

## **English Style Guide**

### **The Zimbabwe Journal on Constitutionalism and the Rule of Law**

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## **Preface**

The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure that the style used in the Journal is clear, consistent and correct.

Writing in a consistent style from the very first draft will facilitate the work of authors, editors, and reviewers, eliminating unnecessary corrections at each stage in the preparation of scripts.

The guide is not comprehensive, but instead aims to be a concise and user-friendly guide for everyday use.

# Spelling

The spellings used are found in the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (COD).

**Words ending in -ize, -ise and -yse** One of the clearest differences between the 'Oxford Spelling' and 'British Spelling' concerns the use of -ize (and -ization) in preference to -ise (and -isation). For example: Organize / Organization Legalize / Legalization Recognize

## Exceptions

There are a small number of verbs that must always be spelled with -ise at the end and never with -ize. Here are the most common:

(not: organise / organisation)

(not: legalise / legalisation)

(not: recognise)

advertise	compromise	exercise	revise
advise	despise	improvise	supervise
apprise	devise	incise	surmise
chastise	disguise	prise ('open')	surprise
comprise	excise	promise	televise

There are also a few verbs which always end in -yse:

## British spelling standard

The 'Oxford Spelling' standard largely follows the 'British Spelling' standard. For example:

<b>analyse</b>	<b>catalyse</b>	<b>electrolyse</b>	<b>paralyse</b>
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<b>breathalyse</b>	<b>dialyse</b>	<b>hydrolyse</b>	<b>psychoanalyse</b>
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Centre Enrol / Enrolment Programme

Colour

(not: center) (not: enroll / enrollment) (not: program – unless it is a computer program) (not: color)

If anything is unclear, consult the COD. Where alternative spellings are given in the COD, the first option is preferred. For example: “adviser; advisor” : use “adviser”

One exception to this rule is for “judgement; judgment”, where “judgment” should be used because it is more common in legal documents.

### **Foreign words and expressions**

Most foreign words and expressions are usually italicized (e.g. *inter alia*, *amicus curiae*, *fait accompli*). Some more common expressions should not be in italics (e.g. *ad hoc*, *vice versa*).

Foreign proper nouns (e.g. Commission Internationale de Juristes), people’s names (e.g. Wilder Tayler) and the names of currencies (e.g. centimes) should not be italicized.

### **Limit the use of Latin words and phrases**

Only use non-technical Latin phrases (e.g. *inter alia*) when there is no simple way to convey the point in English. If Latin phrases can be avoided, they should be. For example:

The prosecution will argue, among other things, that the defendant is dangerous.

Not: The prosecution will argue, *inter alia*, that the defendant is dangerous.

### **Geographical names**

In formal reports and publications, geographical names should normally be spelled according to the official usage of the United Nations. A full list of correctly spelled geographical

names can be found here: <http://www.un.org/en/members/>

Germany (not: Deutschland)

Russian Federation (not: Russia)

Occupied Palestinian Territory (not: Occupied Palestinian Territories)

The one exception to this rule is Burma / Myanmar, where both names should be used as indicated here.

Refer to the United States of America rather than America to avoid ambiguity. It is also important not to confuse England, Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales), the United Kingdom (Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and the British Isles (United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland and surrounding islands).

In less formal publications (e.g. press statements and web postings) this rule can be less strongly applied.

### **Forms of address**

Because forms of address and titles vary according to cultural habits and personal preferences, the standard forms "Mr" and "Ms" should be used as far as possible in publications. Academic titles (e.g. Dr, Prof.) are thus normally omitted.

However, titles such as "H.E." (for a minister or ambassador), "H.R.H" (royalty), "Rev." (clergy), "Justice", "Lord" or "Sir" should be retained.

On the first use of a person's name in a report, write their name in full including their title:

Mr George Clooney delivered the presentation...

It is not mandatory to use a person's title in subsequent references.

## Plurals and collective nouns

Sometimes the choice will be determined by context (e.g. formulae [mathematical], formulas [general]; indices [mathematical], indexes [general]).

Most collective nouns, such as the names of organizations (e.g. OHCHR, Amnesty) and countries, are singular. Therefore, the verb should reflect this:

The OHCHR **is** a human rights organization (not: The OHCHR are...)

