



# Journo Resources Editorial Style Guide

January 2025

This guide will detail Journo Resources' preferred house style, as well as some common style rules in accordance with AP Style and British English.

Please refer to these guidelines to make the process of writing and submitting work as seamless as possible, and get in touch with your commissioning editor directly if you have any questions. It's also worth knowing that we're regulated by IMPRESS, [so do abide by their code of conduct](#).

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## Content Direction

We know the journalism industry has a lot of problems; this isn't something we shy away from discussing. However, we always take a **constructive and positive approach** to our journalism. We are inspired by [solutions journalism](#) and want to suggest positive actions that we can take to move forward.

While we aim to tackle a wide range of subjects, the overall aim of our pieces is mostly to provide **practical takeaways and advice**. Please bear this in mind when speaking to sources or crafting your piece — we don't want our readers to leave with unanswered questions.

Our target audience consists of both people trying to get their first break in journalism and those looking to progress in their careers as well as those within the first few years of their careers in the industry. We are definitely open to reaching new audiences outside our main target group, but if this is the slant you're going for, discuss it with your editor first.

Most of our content is designed to be **evergreen**, so this is also something to bear in mind when writing. We'll most likely want to reshare articles as a resource in the future, so think about references that might date the piece, especially in the introduction.

Journo Resources is **politically neutral**. We avoid backing particular political parties or sections of the press. We may take a stance on an organisation based on how they treat their staff, but not based on their politics. That said, we firmly believe that people's identities are not political. We stand firmly against racism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism.

## Tone of Voice

- Our tone is always **friendly and approachable**. The general vibe is 'relatable older friend who always gives trustworthy advice'.
- Please try to **avoid jargon** or words that wouldn't be understood by the general public — we don't assume our readers are familiar with journalism terms. If this is unavoidable, always explain the meanings of such terms.
- Unless there's a good reason for it, we try to **steer clear of swear words** in the copy. For the most part, we don't think they're needed.
  - The exception to this might be where expletives are used in a quote from an interviewee that adds strength.
- For the most part, use the **first person plural** (Royal We), instead of "I".

## Length and Structure

Most pieces will be roughly **1,000 to 1,200 words** in length, but running slightly over and under isn't a problem. As a digital publication, we have the luxury of giving pieces the space they deserve. Your editor will confirm a rough word count expected when you are commissioned — reach out to them if you need clarification.

Break the article up into **sections**, with subheadings. This not only gives readers more clarity on the article at a glance, but is also good for SEO.

- Do not use H1 subheads in the body of your article. This is for the title only.
- Use H2 subheads to section your article.
- If needed, use H3 subheads within H2 sections to highlight points.
- You are also welcome to suggest text to break out into info boxes, but this is not necessary.

## Process and Submission

- Unless you have access to our CMS, please submit your article as a Google Doc.
  - Make sure you have granted us editor access!
- Our team will provide you with details of any major edits or queries via both email and Google Doc comments, within an agreed timeframe.
- Once your editor has confirmed receipt of your submission, please send an invoice to [invoices@journoresources.org.uk](mailto:invoices@journoresources.org.uk), with details of the work carried out, and a bank account we can transfer to. We will always confirm a fee with you before commissioning.
- Please note that we are an editorial, accounts, and business team of one, and we do all payments in one go, on the last day of each month. Please get your invoices to us before then to ensure your payment goes through.
- If you are writing for Journo Resources for the first time, please also provide us with a headshot, short bio of about 50 words, and links to socials you would like us to include.

## SEO Best Practices

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) affects how Google finds your articles, which in turn gets your work in front of readers on search results pages. Refer to the checklist below to make sure you have optimised your work before submission.

