

# V&A editorial style guide

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## Caption Format

### Example

Product name, type of object, artist/designer, date, country. Museum no. © rights holder of the image

Little Heavy, chair, Ron Arad, 1989, England. Museum no. W.17-1993. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

## Portraits, photographs and paintings:

### Caption Format

### Example

Title, sitter, by artist, date, country. Museum no. © rights holder of the image

The Day Dream, portrait of Jane Morris, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1880, England. Museum no. CAI.3. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

## Examples of correct captions:

### Detail of a larger object:

### Images showing a range of similar objects:

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## **Copyright**

### Out of copyright

V&A

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

V&A

V&A

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London

3rd party

V&A

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London/ [as specified by the rights holder]

### Out of copyright

Out of copyright as V&A took photograph more than 70 years ago

Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

3rd party

V&A

3rd party

3rd party

© [As specified by the rights holder]

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photograph: [as specified by the photographer]

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# Key style points to keep in mind when editing the V&A website:

## Tone

- Use a friendly, accessible tone. Try to be informative and authoritative without being overly formal or academic.
- When referring to the Museum, use ‘the V&A’ for the first mention, followed by ‘our’ or ‘we’, e.g. ‘our collections/we are launching a project....’ – see V&A name
- Aim for clarity, simplicity and ease of understanding. Choose the simplest word for the job and get to the point early.
- Include key/technical terms relating to the subject, but be sure to explain what they mean.

## Format

- All text should stand alone. Try to assume the reader has landed directly on this page and hasn’t seen the rest of the website.
- Do not directly refer to images in the text of an article (e.g. do not write “as can be seen in the image above”)
- Links should be written so that the destination is clear e.g. Find out more about Medieval Revivals Style NOT More information can be found here.
- Sentence case should be used for the titles of web pages and for headings/subheadings (i.e. only the first word is capitalised) – **see Capitalisation**
- Bold should only ever be used for headings/subheadings.
- Captions follow a distinct style online – **see Captions**
- Say Room instead of Gallery, e.g. Room 101 NOT Gallery 101.

## Punctuation

- Paragraph your text – large bodies of text can be off-putting.
- Full stops should be followed by a single space. Do not use double spaces online.
- Italics should be used for the official titles of books, artworks, exhibitions, plays and films. Use single quotation marks for titles of poems, essays or book chapters – **see Italics**
- Use double quotation marks for all direct quotations – use single quotation marks for a quotation within a quotation e.g. “When I say ‘I am ready’, I mean I am ready” – **see Quotations**
- V&A departments, galleries and public facilities are capitalised, e.g. Word & Image, the Ceramics department, the Textiles studio/section, Arms & Armour, the Lunchroom – **see Capitalisation**
- S-spelling (organisation NOT organization) should be used throughout, unless it’s an original quotation.

## Editorial Style Guide

### Abbreviations and acronyms

- At the first mention, write the name in full with the abbreviation or acronym in brackets, e.g. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Thereafter, use the abbreviation or acronym. For an acronym as familiar as the BBC, this is not necessary.

- Acronyms should contain no punctuation and no spaces e.g. NAL, RIBA. They should be completely capitalised, with the exception of brand names that deliberately style themselves differently.
- Don't use a full stop after an abbreviation if it includes the last letter of the abbreviated word, e.g. Mr, Mrs, Dr, St, Ltd

## **Accents**

Use accents correctly for all languages, including Central European and Scandinavian ones.

Examples: cliché, communiqué, café, façade, résumé, protégé.

Note that there are no accents on French capital letters, e.g. Ecole

## **Affect vs effect**

'Affect' is a verb (action) e.g. 'The crack affected the price of the vase'

'Effect' is a noun (thing) e.g. 'The crack has had a negative effect on the price of the vase'

## **Ampersands (&)**

- An ampersand, rather than 'and' or + should be used to join words in company names (Morris & Co., V&A), but not in descriptions or titles (Arts and Crafts', Virgin and Child')
- Use an ampersand for school subjects (e.g. 'these activities are suitable for Design & Technology and Art & Design' students.

## **Apostrophes (see also It v it's and Possessives)**

- Use apostrophes to indicate possession e.g. Tipu's Tiger, and contractions e.g. isn't

- Never use apostrophes to indicate a plural, this is always incorrect: (these painting's)
- Don't use an apostrophe with plural abbreviations, e.g. MPs (not MP's)
- Don't use apostrophes to indicate plural numbers such as decades e.g. 1890s NOT 1890's

## **Attribution**

Avoid the phrase 'attributed to'. Say: 'possibly made by' or 'probably made by'

## **Bold**

Should only ever be used for headings/subheadings

## **Bibliographies**

(see Citations)

## **Birth and death dates**

Only use birth and death dates after the name of the person deceased. Do not add birth dates for living people. The dates should be included after the first mention of a person and should only include the year, not the day or month e.g. 'Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806 – 59)'

## **Book titles (see also Citations/Titles of works of art)**

Should be italicised – do not use inverted commas or bold.



## **Britain/England/UK**

See Places

## **Bullet points**

Use initial capitals for each new bullet point. Do not put full stops at the end of bullet-points, unless the point contains more than one complete sentence.