The United States **is** a large country (not: The US are...)

Common exceptions to this rule include the words 'people', 'staff' and 'police':

The staff **are** content (not: the staff is...)

A large group of people **were** present (not: people was present)

Nouns ending in -ics (e.g. ethics, politics) are singular when they denote an art or science (e.g. politics **is** the art of government), but plural when denoting an activity (e.g. the Prime Minister's ethics **are** questionable).

### Common errors

Please note these common errors and avoid them:

- 'Data' is a plural word (e.g. "more data **are** required")
- Do not pluralize 'training' as 'trainings'

# Personal and impersonal style

In formal documents, the impersonal style should be adopted. In less formal documents, such as personal blogs or speeches, the personal style may be more appropriate.

The impersonal style has a number of distinctive characteristics, of which the most common are:

## **It uses the passive voice:**

The situation was observed to be... (Not: We observed the situation to be...)

A conference was convened to... (Not: We convened a conference to...)

## **It refers to the third person rather than the first person ('it' rather than 'I' or 'we'):**

The OHCHR is a human rights NGO... (Not: We are a human rights NGO...)

It is recommended that... (Not: We recommend that...)

## **It makes 'things' the subjects of sentences, not people:**

This report reveals... (Not: In this report we reveal...) **It avoids run-on expressions (such as 'and so on' or 'etc.')**

Congress participants included lawyers, judges and academics

(Not: Congress participants included lawyers, judges, academics, etc.)

## **It avoids contractions (such as 'don't' or 'can't')**

The officials could not explain... (Not: The officials couldn't explain...)



# Capitalizations

Capitals should be used sparingly and consistently. Too many capital letters can be confusing and distract the reader's attention.

It is difficult to establish concrete rules that apply in every situation, though the following guidelines are useful:

- capitals for the specific;
- lower case for the generic;
- lower case wherever there is any doubt. **When to capitalize** Capitals should only be used for **specific references in the singular** to official titles of persons, councils, historical eras, committees, secretariat units, organizations, institutions or political entities: For clarity, the following words and phrases should not be capitalized in narrative text unless they are used as part of a specific title: rule of law access to justice human rights

## References

(not: Rule of Law) (not: Access to Justice) (not: Human Rights)

Capital letters should only be used when referring to a specific volume, number, part, chapter, appendix, figure or table. For example:

... refer to the data in Table 7... (not: the data in table 7) The following table demonstrates... (not: the following Table...)

However, articles and sections of treaties should be lower case. For example:

article 7... (not: Article 7) section 11a... (not: Section 11a)

## Titles

For the titles of books and journals, use capital letters for all

nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs and the first word following a colon.

For articles, sub-headings and chapter headings, use a capital letter for the first word only (except for proper nouns).

For example:

Book Title:

Not:

Chapter Heading:

Not:

Corporate Complicity and Legal Accountability

Corporate complicity and legal accountability

Applying the law of civil remedies to specific allegations

Applying the Law of Civil Remedies to Specific Allegations

## **States and governments**

The word 'government' should be capitalized when used in reference to a specific government (e.g. **the French Government**), but not in general references (e.g. **judiciaries should be separate from government**).

The word 'State' should always be capitalized when referring to a country (e.g. '**the British State**' or '**assist States in upholding human rights**'). A lower-case 'state' should only be used when referring to a non-country (e.g. **the states of Brazil**).

The phrase '**States Parties**' should be used in ICJ publications (as opposed to **States Party**, **State Parties**, etc.)

## Other examples

Here are some examples of words that should (or not) be capitalized:

<b>Capitalise</b>	<b>Don't Capitalise</b>
Names of languages e.g. English, French	General references to trends, designations or movements  e.g. the human rights movement
Names of stars and planets e.g. Earth	Academic subjects e.g. mathematics, history
	Names of seasons e.g. spring, summer
	The word 'region'  e.g. the Americas region, the Asia- Pacific region

# Numbers, dates and times

## Numbers

Numbers between one and ten should be spelled out in full.

one, two, three... nine, ten. (not: 1, 2, 3... 9, 10)

Numbers greater than 11 should be written numerically. 11, 12, 13... (not: eleven, twelve...)

If mixing numbers greater and less than ten, be consistent:

... 8, 14 and 26 members respectively (not: eight, 14 and 26...)

