

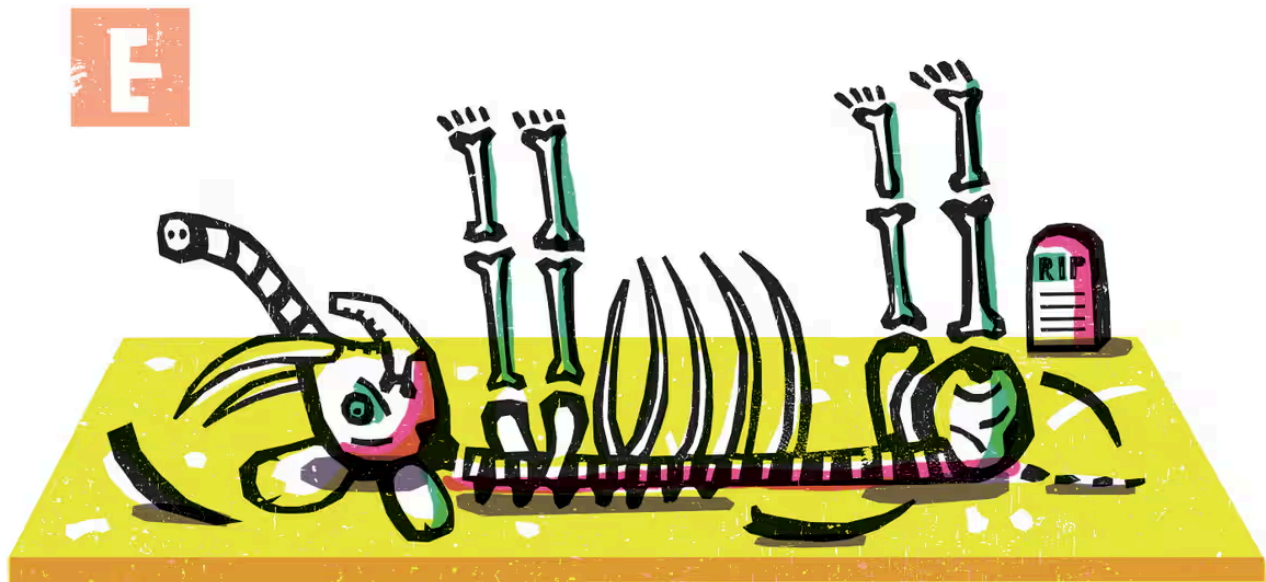
The Guardian and Observer style guide

Guardian and Observer style guide: E

‘Some editors are failed writers, but so are most writers.’ **TS Eliot**

Fri 30 Apr 2021 14.35 BST

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



elephant in the room

Illustration: Jakob Hinrichs

each other or one another?

Some traditionalists say the former should apply only to two people (“Iniesta and Xavi hugged each other”) and the latter to more than two (“all 11 Spanish players hugged one another”). HW Fowler was unimpressed by this argument and in practice very few people make the distinction.

The possessive is singular: they shook each other’s hand

EADS

European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company; the group includes the aircraft manufacturer Airbus and is the major partner in the Eurofighter consortium

earlier

often redundant: “they met this week” or “it happened this month” are preferable to “they met earlier this week” or “it happened earlier this month” and will save space

Earl’s Court

station and district

Earls Court

exhibition centre

earn

rather than learn that a banker or footballer earns, say, £15m a year, readers have indicated that they would prefer us to say “is paid £15m a year” or “receives £15m a year”

earned

not earnt

earring, earshot

no hyphen

Earth

when talking about the planet, but earth in such idioms as down to earth, what on earth? etc

east Africa**East Anglia****east Asia**

or **south-east Asia** rather than the far east

east coast mainline

runs from London King’s Cross to Edinburgh. The principal operator is now London North Eastern Railway (LNER)

East End

inner east London north of the river; the equivalent district south of the Thames is south-east London

EastEnders

TV soap; in real life, people from the East End are East Enders

Easter

The day between Good Friday and Easter Day is Holy Saturday, not Easter Saturday, which falls a week later

eastern Europe**East Jerusalem****East Midlands****East Riding of Yorkshire council****easyCouncil**

approach to local government favoured by some Conservative authorities, modelled on the no-frills approach of budget airlines such as easyJet