## **(Brackets)**

- Use round brackets in running text to set off a phrase within a sentence.
- If an entire sentence is contained in brackets, put the full stop inside the brackets.
- If a bracketed phrase comes at the end of a longer sentence, put the full stop outside the brackets.
- Use square brackets only to add clarification within quotations, e.g. 'They [the visitors] were delighted with the tour.'

## **Capitalisation (see also Titles of works of art)**

### **Page titles**

Sentence case should be used for page titles and sub-headings (i.e. a capital for the first letter and then lower case for all other words).

Exceptions: when the title of the page reflects the official title of an exhibition or specific programme, e.g. V&A Public Programme or

Undressed: A Brief History of Underwear – these use Title Case.

## A NOTE ON TITLE CASE

In title case, all **nouns** (things), **verbs** (actions), **adjectives** (describe things) and **adverbs** (describe actions) are capitalised. All **articles** (a, an, the), **prepositions** (in, from, with etc.) and **conjunctions** (and, but, for etc.) are always lower case unless they are the first word.

**Note:** it is not a rule that all small words are put in lower case and all longer words put in upper case. 'Be' and 'is' are verbs, and so should be capitalised, despite being short, 'between' is a preposition, so should be lower case, despite being a longer word.

### Use CAPITALS for the following:

- V&A departments, galleries and public facilities, e.g. Word & Image, the Ceramics department, the Textiles studio/section, Arms & Armour, the Lunchroom.
- Ranks and titles, when associated with a proper name, e.g. President Clinton or Queen Elizabeth.
- Full job titles, e.g. the Master of the Ordnance, the Professor of Fine Arts, the Duke of Buckingham, the King of France. Otherwise use lower case, e.g. 'the duke spoke to the prime minister for five minutes'.
- These style names, whether nouns or adjectives, are capitalised: Renaissance, Gothic, Impressionist, Modernist, Postmodernist, Neo-classical, Cubist. But classical, medieval and modernist are all lower case – if in doubt check the dictionary.
- Capitalise 'God' when used as a name but not as a common noun e.g. 'he dedicated the picture to God', 'this is a painting of a pagan god'.
- The names of buildings, bridges, rivers, mountains, etc., e.g. the Strand Continental Hotel, Brooklyn Bridge, Westminster Abbey, the Hudson River, Lake Constance.

- Brand names, e.g. Hoover, Volkswagen, Formica.
- Political parties, e.g. Labour, Conservative, and for religious or economic labels – when formed from a proper name, e.g. Buddhism, Christian, Marxist, Napoleonic.
- Geographical areas or political divisions when recognised and definite, e.g. South-East Asia, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, the North.

**DO NOT use capitals:**

- to describe a general area, e.g. northern England, southern Scotland. Capitalise the term ‘the West’, but not when used as an adjective, e.g. western civilisation. When used non-specifically, use lower case for east, west, south, north.
- for job descriptions and qualifications, e.g. ‘he is an accredited conservator’. ‘Jane Smith, Curator of Sculpture, met with John Brown, curator of the exhibition’ – Curator of Sculpture is Jane Smith’s title, but ‘curator of the exhibition’ is John Brown’s job description.
- DO NOT capitalise the names of the seasons:  
spring/summer/autumn/winter

## Captions

Every V&A image caption should adhere to the style laid out below:

**Objects with no product name:**

Caption Format	Example
----------------	---------

Object, artist/designer, date, country. Museum no. © rights holder of the image	The Bullerswood Carpet, William Morris and John Henry Dearle, 1889, England. Museum no. T.31-1923. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London
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### Objects with product name:

Caption Format	Example
Product name, type of object, artist/designer, date, country. Museum no. © rights holder of the image	Little Heavy, chair, Ron Arad, 1989, England. Museum no. W.17-1993. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

### Portraits, photographs and paintings:

Caption Format	Example
Title, sitter, by artist, date, country. Museum no. © rights holder of the image	The Day Dream, portrait of Jane Morris, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1880, England. Museum no. CAI.3. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

- Note: we do not usually include object dimensions or materials in web captions.
- Where loan organisations have stipulated the content/format of captions we must adhere to these.
- ‘Unknown’, can be used in place of the name of maker/designer/photographer. This is useful if a page contains images of several objects, some of which have a known maker, while others do not.

**Examples of correct captions:**

Americans Working Overhead, sticker, Banksy, about 2004, England. Museum no. E.389-2005. ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London/Banksy

Vase, Elkington & Co., 1876, England. Museum no. 562-1877. ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The Day Dream, portrait of Jane Morris, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1880, England. Museum no. CAI.3. ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Peepshow depicting the interior of the Crystal Palace in London, 1851, Germany. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photograph: Dennis Crompton

**Detail of a larger object:**

The Jesse Cope (detail), about 1310 – 25, England. Museum no.175-1889. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

**Images showing a range of similar objects:**

Christmas cards, late 19th century, England. Museum nos (clockwise from top): E.1996-1953/E.378-1971/ E.1971-1953/E.380-1971. ©Victoria and Albert Museum, London

**Images containing multiple works by the same maker:**

Bowls, Lucie Rie, 1976 – 80, England. Museum no. C.43-1982/C.44-1982/C.45-1982. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

### Images containing multiple works by different makers:

Left to right: Dish, Ruth Duckworth, 1959. Museum no. CIRC.241-1959; Vase, Hans Coper, 1958. Museum no. CIRC.154-1958; Bottle, Lucie Rie, 1959. Museum no. CIRC.126-1959. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

### If the maker and designer are different:

Console Table, designed by William Kent, made by John Boson, about 1730, England. Museum no. W.14-1971. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

If the date of design and date of production are not significantly different (within a decade of each other), state the **date of production only**. If there was a significant gap between design and production, state both dates, e.g.