'Rounded' numbers greater than 1 million should be written as follows:

3 million (not: 3,000,000) 8.3 million (not: 8,300,000)

Specific numbers greater than 1 million should be written numerically:

4,567,972

## Exceptions

Numbers should always be spelled out in full when they are used:

- At the beginning of a sentence: Fifty-five people were killed when...
- In isolated references to dimensions, weights and measures in non-technical texts: Over the past eighty years...
- In fractions in narrative text: Three-quarters of the population... Numbers should always be written numerically when referring to:
- Dates: 5 January 1990
- Decades: during the 1980s (not: during the eighties)

- Percentages: 80 per cent (note: use the words 'per cent')
- Units of money: £3.16
- Ages: The woman was 35 years old
- Page references: On page 5 of the report...

## Dates

When writing dates, the day should be followed by the month and the year without commas. Dates should exclude the 'st', 'nd', 'rd' and 'th' suffixes, and the words "the" and "of". For example:

1 January 1985 (not: 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1985) (not: **the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1985**)

If the name of the day is specified, follow it with a comma:

Tuesday, 1 January 1985

Periods of two days should be referred to as *on* (date) *and* (date): The meeting was held on 7 and 8 October (not: **from 7 to 8 October**)

Periods longer than two days should be referred to as *from* (date) *to* (date): The meeting was held from 7 to 12 October

## Times

When writing times:

- Use the 24-hour system in preference to the 12-hour system
- Write times with a colon between hours and minutes, without "o'clock"

15:00 (not: **3 o'clock**)

For midnight, use the word "midnight" or 24:00 (for periods ending) or 0:00 (for periods beginning)

# Commas and full stops

## Commas

The comma is used to separate clauses and phrases, direct speech, and items in lists.

### The Oxford Comma (Serial Comma, Harvard Comma)

The Oxford Comma is more common in American English than British English, though it is technically correct in both.

A comma should not be used:

- Before 'and' in such phrases as 'judges, lawyers and politicians' However, to be clear, a comma can be used before 'and' in a phrase such as: '... consisted of human rights defenders, lawyers and **judges, and** many other groups...'
- After e.g., etc. and i.e. ... in European countries, e.g. Great Britain, France, etc.
- Before Ltd., Inc., etc New Brand Ltd.

## Full stops and points

The full stop signals the end of a sentence, obviously. It should also be used after abbreviations: Inc. Vol. No. Prof.

But not after contractions (i.e. abbreviations that include the first and last letter of the full word):

Dr

Jr

Mr

Mme

Ms

And not after plurals of abbreviations:

Eds Vols

## Ellipsis

Use an ellipsis (three spaced points...) to denote an omission.  
For example:

Human rights abuses should... be discouraged.

Do not use the following symbols to indicate an ellipsis:

..., (...) [...]

An ellipsis should not be used to denote a tail-off in a list.  
Instead, use 'etc.' or 'and so on', or conclude the sentence as expected in the impersonal voice (see earlier):

The colours are red, blue, etc. (not: the colours are red, blue...)

## Bibliographic references

### Citations and references

#### 1) Books

Author (first name, then last name), Title (use italics), Publisher, Place of publication, Edition number (if applicable), date of publication, page number or paragraph number (if applicable, e.g. in UN documents).

For example:

Nigel Rodley, *The Treatment of Prisoners under International Law*, Clarendon Press – Oxford, Second Edition, United Kingdom, 1999, p.192.

#### 2) Articles and Press Statements

Author (first name, then last name), "Title" (use quotation marks), in Source [e.g. book, journal, review, newspapers, etc.] (use italics), Volume and Number (if applicable), Date, page or paragraph number (if applicable).

For example:

Rachel Murray and Frans Viljoen, "Towards Non Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation: The Normative Basis and Procedural Possibilities before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Union", in *Human Rights Quarterly*, Volume 29, 2007, pp. 86-111.