Google likes to see:

- ☐ **Concise headlines** with the **key search term** of your article towards the front of the headline, preferably within the **first five words**
- ☐ Good **lede** paragraph that **contains your search phrase**
- ☐ **Internal links to relevant content** from Journo Resources' website
  - ☐ Make sure the anchor text for the hyperlink is relevant to the content that the URL lands on
- ☐ Articles of **good length**, minimum 400–500 words (The piece won't even register on Google otherwise.)
  - ☐ **At least 200 words** before the any images or embed content
- ☐ Subsections with **keyword-rich subheads**, formatted as H2 or H3

- ☐ Content that “**answers**” the search query
- ☐ **Meta descriptions** that are keyword-rich
- ☐ **Alt text** on images, briefly describing the image itself (No need to include article-related search keywords, unless also relevant to the image description.)
- ☐ **Image file names** to be formatted as keywords separated by hyphens, and numbered at the end
  - ☐ E.g. yasmin-alibhai-brown-journalist-interview-day-in-life-01, for an article featuring Yasmin Alibhai-Brown as part of the ‘Day in the Life Of’ series

As a general rule of thumb, craft your headline with the reader in mind. What would somebody type into Google to find your article? Think about the keywords people would use in their search, and use them in your headline and lede paragraph.

Understand also the audience’s short- and long-term needs. Your article may answer some of the first things they want to know about. But an SEO-optimised article will also include relevant information to your topic, which will flesh out the content with more depth, and may well give it evergreen status on SERPs (search engine results page).

## Punctuation Guidelines

- Use the Oxford comma.
- Use smart quotes / curly quotes ( ‘ ’ and “ ” ), as opposed to straight quotes ( ' and " ) — this just makes for better typography.
  - Google Docs should already do curly quotes by default. Check under Tools > Preferences > General, and make sure the “Use smart quotes” box is ticked.
- How to type curly quotes when not on Google Docs:  
 Mac keyboard shortcut for **single** curly quotes: Option + ] (for open single) and Option + Shift + ] (for close single)  
 Mac keyboard shortcut for **double** curly quotes: Option + [ (for open double) and Option + Shift + [ (for close double)
- Use a colon directly after the introduction to a quote.
  - E.g. Jenny agreed with having guidelines in place: “It’s important to set goals that are sustainable.”
  - E.g. She says: “It’s important to set goals that are sustainable.”
- Use a comma if the attribution comes after the quote.
  - E.g. “It’s important to set goals that are sustainable,” Holliday says.
- Use the em dash (—) **with** spaces on both sides, to stylistically separate and highlight parts of sentences.

Mac keyboard shortcut: Option + Shift + minus sign

Windows keyboard shortcut: Alt + 0151

- The en dash (–) **without** spaces on either side, is used to denote ranges of numbers or dates (1987–89), scores, or connections (America–Canada border).

Mac keyboard shortcut: Option + minus sign

Windows keyboard shortcut: Alt + 0150

- The hyphen (-) is only used in compound modifiers or compound adjectives. (E.g. record-breaking temperatures; two-week holiday; well-established brand name, nine-year-old child)
  - No need for hyphenation when the first part of the adjective ends in -ly (E.g. family friendly hotel, densely populated city)
- Use square brackets [ ] instead of parentheses ( ) when clarifying something within a quote.
- Use ellipses in square brackets, with a space before and after, when omitting information.
  - E.g. Brown says, “I went to Downing Street [...] and spoke to some Boris Johnson supporters.”
- Use only one space after the ellipses to indicate trailing off in speech.
- For plural possessives, do not include an extra s after the apostrophe.
  - The Johnsons’ house, not The Johnsons’s house

## Headlines

- Use sentence case: Every Word Is Capitalised, Like This.
- Use numerals, even when the number is less than 10.
- In SEO headlines, use the ampersand &, instead of And.
  - Exception: If a project title uses ‘And’, or the ‘And’ directly follows an em dash

## Numbers

- **Spell out all numbers under 10.** Exceptions are listed below.
- Numerals should be used in:
  - Headlines (E.g. 7 Journalist Essentials To Carry In Your Bag)
  - Days of the month (E.g. June 19)
    - Note: Do not use “th” or “rd” in dates.
  - Money (E.g. £4,500; £50 million)
    - Note: Exact figures should be used up to £1 million.
  - Time; see below.
- Numbers — even if over 10 in value — should be spelt out when they lead a sentence.

- Ninety-seven per cent of people... (Leading a sentence)
- The study found 97 per cent of people... (Within a sentence)
- “20 per cent increase”, not “percent”.
  - Exception: In headlines, always use the % symbol.

