini-budget, pre-budget report, etc

buffaloes

for the plural; not buffalo or buffalos

buffet

finger food, not to be confused with ...

Buffett, Warren

investor known as the Sage of Omaha

buildup

(noun) no hyphen

Bulger, James

not Jamie

bullet points

take a full stop after each one, ie:

This is the first bullet point.

This is the second.

And this is the third.

bullseye**bullyboy****bumblebee****bumf**

not bumph

Buñuel, Luis

(1900-83) Spanish film director

buoyed up by

not buoyed by

Burberry

TM

burden of proof

This refers to who has to prove an allegation in court ie in criminal cases the burden of proof is on the prosecution, in libel cases it is the defendant (ie the libeller rather

than the libelled). The **standard of proof** is criminal (beyond reasonable doubt) or civil (on a balance of probabilities).

bureau

plural **bureaus** (furniture) or **bureaux** (organisations)

bureaucrat

Not really a neutral term. Consider civil servant, administrator or official instead

burgeon

means to bud or sprout, so you can have someone with burgeoning talent; often misused to describe anything that is growing or expanding, especially population

burgher

citizen, not to be confused with burger (although we have contrived to do so more than once)

burgomaster

not burgomeister

burkini

not burqini

Burma

is now Myanmar

burned/burnt

burned is the past tense form (he burned the cakes); burnt is the participle, an “adjectival” form of the verb (“the cakes are burnt”)

Burns Night

25 January

burqa

not burka

Burton upon Trent**buses, bussed, bussing****Bush, George W**

son of George HW Bush

businesslike**businessman, businesswoman**

for individuals, but say business people or the business community rather than “businessmen”

Bussell, Darcey

Royal Ballet dancer who retired in 2007

but, however

often redundant, and increasingly wrongly used to connect two compatible statements

Butlin's**butterflies and moths**

are usually lc: adonis blue, orange-tip, purple emperor, silver-washed fritillary, death's-head hawk moth, etc; but note the following: Duke of Burgundy, Queen of Spain fritillary, Essex skipper, Lulworth skipper, Scotch argus

buyout

but **buy-in**

buy to let, help to buy, right to buy

no initial caps; hyphenate before a noun, eg buy-to-let mortgages, help-to-buy programme, right-to-buy scheme

BuzzFeed**buzzword**

but **buzz phrase**

byelection, bylaw, byline, bypass, bystander**byte**

unit of measurement of computer information storage, eg 320GB hard drive (320 gigabytes)

Byzantine

empire; **byzantine** complexity

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

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