### **3) Case law**

a) UN Treaty bodies views:

*X v. Colombia*, Human Rights Committee Communication No. 1361/2005, Views of 14 May 2007, UN Doc. CCPR/C/89/D/16361/2005 (2007), para. 7.2.

b) European Court of Human Rights:

*Modinos v. Cyprus*, ECtHR, Application No.15070/89, Judgment of 22 April 1993, para.11

**Note: abbreviations are permitted (e.g. ECtHR)**

c) Inter-American Court of Human Rights:

*Judgment of 8 July 2004*, Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Gómez Paquiyauri v. Peru*, para. 83

d) Inter-American Commission on Human Rights:

*Report No. 42/00 of 13 April 2000*, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Case No. 11.103, *Pedro Peredo Valderrama (Mexico)*, para (if applicable)

e) African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights:

*Malawi African Association et al. v. Mauritania, Communications 54/91 et al*, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, [date of adoption of the decision or the session when adopted - eg. 27th Ordinary Session, May 2000]

f) International criminal tribunals:

*Judgment of 2 August 2001*, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Case of The Prosecutor v. Radislav Krstic "Srebrenica", No. IT-98-33, para. (if applicable)

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h) Working Group on Arbitrary Detention:



*Pastor Gong Shengliang v. China*, Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Opinion No. 21/2008, UN Doc. A/HRC/13/30/Add.1 at 25 (2010), para. 21(b).

#### 4) UN documents

Name, Title (if applicable), Document name, UN document symbol, year of the document (if applicable), page or para.

For example:

- Nicole Questiaux, Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission, Study for the implications for human rights of recent developments concerning situations known as states of siege or emergency, UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1982/15, (1982), para.192
  - Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2004/3 (2003), para. 145.
  - Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 9, The domestic application of the Covenant, UN Doc. E/C.12/1998/24, para. 2. **5) Documents from other IGOs** Name of the IGO, Name of the document, symbol of the document, year, page or paragraph (if applicable). For example:  
*Report on Terrorism and Human Rights*, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, OAS Doc. OEA/Ser.L/V/II.116, Doc. 5 rev. 1 corr. (2002), para. 51
- 6) Weblinks** As punctuation is an important part of many internet addresses, certain conventions of citation punctuation have been changes and/or adapted, such as the omission of full stops: Canada. 2000. *Freedom from Fear: Canada's Foreign Policy for Human Security*. Ottawa, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.  
<http://www.dfaitmaeci.gc.ca/foreignp/humansecurity/menu-e.asp> (Accessed 22 August 2001)

#### Quotations

For quotations, use only the official text from the source. When we have translated the text quoted, indicate it in the

respective footnote: (original in [language], unofficial translation).

When the quotation is made inside a paragraph, use the normal layout.

When the quotation needs to be underlined and it is located at the end of the paragraph, italicize the citation.

For example:

The odious and extremely serious nature of some terrorist acts cannot be used by States as a pretext for avoiding their international obligations with regard to human rights, especially in the case of rights that are non-derogable or *jus cogens*. That great writer on international humanitarian law, Jean Pictet, warned four decades ago that "it would be a disastrously retrograde step for humanity to try to fight terrorism with its own weapons". This was further underlined in the following terms by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:

"An effective international strategy to counter terrorism should use human rights as its unifying framework. The suggestion that human rights violations are permissible in certain circumstances is wrong. The essence of human rights is that human life and dignity must not be compromised and that certain acts, whether carried out by State or non-State actors, are never justified no matter what the ends. International human rights and humanitarian law define the boundaries of permissible political and military conduct. A reckless approach towards human life and liberty undermines counter-terrorism measures".

### **Naming international instruments using acronyms**

Use the official name of the international instrument the first time it is used in the document. For longer documents, acronyms may be used for subsequent references. When the instrument is named in the core text, put it in italic, and in regular when it is referred to in footnote.

For example:

Core text: the Committee against Torture has similarly reiterated that the

*Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* applies extraterritorially.

Footnote text: Article 2 of the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*.

To use acronyms:

1. Avoid the use of acronyms in short documents.
2. Use the official acronyms from the IGO systems.
3. Take care that the same acronyms are not used to identify to distinct instruments and/or bodies. For example do not use ECHR to refer simultaneously to the European Convention and to the European Court.
4. For long documents, include a table of acronyms.

## **Colons, semicolons and parentheses**

### **Keep it short and simple**

Try to be sparing when using parentheses (brackets), colons and semicolons. In particular, try to avoid writing long statements within brackets, which can be very hard to read.