Easy Street

Ebacc

English baccalaureate

eBay

but Ebay if you cannot avoid starting a sentence or headline with it

ebike

strictly speaking, to qualify as an ebike, or electric bike, the bike must have pedals that can be used to propel it, its motor must have a maximum power output of 250 watts and should not be able to propel the bike at speeds of more than 15.5mph. Anything else is legally classed as a motorcycle or moped, although some models and adaptations blur the distinction

Ebola

a virus and a disease, Ebola haemorrhagic fever (EHF)

ebook, email

but **e-cigarette, e-commerce, e-learning, e-petition, e-reader**

eccles cake**ecclesiastical titles**

Most Rev (archbishop), Right Rev (bishop), Very Rev (dean or provost), the Ven (archdeacon), the Rev John (or Joan) Smith – not “Rev John Smith”, “Rev Smith”, “the Revs Smith and Jones”. Surname only on subsequent mentions, except in leading articles

Eccleston, Christopher

actor

Ecclestone, Bernie

former Formula One boss

e-cigarette**E coli**

It is not normally necessary to use the full name, *Escherichia coli*. As with other taxonomic names, italicise in copy but use roman in headlines and standfirsts; no full point.

Note that *E coli* is a bacterium, not a virus

eco-friendly

but **ecohome, ecosystem, ecotown, ecowarrior**

ecstasy

state and drug

ecu

European currency unit, superseded by the euro

Ecuadorian

Edinburgh festival

comprises the following:

Edinburgh international festival

Edinburgh festival fringe (not fringe festival, but **the fringe** is OK)

Edinburgh international book festival

editor

lc: editor of the Observer, editor of the Bromley, Bexley and Eltham Leader series, etc

editors

An editor is to newspaper or website as a captain is to ship.

“Editors are craftsmen, ghosts, psychiatrists, bullies, sparring partners, experts, enablers, ignoramuses, translators, writers, goalies, friends, firemen, wimps, ditch diggers, mindreaders, coaches, bomb throwers, muses and spittoon – sometimes all while working on the same piece” (Gary Kamiya, Salon.com).

“Trust your editor, and you’ll sleep on straw” (John Cheever)

educationist

not educationalist

-ee endings

-ee means something happens to you; -er means you do something: so employee, invitee (if you must), refugee but attender, escaper, etc, rather than attendee, escapee, etc

eerie

weird; **Erie** North American lake; **eyrie** of eagles

effect or affect?

See affect

effectively

This adverb is best kept simply to describe how something was done: “Anna managed the department effectively.” Confusion arises when it is used instead of “in effect”, which describes something that has the effect of, even if the effect was unintended or unofficial: “Her boss was off, so in effect Anna was the manager of the department” is clearer than “Her boss was off, so effectively Anna was the manager of the department.”

Sometimes effectively is used in neither of these ways, but just to pad out a sentence in a feeble attempt at adding emphasis, in which case it can be safely deleted

T

effete

The traditional meaning is exhausted, spent or worn out, but nowadays you rarely see this word used to mean anything other than effeminate or foppish. Baroness

Orczy used it in this sense in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* as long ago as 1905: “Those happy days of courtship, before he had become the lazy nincompoop, the effete fop, whose life seemed spent in card and supper rooms”

efficacy or effectiveness?

in scientific terms, efficacy relates to the performance of an intervention, eg a vaccine, under ideal and controlled circumstances, whereas effectiveness relates to the performance of an intervention under real-world conditions

efit

(electronic facial identification technique) program used to create police drawings

eg

no full points

EGM

extraordinary general meeting

Eid al-Adha

(Festival of Sacrifice) Muslim festival laid down in Islamic law, celebrates the end of the hajj. Note that eid means festival, so it is tautologous to describe it as the “Eid festival”

Eid al-Fitr

Muslim festival of thanksgiving laid down in Islamic law, celebrates the end of Ramadan (al-fitr means the breaking of the fast)

eid mubarak

not a festival but a greeting (mubarak means “may it be blessed”)

Eiffel Tower**Eire**

no: say Republic of Ireland or Irish republic

Ekaterinburg

not Yekaterinburg

eke out

This used to mean making a small amount go further, as in “she eked out her rations by serving string instead of spaghetti”. It was a bit extra - note that eke meant “also” as used by Chaucer.