Washstand, designed by William Burges, 1805, made by John Walden, 1879, England. Museum no. W.4 to D-1953. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

## Copyright

Follow the guidelines below for every image published on the website.

**REMEMBER:** you are crediting both the person/organisation who took the photograph (usually the V&A) and the copyright owner of the object pictured. Information on who owns the copyright can be found on VADAR.

Rights holder of the work	Rights holder of the reproduction	Credit line
---------------------------	-----------------------------------	-------------

	(image/footage)	
Out of copyright	V&A	© Victoria and Albert Museum, London
V&A	V&A	© Victoria and Albert Museum, London
3rd party	V&A	© Victoria and Albert Museum, London/ [as specified by the rights holder]
Out of copyright	Out of copyright as V&A took photograph more than 70 years ago	Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London
3rd party  V&A	3rd party  3rd party	© [As specified by the rights holder]  © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Photograph: [as specified by the photographer]

## Centuries (See also Dates)

- Hyphenate when using as an adjective, e.g. 19th-century carpet.  
Don't hyphenate the noun: the 19th century.

- Hyphenate mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, but not early 20<sup>th</sup> century or late 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Use ‘the 19th century’ – not ‘the 1800s’ or ‘the nineteenth century’. Do not use superscript e.g. 16<sup>th</sup> NOT 16<sup>th</sup>
- Some people are confused by the naming of centuries, so it may be better to give a date range, e.g. 1830 – 70

## Circa

Do not use ‘circa’ or ‘c.’ or ‘ca.’, instead write ‘about’, e.g. ‘about 1850’.

## Citations

Use the Chicago citation system. A hard copy is available in the NAL but you can access the basics online at

[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

## Examples:

Brown, David Blayney. *Romanticism*. London: Phaidon, 2001. National Art Library pressmark: 602.AB.1797

Brewer, John. *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. London: HarperCollins, 1997. National Art Library pressmark: 399.A.0040

For two or more authors, only the name of the first is inverted, e.g.

Jackson, Anna, with Morna Hinton. *The V&A Guide to Period Styles: 400 Years of British Art and Design*. London: V&A Publications, 2002. National Art Library pressmark: REF 745.03 JAC



Articles in a journal use single quotes for the article title, with the journal title in bold.

'Rethinking the Arcanum'. *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth Century Porcelain*, edited by Michael Yonan and Alden Cavanaugh. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009

## Colons (see also Semicolons and Dashes)

The **colon** is used to separate two independent clauses when the second explains or illustrates the first, e.g. 'They unpacked their lunch: eggs, chicken, fruit and beer'.

## Commas

- These should be used to aid clarity, break an otherwise lengthy sentence and to reduce ambiguity.
- Use two commas to enclose a part of a sentence that can be removed without altering the overall sense e.g. 'the fence, which they had painted the day before, lay flat on the ground'
- 'He was born in Chichester, Sussex, and studied in London'.
- Note that the following does not have a second comma: 'Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough was a close friend of the queen'.
- A comma should not precede 'and' in a sequence unless other items in the list also include 'and', e.g. 'He studied history, philosophy and art'
- 'The departments of art and design, science and technology, and religious studies'
- Commas should be used carefully around the titles of works e.g. 'Jane Austen's novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, was published in 1813'

This is **wrong** because it incorrectly implies that *Pride and Prejudice* was Jane Austen's only novel.

‘Jane Austen’s novel *Pride and Prejudice* was published in 1813’  
This is correct as you are referring to one of her many novels.

‘Jane Austen’s second novel, *Pride and Prejudice*, was published in 1813’

This is correct as there can only be one second novel, and ‘*Pride and Prejudice*’ can be removed from the sentence without changing the meaning.

## **Contact details**

- Put a comma after the telephone number, as follows:
- tel: +44 (0)20 7942 2211, seven days a week, 9.00 – 17.30
- All telephone numbers must be international, e.g. +44 (0)20 7942 2385.
- ‘Email’ is one word, not hyphenated. Where possible, use departmental addresses, not personal ones. Add them in the following format:
- For more information, contact  
International.Initiatives@vam.ac.uk

## **Contractions (see also Apostrophes)**

Contractions (isn’t, hasn’t, you’ve, etc.) can be used in blog posts, and in other contexts online if it suits the overall tone (less formal Article pages). Avoid them if a formal style is required, e.g. Information pages.

## **Copyright**

See Captions

## **Dashes** (see also Dates and Hyphens)

An ‘en’ dash (–) is longer than a hyphen (-). Use ‘en’ dash for the following:

- when using in place of a colon. E.g. “En dashes can be used in pairs like brackets – that is, to enclose a word, or a phrase, or a clause – or they can be used alone to detach one end of a sentence from the main body”.
- when separating a range of dates or times, e.g. ‘2 January – 3 October’, or 1927 – 1935.
- Keep spaces around ‘en’ dashes in dates and times, as this is more accessible for screen readers.
- The en dash symbol can be found with keyboard shortcuts:

### **PC**

Hold down Ctrl and press the minus key on the number keypad.