## Time and Dates

- Use numerals, unless referring to “noon” or “midnight”. (E.g. 5pm)
- Use the 12-hour clock, labelled am and pm as appropriate.
  - The construction “4 o’clock” should only be used if quoting someone directly. In all other circumstances, it should be presented as 4am or 4pm.
- Use am and pm, **without a space** after the numeral, not AM and PM.
- Use a colon to separate hours from minutes. (E.g. 11:25pm)
- Use the format “March 28, 2022” when writing dates.
- Spell out months in full.
- Seasons (spring, autumn) are not capitalised.
- Where possible, list events in order of time, date or day, and place. (E.g. The service was held at 11 am on Friday, July 1, at Westminster Abbey.)
- Use an apostrophe when abbreviating decades. (E.g. ‘90s, not 90’s)

## Locations

- United Kingdom and United States should be spelt out if being used as a noun. (E.g. He was born and raised in the United States.)
- The above should be abbreviated if used as an adjective. (E.g. They became UK citizens back in 2004.)
- UK and the US, not U.K. and the U.S.
- Cardinal directions (north, south) are not capitalised. (E.g. We decided to head south.)
- Directions with regards to locations within the country are capitalised. (E.g. the South West; the West Country)

## Project Titles

- All project titles (books, films, TV shows, music albums, podcasts, etc.) should be italicised in the body of the article.
  - Publications should also be italicised in the body of the article — this also included digital-only publications. For example, *Press Gazette*.
- Smaller parts of projects, such as episode titles and songs should be in double quotes.
  - In text: The most iconic episode of *Rick and Morty* is definitely “Interdimensional Cable 2: Tempting Fate”.
  - In headline: “Break My Soul” in New Beyoncé Album *Renaissance* Causes Job Resignations

## Titles for People

- Only abbreviate and capitalise a title ahead of mentioning someone’s name. (E.g. PM Boris Johnson)
- When the title follows the name, or is just generally mentioned, spell it out in full and **do not capitalise**. (E.g. Boris Johnson, prime minister of the United Kingdom; There is a growing distrust in the prime minister.)
- For medical professionals, only add “Dr” in front of the names of people who have medical degrees.
  - However, you should still include academic letters following a person’s name if mentioning the doctorate or degree licensing is important or relevant. (E.g. Dr Jane Doe, MD.; Sophia Brown, PhD.)
- On the second mention of a titled person, omit their last name. (E.g. Dr Jane said ✓ ; Dr Brown said ×)
  - Same goes for all mentions thereafter in the rest of the article

## Attributing People or Organisations

- List a person’s full name on the first mention, but only by first name thereafter.
  - Exception: When mentioning multiple people with the same first name, use full names
- Spell out the full names of organisations on first mention, with its acronym following in parentheses, if applicable. Use the acronym for subsequent mentions.
- Publications and companies are considered singular nouns. Regardless of whether the name of the organisation seems to be plural, we would use “is” and the simple present tense.
  - E.g. News UK **is** hiring a social media editor. Warner Bros **is** looking for a videographer. The BBC **produces** many types of content.

- When attributing a quote that came from an external source, use past tense (e.g. said, claimed, declared, etc.).
  - Make sure to mention where the quote originated from, with a hyperlink to the external article. (E.g. “According to News UK”; “as reported by *The Guardian*”)
- If the quote was obtained first-hand by Journo Resources, use present tense (e.g. says).
- Use brackets, instead of parentheses, when clarifying something inside a quote.
- Use “[sic]” — italicised and in brackets — directly after a word within a quote that is incorrect, to indicate that the unexpected form reproduces the original speech that is quoted, and is not an editorial error on our part.
- When omitting information, use a space before and after the square brackets containing ellipses. (E.g. Jack says: “I went to Downing Street [...] and spoke to some Boris Johnson supporters.”)
- Use only one space after the ellipsis to indicate trailing off when speaking.

## Interviewees and Sources

- Diversity is important to us — please try to feature a range of voices from different backgrounds within your piece.
  - This includes, but isn’t limited to, factors such as gender, geographical location, race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality etc.
  - Interviewees should not just be asked about their lived experiences, but also the areas in which they are an expert.
- Similarly, where you are using research material, we would aim to draw from a good range of sources. Statistics in an article should not all come from one university, for example.
- We always link to source material, so we are transparent about where our content comes from. If you’ve used a quote, research, or a study, hyperlink to it and mention where it has come from within the text.