The word has come to mean something rather different, namely scraping by, as in “she eked out a living doing the occasional subbing shift at the Sunday Times”

elan

no accent

ElBaradei, Mohamed

former director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, ElBaradei after first mention

elderly people

or older people, not “the elderly”; do not use to describe anyone under 75

El Dorado

fabled city of gold

Eldorado

fabled flop of a TV soap

Electoral Reform Society

campaigns for “a democracy fit for the 21st century”; the related company Electoral Reform Services provides an independent balloting and polling service to political parties, trade unions and other organisations

electra complex

the female equivalent of oedipal complex

electric vehicles

can be referred to as EVs at second mention

electrocution

serious injury or death by electric shock

elegy

poem of mourning; **eulogy** speech of praise.

The adjective elegiac, sometimes misspelt “elegaic”, is very popular with writers on upmarket newspapers seeking an alternative to “sad”

elemental

basic; **elementary** simple

Elephant and Castle

area; **Elephant & Castle** station

elephant in the room

Like governments and reality TV series, metaphors that we once welcomed into our lives as refreshing can become all too familiar, to the point of tedium - and this cliché is a fine example.

At its height, elephants were not only in the room, but had taken over the whole house: “elephants in the room” included trade figures, policy, lack of policy, climate change, Iraq, the US, Europe, anti-Americanism, men, women, single women, a French football league, race, religion, Islam, Catholicism, Tessa Jowell, Andrew N. Jimmy Greaves, fatness, thinness, Stalinism, Hitler and Tony Blair’s departure from office.

The phrase seemed destined for the elephants' graveyard but there is evidence that, used imaginatively, it may still be effective: "There's only so long they can ignore this elephant in the room [the Iraq war] before it takes a dump on the carpet" (Gary Younge, 5 July 2010); and, from the same writer: "Money in American politics was already an elephant in the room. Now the supreme court has given it a laxative, taken away the shovel, and asked us to ignore both the sight and the stench" (30 January 2012)

11-plus**11th hour**

not eleventh hour

Elfbar

vaping company

elision

means omission, not the conflation of one or more thing

elite**ellipsis**

Use a space before and after ellipses, and three dots (with no spaces between them), in copy and headlines: "She didn't want to go there ... " There is no need for a full point

Élysée Palace**email****emanate**

is intransitive; use exude if you need a transitive verb

Embankment, the

in London; the tube station is just Embankment

embargo

plural embargos

embarrass, embarrassment**embassy**

lc, eg British embassy; not necessarily an excuse to use the Ferrero Rocher joke yet again

emigrate

leave a country; **immigrate** arrive in one.

Hence emigrant and immigrant, emigration and immigration

émigré**Emin, Tracey**

emoji

plural emojis

emotional

showing emotion; **emotive** causing emotion.

“Badger culling is an emotive issue. No wonder people get emotional about it.”

“Tired and emotional” is a euphemism for drunk

Empire State Building**empires**

British empire (but British Empire Medal), Roman empire, etc

employment tribunal

not industrial tribunal

EMS

European monetary system

Emu

economic and monetary union

emulate

The traditional meaning of emulate is to attempt to equal or surpass, so “try to emulate” is strictly tautologous. But nowadays if you say “he emulated Thatcher”, everyone will think you mean that he succeeded, so you do need to qualify it: “He sought to emulate Thatcher, but ended up doing a poor imitation of Major”

enamoured of

not by or with

enclave

a piece of land totally surrounded by a foreign territory, eg San Marino and Vatican City, both enclaved within Italy; an **exclave** is politically attached to a larger piece of land but not physically conterminous with it because of surrounding foreign territory, eg the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan, which is bounded by Armenia, Iran and Turkey

encyclopedia

not encyclopaedia

endgame**enervate**

to deprive of strength or vitality

enforce, enforceable**England, English**

should not be used when you mean Britain or British, unless you are seeking to

offend readers from other parts of the UK (we published a map of England's best beaches, with the headline "Britain's best beaches")

[See Scotland](#)

English Heritage

Charity now solely responsible for care of 400-plus sites across England. Not to be confused with Historic England

English Nature

is now Natural England

English PEN

Enlightenment, the

en masse

Ennahda

Tunisian political party

enormity

It might sound a bit like "enormous", but enormity refers to something monstrous or wicked, such as a massacre, and is not just another word for "big"

enquiry

use inquiry

enrol, enrolling, enrolment

en route

not on route

en suite

two words, whatever estate agents might claim

ensure

make certain; **insure** against risk; but you can assure someone's life by taking out an insurance policy

enthrall, enthralling

entr'acte

E.ON

epicentre

point on the Earth's surface directly above the focus of an earthquake or underground explosion; frequently misused to mean the centre or focus itself and also not a synonym for "dead centre".