### **MAC**

Hold down alt/option and press the minus key at the top of the keyboard.

- NOTE: never use an ‘em’ dash ( — ), as this is more suited to print copy.

## **Dates** (See also Dashes)

Follow this convention:

- 14 December 1861; Monday 1 May.
- When referring to years, use the shortest possible form: 1971 – 4; 1914 – 18; 1798 – 1810

- Do not say ‘from 1623 – 1626’ or ‘between 1927 – 1935’. Use instead ‘from 1623 to 1626’ and ‘between 1927 and 1935’, or ‘in the period 1927 – 1935’.
- Keep spaces around dashes in dates and times, as this is more accessible for screen readers
- Use ‘en’ dashes NOT hyphens
- Use BC and AD (not BCE and CE). Use BC for every date before the Christian era: e.g. 200 BC. Use AD only when there is a danger of ambiguity: e.g. AD 54
- Use ‘about’ rather than ‘circa’ or ‘around’
- When referring to a year that covers part of two calendar years (e.g. the financial year), use an oblique slash, e.g. ‘the years 1945/6 – 1968/9’)

## **Decades** (see also Dates)

As follows: the 1690s (with no apostrophe).

## **Dimensions**

Use metric only, except in the case of objects that were made in standard imperial sizes (e.g. photographs or mass-produced ceramics). Then use imperial followed by metric. Spell out metres and centimetres unless there are many dimensions in the text.

## **Duration**

Use the following format:

3 October 2003 – 16 February 2004; 10.00 – 1700 (note ‘en’ dashes not hyphens).

## **Email addresses**

Where possible, use departmental addresses, not personal ones. Add them in the following format: For more information, contact [International.Initiatives@vam.ac.uk](mailto:International.Initiatives@vam.ac.uk)

## **England and Britain/UK**

- For objects created before 1922 use England/Scotland/Wales, if possible. If in doubt, use Britain.
- For objects created after 1922 use UK (note no full stops between U and K).
- Use England (or English) only when there is no possibility of the text meaning also Scotland, Wales or Ireland. Sheffield plate was made only in England, but fine silver was also made in Scotland and Ireland. When in doubt, say Britain or British, but beware of including Ireland in this category.

## **Events and exhibitions, dates and times of Years**

Should be used when referring to gallery opening dates and exhibitions, e.g.

‘The Furniture Gallery will open in December 2012’

‘Hollywood Costume 20 October 2012 – 27 January 2013.’

- Dates as follows: Wednesday 12 January 2004. Days of the week can be abbreviated if necessary, but not months.
- The 24-hour clock is used for all events.
- Use a full stop in times, not a colon e.g. 19.00 NOT 19:00

## **Fewer v less**

- Fewer refers to items that can be counted e.g. ‘We have had fewer complaints from visitors this year’.
- Less refers to general amounts e.g. ‘We hope there will be less noise from building works this week’.

## **Full stops**

- Do NOT use full stops in acronyms or at the end of headings, web or email links.
- Do use full stops at the end of every other piece of text, unless it forms part of a bulleted list (see Bullet points).
- Do not hit the spacebar more than once after a full stop.

## **FuturePlan**

No spaces between the words and no ‘the’ in front of it, e.g. ‘As part of V&A FuturePlan, this gallery is being repainted’.

## **Gallery names** (see also Appendix B)

Say Room instead of Gallery, e.g. Room 101 NOT Gallery 101.

Always follow latest terminology on the current published map when naming galleries. Or check with the Development department.

## **Headings**

Do not end with ellipses or a colon.

## Hyphens (see also Dashes/Centuries)

- Compound adjectives – when two or more words function together as an adjective, they should be joined by a hyphen e.g.  
'This 19th-century carpet shows signs of wear'  
'The job has been given to well-known historian Joe Bloggs'

Note: If the above sentences were rearranged, the hyphen would be removed

'The job has been given to historian Joe Bloggs who is well known' –  
'well' is now the  
adjective of 'known'.

'The worn carpet is from the 19th century' – '19th' is now the adjective  
of 'century'.

- Do not use a hyphen to connect adverbs (usually ending in 'ly') to other words, e.g. 'newly qualified doctor', 'visually impaired cat' are NOT hyphenated.
- In a series, hyphens are suspended e.g.  
'You have a choice between a first-, second- or third-class ticket'  
'The museum is seeking an 18th- or 19th-century carpet for its collections'
- Do not use hyphens (-) in place of 'en' dashes (–) in sentences or between ranges of dates.
- Hyphenate Middle-Eastern (but not Middle East).
- Hyphenate points of the compass, so use 'South-East Asia' and 'north-west Scotland' (but don't use capitals in the latter case).
- Ages – use hyphens when an age comes before a noun e.g. 'a five-year-old boy' 'a 250-year-old carpet' or is the noun itself e.g. 'an eight-year-old would love this story'.
- Do not use a hyphen if an age is part of an adjective phrase after the noun e.g. 'this carpet is 100 years old'

**Example:**

Three-hundred-year-old trees: this means an indeterminate number of trees that are 300 years old.

Three hundred-year-old trees: this means three trees that are 100 years old.

Three hundred year-old trees: this means 300 trees that are 1 year old.

**Images (see also Captions)**

Do not directly refer to images in the text of an article. E.g. do not write 'As can be seen in the image to the left this blue vase is severely damaged' or 'The image above demonstrates that the blue vase is severely damaged.'