## Images

- Where possible, we would appreciate images from your interviewees to help illustrate the piece. Ideally, these should be in **landscape** orientation and **at least 700px wide** so they can work with the format of our site. Our team will take care of stock photos!
- Send us images for your article via WeTransfer or a shared Google folder. Include a link to this within your article on Google Doc.

- We obviously need to be aware of copyright infringement, so please be mindful when sourcing images from social media. Images uploaded onto interviewees' social media channels, that have clearly **not** been taken by professional photographers or news agencies, are usually fair game. (They will still need to be properly credited, of course — see below section on sources and crediting.)
  - It is best practice to ask permission when conducting the interview, whether it's okay for us to go through their social media for images to use in the article. If the answer is no, have the interviewee send alternative images of their choice.
- Some notable image sources to be aware of.
  - Flickr: Only use images from Flickr if they have been made available to download. Apply proper credits; see below.
- Do not use gifs unless they are of very good resolution or quality, and can illustrate your discussion very well.

## Crediting Images

### Crediting in-article images

- At the end of each image caption, include accreditation in the following format:  
**Image credit:** [Photographer / Owner / Supplier / Social media handle / Username] / [Official source / Stock image site / Photography sharing site / Social media platform]
  - E.g. Image credit: @catharinacheung / Twitter; Image Credit: Steve Granitz / Getty Images
- For multiple images:  
**Image credits:** [Photographer / Owner / Supplier / Social media handle / Username] (L / C / R) / [Official source / Stock image site / Photography sharing site / Social media platform]
  - E.g. Image credits: Derek Braithwaite (L) & Rod Long (R) / Unsplash

### Crediting header images

- At the end of the entire article, on a separate line, include header image accreditation in the following format:  
**Header image courtesy of** [Photographer / Owner / Supplier / Social media handle / Username] **via** [Official source / Stock image site / Photography sharing site / Social media platform]
  - E.g. Header image courtesy of @journoresources via Instagram; Header image courtesy of *Stranger Things* via Netflix

**\*\* Include accreditation for the images you're providing within your Google doc article.**

- You can put the file name and respective image accreditation throughout your article if you have specific ideas on where your images should be inserted.
- If you're happy for the editors at Journo Resources to decide how your images should be used, you will still need to include the accreditations at the end of your document, making sure it's clear which credit goes with which image files.

# Inclusivity Guidelines

## Gender & Sexuality

- Always refer to people by their preferred pronouns.
  - For clarity, be sure to ask this question when conducting interviews.
- That said, do not put the spotlight on people's personal choice of gender expression. There is no need to mention if someone is transgender, nonbinary, or does not identify with their gender assigned at birth — simply bypass the explanations, and use their preferred pronouns.
  - Exception: If someone uses a mixture of pronouns or pronouns some readers may be unfamiliar with (eg. Xe/Xem or She/They) and this is reflected in the article you may introduce them.
    - Jane Doe (she/they) OR Jane Doe, who shes Xe/Xem pronouns.
  - Exception: When someone is specifically talking about their trans journey or experiences, or has requested that their choices be highlighted.
- When referring to adults who identify as women, use woman/women, not girl(s).
  - Exception: When quoting someone directly
- When referring to actors who identify as women, use actor, not actress.
  - Exception: When quoting someone directly, or referencing an award category
- “LGBTQ+” is inclusive of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer / questioning, and all other identities that do not fit under the cisgender / heteronormative umbrella.
  - “LGBTQIA+”, which specifically names intersex and asexual groups as well, can also be used.

## Race

- When referencing someone's race who is Black, use “Black”, capitalised.
- Do not capitalise “white” when referencing someone's race.
- Use “person/woman/women of colour” to refer to non-white people.
  - Unless part of a quote, avoid initialism such as BIPOC or BAME. It is best to be specific about the people you write about, rather than use general umbrella terms.
- “Asian” refers to someone whose heritage originates from anywhere east of Europe and Pakistan, north of Australia, and south of Russia — this is a **huge** area. Always be as specific as possible and reference countries of origin where possible (e.g. Hong Kong Chinese, mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, South Korean), or at least hone in on Asian regions (e.g. Southeast Asia, Asia-Pacific region, East Asian).