After one of our misuses in 2010 a reader (for more than 60 years) wrote: "How is it that so many highly educated people, whose business is words and communication,

do not understand that a prefix such as epi is there for a purpose: it changes the meaning of the root word”

epilepsy

A person with epilepsy might have a seizure, rather than a fit.

Seizures are epileptic, people are not – we do not define people by their medical condition; so say (if relevant) “Joe Bloggs, who has epilepsy” not “Joe Bloggs, an epileptic”

epinephrine autoinjector

device for injecting epinephrine (adrenaline), most often used for the treatment of anaphylaxis; normally abbreviated to EpiPen

epithalamium

poem written for the bride on her way to the marital chamber, such as the poem by Andrew Motion, his first as poet laureate, on the marriage of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones in 1999

EPO

erythropoietin, a hormone produced by the kidneys that controls red blood cell production. Erythropoietins produced by cell culture are used for treating anaemia resulting from chronic kidney disease and other conditions.

In sport, EPO is a banned substance used to enhance performance in cycling and other endurance sports

equable

unvarying; **equitable** fair

“His temperament, like the climate, was equable. Nonetheless, he demanded a more equitable share of the proceeds”

Equality and Human Rights Commission

body created in 2007 to bring together the work of the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission, and the Equal Opportunities Commission; may be called EHRC, or simply the commission, after first mention

equator, the

Equatorial Guinea

formerly Spanish Guinea, a country in central Africa that became independent in 1974; do not confuse with Guinea or Guinea-Bissau, other African former colonies

Erdoğan, Recep Tayyip

Turkish politician, elected prime minister in 2003

ere or e'er?

ere long (soon), ere now (before); e'er, which you might come across in an old poem, is an abbreviation of ever

Eriksson, Sven-Göran**ERM**

exchange rate mechanism, the system that preceded Emu and the single currency

Ernie

electronic random number indicator equipment: the machine that picks winning premium bond numbers

erupt

burst out; **irrupt** burst in

escapers

not escapees, despite the apparently unstoppable advance of the -ee suffix (can it be long before readers become “readees”?)

Eskimo

is a language spoken in Greenland, Canada, Alaska and Siberia. Note that it has no more words for snow than English does for rain. The people are Inuit (singular Inuk), not “Eskimos”

especially or specially?

The former means particularly (“he was especially fond of crab”) or in particular (“this policy is aimed at Ukip voters, especially those in marginal seats”).

The latter means for a special reason (“she made crab sandwiches specially for him”). If a company claims a product has been designed “especially for you”, it hasn’t

esport

but Esport at the beginning of a sentence

espresso

not expresso

establishment, the**estuary English****Eswatini**

formerly Swaziland, which is worth mentioning at the first reference

Eta

Basque separatists; ETA estimated time of arrival

etc

no full point

Ethio-jazz**Ethiopian and Eritrean names**

Ethiopian and Eritrean people are usually given a first name followed by their

father's first name. As such, the second name does not function in the same way as a western surname and people should be referred to by their first name on second mention, eg the athlete Kenenisa Bekele becomes Kenenisa thereafter. There can be exceptions to this - a person may always be referred to by their first and second names together - so it is worth checking. Also, people are sometimes given their grandfather's first name as a third name, but this tends to function in a similar way to a western middle name and is not included in everyday usage

ethnic

never say ethnic when you mean ethnic minority, which leads to such nonsense as "the constituency has a small ethnic population"

EU

European Union (no need to spell out at first mention); formerly EC (European Community); before that EEC (European Economic Community)

EU presidents

There are three, so don't say "EU president" or "president of the union" without making clear which you mean: president of the European Commission (currently Ursula von der Leyen), president of the European parliament (currently Roberta Metsola), or president of the European Council (sometimes referred to as president of the EU), appointed for a two-and-a-half-year term with the possibility of renewal once (currently Charles Michel).