Instead simply write: 'The blue vase is severely damaged'

**Initials**

Initials should be closed up, with full stops between each letter e.g.

A.W.N. Pugin

Do not use full stops in acronyms.

**Interviews**

The spelling, punctuation and grammar should be corrected (although contractions, such as 'isn't' or 'hasn't', should not be removed). There should be no other alterations unless the content really does not make sense. In that case, the text can be trimmed or cut but must be returned to the author or speaker for approval. All interviews should be credited with the subject's full name unless there is a specific reason not to do so.



## **Italics**

- Italics should be used for the official/published titles of books, artworks, exhibitions, plays and films. Use single quotation marks for titles of poems, essays or book chapters.
- Don't use either italics or quotation marks for non-official titles of museum objects – these should be capitalised with no other punctuation e.g. the Luck of Edenhall, the Great Bed of Ware.
- Use italics and capitals for names of ships, e.g. HMS *Discovery*.

## **Its v it's (see also Contractions)**

“Its” is the possessive form of “it” e.g. ‘the chair is old but its cushion is new’

“It's” is a contraction of “it is” e.g. ‘the chair is damaged but it's going to be restored’

## **Key stages**

Use lower case for generic references e.g. ‘these activities are suitable for all key stages’

Use upper case for specific key stages e.g. ‘these activities are suitable for Key Stage 1’.

## **Museums (see V&A name)**

Use ‘the Museum’ (capital ‘M’)

## Numbers

Use words for numbers from one to ten, figures thereafter. Always use figures in:

- page references
- decimals
- percentages (15%)
- sets of numbers, e.g. 'accidents were recorded each day as 21, 12 and 5'

Numbers at the beginning of a sentence should always be expressed as words. e.g.

'Two hundred sandwiches are eaten in the café every day'

If a number at the beginning of a sentence is too long to write out, reword the sentence.

Use commas in numbers that exceed four figures, e.g. 2550 or 12,500.

When expressing a range of numbers, use the following forms:

- 'between five and six million', not 'between 5 – 6 million nor five – six million'
- 'from 9 to 20 billion', not 'from nine to 20 billion'
- '5000 – 6000', not '5 – 6000', nor '5 to 6,000'
- 10 – 12 millimetres (when expressing dimensions).

**Page titles** (see Capitalisation)

## **Places** (see also Capitalisation)

- Place names should be contemporary with the period under discussion with the current name in brackets, e.g. 'He worked in Leningrad (now St Petersburg) between 1922 and 1928'.
- Avoid historic place names that are no longer familiar. If unsure of how to refer to a place, contact the relevant curatorial department.
- American states should be spelt out, e.g. Massachusetts. For United States use US (no full stops or space between U and S).
- 
- For objects created before 1922 use England/Scotland/Wales, if possible. If in doubt, use Britain. For objects created after 1922 use UK (note no full stops between U and K).
- Use England (or English) only when there is no possibility of the text meaning also Scotland, Wales or Ireland. Sheffield plate was made only in England, but fine silver was also made in Scotland and Ireland. When in doubt, say Britain or British, but beware of including Ireland in this category.
- Use the Netherlands, not Holland.

## **Possessives** (see also Apostrophes and Its v it's)

- For plurals that do NOT end in 's', add an apostrophe BEFORE the 's', e.g. men's, children's. For plurals that DO end in 's', add an apostrophe AFTER the 's', e.g. museums', sisters'
- Names should always end with apostrophe AFTER the 's', e.g. Moses' law, Jesus' love
- For Museum titles, omit the apostrophe, e.g. the Schools Service, the Members Room, a Readers Event; also for titles such as the Hundred Years War

## Quotations and quotation marks

Use double quotation marks for all direct quotations – use single quotation marks only for a quotation within a quotation e.g. “When I say ‘I am ready’, I mean I am ready”.

Longer quotations which do not form part of a sentence can be formatted as a block quote in the CMS:

- Note: it is not necessary to include quotation marks in block quotes.
- Use single quotation marks for the first use of an unusual phrase or expression.
- Don’t use ellipses at the beginning or end of quotations.
- Quotes should be preceded by a comma, e.g. “he said, ‘we have far to go’”.
- For a stronger statement, cry or slogan, use a colon, e.g. “He cried: ‘God for England! Harry and St George!’”
- The closing quotation mark goes before all punctuation, except when the quotation finishes with a question or an exclamation mark (see above example).

## Semicolons

Avoid semicolons where possible as they are a literary device not suited to web text.

Exception: use a semicolon to separate items in a list containing punctuation e.g.

‘The director was joined by several guests for dinner: Geoff, the curator of the exhibition; Martha, the competition winner; and Ian, who gate crashed the party.’

## **Spaces**

Avoid large white spaces. Paragraphs should be separated by one hard return. Full stops should be followed by one space only.

## **S-spelling**

Use English spelling throughout e.g. organisation and not organization. Use American spelling only when part of an original quotation.

## **Subheadings** (see also Capitalisation)

Subheadings should use sentence case (i.e. only the first word capped up) and may use bold to differentiate from other text.

## **Technical terms**

Technical or obscure terms should always be defined after their first mention.

## **Time**

As follows: 2 mins 30 secs; 10.00 – 17.00 (use an ‘en’ dash NOT a hyphen).

