

The Guardian and Observer style guide

Guardian and Observer style guide: V

'Who gives a fuck about an Oxford comma?' **Vampire Weekend**

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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



videotape

📷 Illustration: Jakob Hinrichs

v

for versus, not vs: England v Australia, Rochdale v Sheffield Wednesday, etc

vagina or vulva?

The vagina is an internal organ, the muscular tubular organ that connects the genitals to the uterus; not the same thing as the vulva, the female genitals.

As the reader who pointed out one of the many examples of our getting this wrong said: "I am sure an article that used the term testicles to describe the penis would be corrected. Why do you accept this error for women?"

V&A

abbreviation for Victoria and Albert Museum

Vajpayee, Atal Bihari

former prime minister of India

Val d'Isère

Valentine's Day

T

valley

lc, eg Thames valley, Ruhr valley, the Welsh valleys, valley girl (California); but Silicon Valley

Valium

TM; a brand of diazepam

Valparaíso**Valuation Office Agency**

(VOA after first mention) an executive agency of HM Revenue & Customs, it compiles business rating and council tax valuation lists for England and Wales but not Scotland, where the job is done by the Scottish Assessors

Vanessa-Mae

violinist

Van Gogh, Vincent

(1853-90) Dutch artist; note that as with most Dutch names it is Van Gogh when just the surname is used (a Van Gogh masterpiece) but van Gogh with the forename (a masterpiece by Vincent van Gogh)

Van Rompuy, Herman

Belgian ex-president of the European Council. The Van is capped up when his forename is used, ie Herman Van Rompuy

Vanuatu

archipelago in the South Pacific Ocean, formerly New Hebrides; its people are Ni-Vanuatu, not “Vanuatians”

vapour

but **vaporise**

Vargas Llosa, Mario

Peruvian writer and politician, born 1936; his son Álvaro is also a writer

variant

the correct term for a different form of a virus; avoid using the term strain unless in direct quotes. In relation to Covid-19, significant variants in the UK have included Omicron (B.1.1.529) and Delta (B.1.617.2)

Vaseline

TM; call it petroleum jelly

VAT

value added tax; no need to spell it out

Vatican City

no “the” (but the Vatican)

Vaughan or Vaughn?

Frankie Vaughan (late singer), Johnny Vaughan (broadcaster), Michael Vaughan (cricketer), Sarah Vaughan (late singer).

Matthew Vaughn (film producer), Robert Vaughn, Vince Vaughn (actors)

VE Day

8 May 1945; **VJ Day** 15 August 1945

Vehicle and Operator Services Agency

Vosa after first mention. Body that regulates the MoT test, formed by a merger of the Vehicle Inspectorate and Traffic Area Network

vehicle tax

not “road fund licence” (abolished in 1937) or “road tax”, which tend to be used by petrolheads to suggest, wrongly, that this duty is hypothecated for road maintenance. All taxpayers pay for roads, not just motorists.

[The oddly fascinating history of ‘road tax’](#)

Velázquez, Diego

(1599-1660) Spanish painter

Velcro

TM

veld

not veldt

venal

open to bribery

venial

easily forgiven

venerable

worthy of reverence, not just old

venetian blind**Venice Biennale**

thereafter biennale

veranda

not verandah

verdicts

recorded by coroners, returned by inquest juries

Verkhovna Rada

(supreme council) Ukraine’s parliament

vermilion**verruca**

not verucca

very

usually very redundant.

“Substitute ‘damn’ every time you’re inclined to write ‘very’. Your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be” (a quotation often attributed to Mark Twain but now thought to be the advice of William Allen White)

Vespa

scooters

Vesta

curries

veterinary**veto, vetoes, vetoed, vetoing****Viagra**

TM; the generic is sildenafil citrate

vicar

a cleric of the Anglican church (which also has rectors and curates, etc), not of any other denomination.

A priest writes: “A vicar is a person who is the incumbent of a parish, and the term is a job description in the same way that editor is a job description. All editors are journalists but not all journalists are editors. In the same way, all vicars are priests, but not all priests are vicars. Some priests are chaplains; some (like me) are forensic social workers; some are retired; some are shopworkers; some are police officers”

vice-chair, vice-chancellor, vice-president**vice versa****vichyssoise**

If you are not sure how to spell it, simply warm it up and you’ve got a nice bowl of leek and potato soup

video link**video game**

preferable to computer game, and two words, although Sheffield is the home of the National Videogame Museum

videotape

noun and verb, although normally shortened to video or tape; the two are interchangeable - Did you video that programme? No, I taped something else

vie, vying**Vietnamese names**

These are written in three parts eg Tran Dai Quang (family name/middle name/given name); on second mention use the given name eg Quang (except in leading articles: Mr Quang)

Vientiane

capital of Laos

Villa-Lobos, Heitor

(1887-1959) Brazilian composer

virtuoso

plural virtuosos

virus

not the same as a bacterium, but we often confuse the two

vis-a-vis

no accent

vocal cords

not chords

Vodafone**voiceover****voilà****volcano**

plural volcanoes

volcanology

not vulcanology

Volgograd

Russian city known as Tsaritsyn until 1925 and Stalingrad from 1925 to 1961

von der Leyen, Ursula

the president of the European Commission. Do not cap up the v or d when just her surname is used, unless it starts the sentence. So, for example: “The Brexit talks brought von der Leyen to despair.”

voodoo

use for fictional sorcery or metaphorical trickery, eg, statistical voodoo on the figures

Voodoo

Use for African-based religion also practised in the Caribbean and southern states of

the US; but use relevant spelling when referring to the religion in specific countries: **Vodou** in Haiti, **Vodum** in Brazil, **Vodú** in Cuba, **Vodun** in west Africa and **Vudú** in the Dominican Republic

vortex

plural vortices

vote of confidence

if a confidence motion is tabled by the government in parliament it is referred to as a vote of confidence. If it is tabled by the opposition it is a vote of no confidence. In either case it is fine to refer to a “confidence vote” as shorthand in furniture.

If 15% of Conservative MPs write to the chair of the party’s 1922 Committee it triggers a vote among Tory MPs of no confidence in the leader

voting systems

lc, but may be abbreviated after first mention, eg first past the post (FPTP), alternative vote (AV), single transferable vote (STV)

vulnerable people

not “the vulnerable”, and not to be used as a synonym for disabled people. Generally used in the UK to refer to adults who may be at risk of neglect or abuse because they need care and support, and to whom the state has a safeguarding responsibility.

In relation to coronavirus, use the term clinically extremely vulnerable people.

vuvuzela

not vuvuzuela

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