To add to the confusion, there is also a presidency of the Council of the European Union, held by a national government, which rotates among member states every six months

EU27

not EU-27 or EU 27

euro

currency; plural euros and cents

Euro

should not be used as a prefix to everything European, but Euro-MP is an acceptable alternative to MEP

Euro Disney

runs what is now called Disneyland Paris

Eurogroup

euroland, eurozone

Europe

includes Britain, so don't say, for example, something is common "in Europe" unless it is common in Britain as well; to distinguish between Britain and the rest of Europe the phrases "mainland Europe" or "elsewhere in Europe" may be useful

central Europe, eastern Europe, western Europe**European Commission**

the commission after first mention; do not abbreviate to EC

European convention on human rights**European Council/Council of the European Union (EU Council for short)/Council of Europe**

all different institutions so ensure the correct name is being used. The European Council is made up of the heads of state or government of EU member states and considers the general political direction of the EU; the EU Council is made up of government ministers from member states, grouped by policy area, and works on EU laws; the Council of Europe is not an EU body but an organisation set up to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law across Europe

European court of human rights

nothing to do with the EU: it is a Council of Europe body; sits in Strasbourg. To avoid confusion, call it the “Strasbourg court” or the “human rights court” after first mention rather than the “European court”

European court of justice

the highest court in the European Union in matters of EU law; sits in Luxembourg

European Economic Area**European parliament****European Space Agency (Esa)**

not ESA

European stability mechanism

ESM for short

Eurosceptic

sceptical about Europe, not just the euro

Eurovision song contest**evacuate**

You can evacuate a place, or people from a place. So “the islands were evacuated of thousands of people” and “thousands of people were evacuated from the islands” are both correct

evangelical

fundamentalist wing of Christianity

evangelist

someone who spreads the gospel

Evening Standard

no longer the London Evening Standard

eventually

often unnecessary, as in “the FTSE 100 drifted back, eventually closing 33.9 points lower at 5244.2”; the stock market always closes eventually

every day

adverb meaning daily: it happens every day

everyday

adjective meaning commonplace: an everyday mistake

every parent’s nightmare

avoid this cliché

evoke or invoke?

If you invoke the spirit of Picasso, you’re trying to summon his soul up from the grave; if your paintings evoke the spirit of Picasso, it means their style reminds viewers of that artist’s work

Ewok**exalt**

praise someone; **exult** rejoice

“Tony Blair was exalted as exultant New Labour supporters exulted”

exceptional

above average; **exceptionable** something you take exception to

“The roast beef was exceptional, the yorkshire pudding exceptionable”

exchequer, the**exclamation marks**

Use sparingly! (As Scott Fitzgerald said, it is like laughing at your own jokes)

exclusive

term used by tabloid newspapers to denote a story that is in all of them

execution

the carrying out of a legally authorised death sentence, so a terrorist or soldier, for example, does not “execute” someone

exhausting

tiring; **exhaustive** thorough

ex officio

by right of position or office; ex parte on behalf of one party only

exorcised

having had evil spirits removed; often used erroneously for **exercised** having one’s

passions inflamed by something

expat, expatriate

not ex-pat or expatriot; this is “ex” meaning “out of” (as in export, extract), not “ex-” meaning “former” (as in ex-husband).

The term is redolent of the days of empire and used only to describe Brits abroad, who might more accurately be termed emigrants

explained

“said” is normally sufficient

exploitative

rather than exploitive

Export Credits Guarantee Department

ECGD at second mention

exposé**extracurricular, extramarital, extraterrestrial, extraterritorial****“extrajudicial killing”**

should be used only when quoting someone

extrovert

not extravert

eye level

no hyphen

eyes

is being used increasingly for “considers”, but it doesn’t mean that. You might get away with “BoS eyes up Abbey” meaning considers it as a takeover target, but not “BoS eyes online insurance” meaning BoS is considering setting up an online sales operation

eye-watering

The pace at which a fresh metaphor becomes a tired cliché seems to have increased in recent years; this one saw a huge increase in 2009 – although curiously, while “eye-watering” is only ever applied to money (“eye-watering sums”), its adverbial near relative is more versatile (“an eye-wateringly beautiful woman”, “an eye-wateringly sharp sauvignon” and so on). The danger, as ever, is that the expression loses its force from overuse

eyewitness

one word, but witness is preferable, except in the Guardian’s Eyewitness picture spread

T

Eyjafjallajökull

Icelandic volcano that brought peace to the skies for a short time in 2010

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