Always use the 24-hour clock, except in certain types of body text: ‘In the 18th century ladies took tea at 4pm.’

## **Titles, ranks, honours and offices** (see also Capitalisation)

- Titles of living persons are not used except in press releases and credit lines (when requested by the donor). Peers are an

exception to this rule – e.g. the Duke of Buccleuch, Lady Cobham – they are always referred to by their title. The full name and number of the peer should be included at the first mention, e.g. ‘James Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk’, not ‘James, Duke of Norfolk’.

- Members of the peerage: Duke, Marquess, Earl, Viscount, Baron.
- Official titles of kings/queens can be followed by how they were commonly known, e.g. King Frederick II of Prussia (Frederick the Great)
- NOTE no full stop after Dr, Mr, Mrs, Jr, etc.

## **Titles of works of art**

- All official titles of artworks should be capitalised and italicised with no quotation marks.
- Non-official (not given) titles of museum objects should be capitalised with no italics or quotation marks, e.g. the Luck of Edenhall, the Great Bed of Ware.
- Use English titles for foreign works of art except where the work is universally known by its foreign title.

## **V&A name**

- ‘the V&A’ should be used first, followed by ‘the Museum’, or ‘our/we’, e.g. ‘our collections are unrivalled/we are launching a project....’
- Don’t use any other forms, e.g. the ‘Victoria & Albert Museum’, the ‘V and A’, or the ‘V+A’.

## Web Links

Hyperlinks should be written so that the destination of the link is clear  
e.g.

[‘Find out more about the Medieval Revivals Style’](#)

**NOT** ‘more information about Medieval Revivals can be found [here](#)’

Buttons should have a clear call to action, and be as short as possible  
e.g.

## ‘Who’ v ‘whom’

- Who refers to the subject of a clause (i.e. the person doing something)
- Whom refers to the object of a clause (i.e. the person having something done to them)
- The easy way to remember is that who is equivalent to ‘he/they’ and whom is equivalent to ‘him/them’ (note, both of these end with an ‘m’)
- So, for example, if a question can be answered with ‘he/they’ you should use ‘who’. If a question can be answered with ‘him/them’ you should use ‘whom’ e.g.

‘**Who** painted that picture?’ -> ‘**He/They** painted the picture’

‘**Whom** do you prefer’ -> ‘I prefer **him/them**’

- It also works for sentences that are not questions, just rearrange them in your head:

“He tells the story to **whoever** will listen” -> “**He/They** will listen”

“You will work with our curator, **whom** you will meet at lunchtime” ->

“you will meet **him/them** at lunchtime”.

# **Word and Abbreviation List – a handy alphabetised list of correct terms**

## **A**

à la Russe

a reticello

Aestheticism

Alhambra; the Alhambra (not 'The Alhambra')

alms dish

among (not 'amongst'); while (not 'whilst'), etc.

amphora

Antique – try to avoid; use 'ancient Roman' or 'ancient Greek' instead; otherwise use 'Antique' to avoid confusion with antique furniture, etc.

antiquity

Apostles

archaeology

Art Nouveau

Arts and Crafts

## **B**

back plate

Baptism (of Christ); otherwise lower case

Baroque

Basle, not Bale or Basel

bed curtain; bed hanging; bed cover

Beijing, not Beijung or Peking

bhaskar (caste)

Bible, the Bible

biblical



Black Basalt  
blackwork (embroidery)  
Blanc de Chine (roman, quotes for first use)  
blue-john  
bobbin lace  
Book of Common Prayer  
Book of Hours  
Book of Revelation/Genesis etc – upper case for biblical books  
bookbinder; book cover; book trade; book illumination  
brassmaker; brassmaking; brasswares  
'broderie anglaise'  
Bt (baronet) e.g. Sir Paul Makins, Bt (not 'Bart.', also note the preceding comma)

## C

cabinet ware  
cabinetmaker  
caddy See Tea  
calf skin  
candlestands  
candlestick  
canister See Tea  
canvaswork  
carcase (i.e. of a piece of furniture)  
carte de visite  
cassone/cassoni  
cast iron (n); a cast-iron fireplace (adj)  
casting bottle  
cathedral – St Paul's Cathedral; the cathedral was built...  
century – see Dates in the Checklist  
chair-maker

chalcedony

champlevé

chimneypiece

Chinese white

Chinoiserie

chip carving; chip-carved decoration

choirbook

choir-stall

Christie's

Church/church: 'the church was very wealthy'; St James's Church; but 'the church was built in 1724'; the Anglican church; the Roman Catholic church; the Church of England

circa – do not use, say 'about' instead

classical/ classicism – except when talking of a specific classical revival, e.g. Regency Classicism. But note Neo-classicism

clockmaker; clock case

cloisonné

cloth-of-gold

cm (not closed up, e.g. 10 cm)

Co.

Coadestone

coat of arms

collection (V&A) – lower case, e.g. the textiles collection, the South-Asian collection. Note: Search the Collections is capitalised, as is the Gilbert Collection.

Commedia dell'Arte

Communion/ Holy Communion – as Mass

Composite order

Computer Catalogue (caps)

Constantinople – use up to the time of the Ottoman conquest, afterwards use only Istanbul

contemporary – this can be ambiguous, be sure the time period is clear.