### **When to use a colon**

Colons should be used before a list or an explanation that is preceded by a clause that can stand by itself independently. A colon is used to introduce the second clause.

The following examples show correct usage of the colon:

These are Wilder's favourite jurists: Rodley, Nikken and Robinson.

Wilder's favourite jurists are Rodley, Nikken and Robinson.

## How to use a semicolon

(colon after "jurists") (**no** colon after "are")

If you have two independent clauses, meaning they could stand alone as their own sentences, it is ok to use a semicolon. It eliminates the pause between two statements without using words such as and, but, etc.

Semicolons are often misused; this is how they should be used.

A semicolon is used when you want to form a bond between two statements, typically when they are related to one another.

### Semicolons in lists

In lists, use the semicolon to separate units of a series when one or more of the units contain commas. This often occurs when listing locations, names, dates and descriptions:

ICJ missions took place in Kathmandu, Nepal; London, England; and Paris, France.

Note that a colon (:) is not used preceding 'in' in the example above. However, it would be used if the clause preceding the list were able to stand alone as a sentence:

ICJ missions took place in the following locations: Kathmandu, Nepal; London, England; and Paris, France.

Note that commas, not semicolons, should be used in simple lists:

ICJ missions took place in the following locations: Kathmandu, London, and Paris.

## Hyphens and dashes

### Hyphens

Hyphens are used to connect words that are more closely linked to each other than to the surrounding syntax. Their use should be kept to a minimum and, most of the time, prefixes should not be separated from the next word by a hyphen:

subregion interregional bilateral

However, there are some exceptions to this rule:

1. Some compound words have permanent hyphens. For example: Secretary-General Policy-maker Time-limit
2. When the prefix ends and the word begins with a vowel: pre-eminent re-educate
3. The prefixes non-,ex-,self-: non-conformist ex-directory self-harm
4. When the next word begins with a capital letter: inter-American sub-Saharan
5. Fractions and Numbers: thirty-six one-third
6. When a compound adjective precedes the noun it modifies:

up-to-date information (but: the information is up to date)

twentieth-century law (but: law from the twentieth century)

part-time work (but: work that is part time)

Unless the first word of the compound adjective ends in -ly:

readily available information (not: readily-available information)

poorly worded statement (not: poorly-worded statement)

But...

well-respected lawyer (not: well respected lawyer)

## Dashes

Dashes help to clarify a complex sentence. They create a break in a sentence for explanatory phrases. For example:

The aim was to enhance the efficiency – and the relevance – of the mechanism.

Dashes are also used in page numbers, dates and to denote association:

pp.18-20

1914-18

OHCHR-HRW

However, words should be used instead of dashes for 'from... to...' and 'between... and...'

between 10 per cent and 15 per cent (not: between 10-15 per cent)

## Fonts

The font size should be set at 11 and the font type is Verdana and line spacing 1.15.

### Text width and alignment

It is recommended that the text width be 15.8cm.

Text should be aligned to the left.

## Avoiding bias and stereotypes

It is important to avoid writing in such a way that can reinforce stereotypes in terms of gender, race, nationality, culture and religion.

Please remember the following tips for avoiding potentially offensive language:

### Non-sexist language

Avoid gender-specific words when there are neutral alternatives. The clearest example is to avoid exclusively masculine pronouns (e.g. "his" or "he") when both men and women are the subject.

Other common examples include:

chairperson (not: chairman)

best person for the job (not: best man for the job)

husband and wife (not: man and wife)

artificial / synthetic (not: man-made)

police officer (not: policeman/woman)

spokesperson (not: spokesman)

When it is not possible to use a neutral word, write 'he or she' and not (s)he or other variations.

### **Marginalization of the disabled**

Do not try to fit people with disabilities into a homogenous group:

People with epilepsy (not: epileptics)

People with disabilities (not: disabled / handicapped)

Blind people (not: the blind)

### **Patronizing language towards minority groups**

Do not reinforce the image of people with disabilities as 'unfortunate' or 'pathetic':

People living with AIDS (not: victims of AIDS)

He is a wheelchair user (not: confined to a wheelchair)

People living in poverty (not: poor people)

Disadvantaged / marginalized groups (not: vulnerable groups / those most at risk)