Contemporary Programme (V&A)

Continent, Continental – don't use. Say 'mainland Europe' instead.  
Corinthian order  
costume – for theatrical costume; 'fashion' or 'dress' are preferred for general clothing  
County – spell out, e.g. County Antrim  
court – e.g. the French court, the court of Charles I  
creamware  
crewel work; a crewel-work curtain  
crosier (not 'crozier')  
cross; the True Cross  
cross-banding  
crown – i.e. the government  
Crown of Thorns (for the actual crown, i.e. a relic); crown of thorns (for a depiction)  
Crucifixion (of Christ); otherwise lower case  
C-shaped scrolls  
Cubist  
curtain tie-back  
cut-card work

## D

De Morgan: William De Morgan (not 'William de Morgan')  
death-bed  
delftware  
department (V&A) – lower case, e.g. the Asian department, the Word and Image department, the Personnel department  
Dissolution of the Monasteries  
Doric order  
Dr  
dye destruction print  
dynasty – e.g. the Ming dynasty, etc.

## E

East Asia

Ecole des Beaux-Arts (note hyphen)

electroplated

Elder – Hans Holbein the Elder

email

émail en resille

empire: the Byzantine empire, the Ottoman empire

enamelwork

epergne (roman, no accent)

EU (not EEC or EC)

Evangelists

## F

façade

Far East – do not use; say East Asia instead

fire screen; fire grate; firedog

First World War

First come, first served (not hyphenated)

first-hand (compound adjective)

fleur/fleurs-de-lis (roman)

floruit – do not use; say ‘active’ instead

flower pot

footboard

fore-edge

freehand

freelance

Freeman – e.g. of the Clockmakers’ Company

free-standing

French Style; a French-style table (of the 19th century revival only)  
Freud, Lucian (not Lucien)  
frock-coat  
furniture maker  
Furniture, Textiles and Fashion department – note that it is Fashion  
not Dress  
fusee (roman, no accent)

## **G**

games table  
gelatin-silver print  
gemstone  
Gilbert Collection (capitalised)  
gilding; gilded; painted in gilt  
Gillow: use 'Gillows', but after 1812 'Gillow & Co.'  
gilt bronze; a gilt-bronze mount  
glass painter  
glass worker; glass cutter; glass dealer; glass-making; glassworks  
Gobelin stitch  
Gogh – Vincent Van Gogh  
Goldsmiths' Company – spelt out, since it is a City company  
Gospels  
Gothic  
Greek Revival  
grisaille  
gros point de Venise  
guidebook  
guilloche

## H

Habsburg

hairpin

Handel – George Frideric Handel is the agreed form (as he signed)

handmade

hand-painted

hand-sewn; machine-sewn

hand-weaving

handwoven

hard-paste porcelain

hardstone (not ‘semi-precious stone’). See also Pietre Dure

headboard

headdress

heaven

Heidelberg, not Heidelberg

hell

high-quality machine embroidery

Holland – remember that Holland is a province and not synonymous with ‘the Netherlands’

Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost is old fashioned)

homemade

Hon.: the Hon. Frances M. Talbot; the Rt. Hon. William Kenrick

house of Lancaster

HRH

humpen

Huntley & Palmer (not ‘Palmers’)

## I

imperial (as in ‘imperial China’)

Impressionist

Indian ink

Indian subcontinent – note that this should be avoided and ‘South Asia’ used instead. However, ‘India’ is acceptable in relation to Room 41 as it doesn’t include anything from Pakistan.

inkstand

instrument-maker

Instruments of the Passion

intaglio

International Modernist – but see also ‘modernist’ below

Ionic order

Iran – see Persia

Iznik ware

## **J**

jacquard loom (lower-case ‘j’); jacquard-woven wool

jambiya (dagger)

Jaspar

jewellery

Jia Jing porcelain

Jingdezhen kilns in Jiangxi Province

judgement

junior –abbreviated to Jr

## **K**

Kaendler, Johann Joachim (not ‘Kändler’ as in Grove)

Kakiemon (upper case)

kashmir shawl – lower case for the type. Use upper case for the country, e.g. ‘the wool came from Kashmir’

kelim

keyhole

key-plate

King/king See Kings and Queens in the Checklist (§4.1)

Kirchner, Johann Gottlieb (not ‘Gottlob’ as in Grove)

klismos – as in klismos chair; use quotes (‘klismos’) for first use

km (not closed up, e.g. 10 km)

knife-case

koftgari

Koran – see Qur’an

kph

## **L**

lacemaking (as stonecarving, woodcarving)

large scale; a large-scale design

lawgiver

lead glass

learned (not ‘learnt’)

life-size

lockmaker

long-case clock

longhouse

looking glass – do not use; say ‘mirror’ instead

low-relief decoration

lustreware

Luxembourg, not Luxemburg

Lyons, not Lyon

## **M**

Madame – do not abbreviate

maiolica – tin-glazed earthenware with polychrome decoration

produced in Italy during the Renaissance period



majolica – name used by Minton for their lead-glazed earthenwares  
produced in the mid-19th century  
Marseilles, not Marseille  
Marshal – use this spelling in ‘the Earl Marshal’, as recommended by  
OUP (not ‘Marshall’, as in the Marshall Plan)  
Mary Queen of Scots  
Mass (the church service)  
mass production; mass-produced goods  
maypole  
medieval, but Medieval Revival for the style  
Member of Parliament or MP  
memento mori  
metalwork  
mid – with a hyphen, e.g. ‘mid-term’, ‘the mid-1890s’, ‘the mid-18th  
century’  
Middle East  
mihrab  
millboard  
mirror (not ‘looking glass’)  
mm (not closed up, e.g. 10 mm; avoid mm and use cm instead)  
Mocha ware  
Modernist, Modernism – as in the Modernism exhibition  
Monsieur – do not abbreviate  
Moresque (upper case)  
morocco leather  
mortise  
mother-of-pearl  
motto; mottoes  
mouse trap  
mph  
Mr, Mrs (no full stop)  
Mughal  
Muhammad

Muslim

## N

naïve

needle lace

Neo-classical

neo-Renaissance See Renaissance Revival

Netherlands – use ‘the Netherlands’

netsuke

New York is the city; use ‘New York State’ in full for the state

nightcap; nightgown

Nonconformist

northern Europe

## O

oinochoe (not oenoche)

old-fashioned (adj.)

on to

openwork

opus anglicanum

oriental – use only of East Asia, not the Middle East

ornament – avoid the noun. For many people, an ‘ornament’ is something one puts on the mantelpiece. Its use as a verb is permissible.

over-painting

oysterwork

## P

paint box

Palladianism

paperweight; paperwork

papier-mâché

Parliament; Parliamentary

pâte de verre

pâte-sur-pâte

pattern book

per cent

Persia/Iran – this is a difficult issue. Please refer each case to the Interpretation Editor, who will discuss it with a curator in the Middle Eastern section

PhD

piece-mould

pietra dura – when used as an adjective the phrase is singular, e.g. ‘a pietra dura panel’; when used as a noun it is likely to be plural, e.g. ‘a cabinet inlaid with pietre dure’. But, also ensure that the term is explained as ‘hardstone’

piloti (sing.); pilotis (pl.)

pin cushion

pinjra (‘bird-cage’ work)

piqué work

plc (unless a company specifically uses another form, e.g. PLC)

pole lathe

post-war – make sure that the context makes clear which war is meant

Postmodernism

prayer book

press-moulded glass

printmaker

Prussian blue

punch bowl

punchwork

Panjab

## Q

Quattrocento – do not use. Say 15th century instead

Queen/queen See Kings and Queens in the Checklist (§4.1)

Queen's Ware

Qur'an (not Koran)

## R

Red House (not 'the Red House')

Reims, not Rheims

Renaissance

Renaissance Revival (not 'neo-Renaissance', but occasionally it is necessary to keep 'neo-Renaissance' to refer to specific features rather than the global style – e.g. 'The Renaissance Revival style was characterised by the use of neo-Renaissance motifs')

renamed

re-set (when writing of typesetting)

Restoration – but lower case in such phrases as 'the joy that greeted the restoration of the monarchy'

Resurrection (of Christ)

reused

River Werra

rocaille

Rococo

Rococo Revival

room (V&A) – See §4.4.3. Galleries, venues, facilities and services

rose engine turning

rosewater

royal arms

Royal Family; Royal Household

Royalist – of the Civil War

## S

sadeli (a type of micro-mosaic)

Samarqand

San (not S.)

satinwood

sauce boat

School (e.g. Barbizon School)

Search the Collections

Second World War

self-portrait

semi-circular; semi-precious

semi-precious stone – do not use. See Hardstone and Pietra Dura

senior – abbreviated to Sr

Sète (see Gustave Le Gray, The Great Wave)

sgabello/sgabelli

sharkskin

Sheffield plate

Shiva

side table

silver gilt; a silver-gilt chalice

silverware

sketchbook

slip-cast porcelain (but ‘the teapot was slip cast’)

slop basin

snuff box

Sotheby’s

South Staffordshire – do not use this term, use ‘West Midlands’ instead. However, ‘Staffordshire pottery’ is alright

south-east Asia

St (not St.)

staghorn  
State Coach  
still life, still lifes  
stonecarving  
strapwork  
Strasburg, not Strasbourg or Strassburg  
straw-work  
sundial

## T

table clock  
table fork; tablespoon  
tailcoat  
tarkashi (wire drawing)  
tazza  
tea canister (18th century); tea caddy (Victorian)  
tea cup; tea service (not 'tea set'); teapot; teapoy; tea-urn; tea plate; tea leaves; tea room  
Tehran, not Teheran  
title-page  
topcoat  
torchère(s)  
Torrigiano – Pietro Torrigiano  
tour de force  
transfer-printing  
trompe-l'oeil  
Turkoman  
Typo-foto

## U

Underglaze

ukiyo-e

US – not USA or America

## V

vargueño

verre églomisé

viewpoint

visually impaired (no hyphen)

## W

wall hanging; wall painting

Watcombe Pottery

watercolour; watercolourist

website

West/western – capital for ‘in the West’, but lower case for ‘western’ (e.g. ‘in the western tradition’). Be careful with the use of ‘the West’ as it can easily give the impression of a Eurocentric viewpoint.

while/whilst – use while

wide-ranging

windowsill

wine pot; wine jug

woodcarving; woodcut; wood-engraver/ wood-engraving

work box

wrigglework

writing desk

wrought iron

## Y

yali (mythical beast)

Younger – Hans Holbein the Younger

## Z

zigzag

zwischen goldglas