- “Hispanic” refers to someone of Spanish-speaking origin. (So, do not use this in reference to Brazilians, for example, as they speak Portuguese.)
- “Latinx” refers to someone of Latin American origin — this includes Brazil, but excludes Spain.

For more specific inclusivity queries not included in these (admittedly not exhaustive!) guidelines, please refer to [Language, Please](#) — a fantastic, free resource for writers who want to use language thoughtfully when covering ever-evolving social, cultural, and identity-related topics.

## Ableism in Language

Be aware that some common expressions ingrained in English — especially in pop culture and slang — fall under ableist language, where its connotations are almost exclusively negative, at the expense of disabled people.

- Even if we don’t mean to be insulting, these common words can be hurtful micro-assaults to disabled people.
- In continuing to use and perpetuate ableist language, we construct a worldview in which existing as a disabled person is negative.

About one in five people in the UK have a documented disability, and it is up to us as writers to not contribute to the discrimination that disabled people already face in society.

Some common examples of ableist language include:

- “Crazy”, which refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities
  - Consider using: wild, impulsive, unpredictable
- “Dumb”, which refers to deaf people, or people with speech- or communication-related disabilities
  - Consider using: dense, ignorant, stupid, foolish
- “Lame”, which refers to people with physical or mobility disabilities
  - Consider using: boring, unpopular, out-of-fashion (or even cheugy)
- “OCD”, which refers to people with obsessive-compulsive disorder, and takes on ableist connotations if used to describe being highly strung
  - Consider using: highly strung, meticulous, hyper-focused
- “Suffers from [disability]”, which can be ableist because it assumes that being disabled always means suffering
  - Use instead: has [disability]
  - Exception: Not ableist when it is a disabled person’s chosen description, or when referring to specific universally painful experiences, like seizures
- Using the disability or its identifier as a noun or a description of a disabled person, like “the deaf”, “the autistic”, “the wheelchair”, is ableist and dehumanising
  - Use instead: the person / people who is/are deaf, the woman in the wheelchair, or — better yet — their actual name
- As a general rule, we use [the social model of disability](#), which looks at what a person needs rather than what is ‘wrong’ with them. Should a wheelchair user not be able to

access a bar, for example, this is likely due to the bar not putting in place accessible entrances. This is the fault of the bar, not the person.

- The social model of disability also centres the person. Eg. a disabled person not a person with disabilities.
  - Exception: Always check this with your interviewee and follow their preferences.

Of course, the above barely scratches the surface of how pervasive ableist terms are in our everyday language. Public policy advocate Lydia Brown has compiled a fantastic list of [ableist phrases and alternatives](#) to use instead.

The main takeaway here is to be mindful of what you mean. Rather than repeating a phrase just because you've heard it, think about the meaning you are trying to convey and express that instead.

## Additional Words of Note

Here are some miscellaneous terms and phrases which are often misused.

**Practice** is the noun; **practise** is a verb.

- It is common practice to lock your front door.
- He decided to practise yoga.

Lightbulb, not light bulb

Wi-Fi, not wi-fi, Wifi, or wifi

Healthcare is an adjective and also refers to the industry.

- Only use "health care" to convey patient care or medical care, e.g. "Putting health care in practice is beneficial to everyday life."

3D, not 3-D

Versus, not vs.

- Exception: When in headlines, or referring to court cases

Antidepressants, not anti-depressants

When referencing the global pandemic, "COVID-19" is the full terminology, but you can also just use "Covid".

- COVID-19 delta variant: the d is not capitalised

Twitter is capitalised; tweet is not.

TikTok; TikToker

millennial(s): not capitalised

Fiancé for men, fiancée for women  
Cliché, with the accent  
Café, with the accent

**Programme** refers to an outline of an agenda; **program** is used in context with computers.

**Focused**, not focussed

Could've / would've / should've, not could of / would of / should of

- The correct form is a contraction of could have / would have / should have. The common mistake containing "of" is just wrong.

**By** accident, not On accident

Watch-back videos, instead of watchback or watch back

- Same rule applies when used as a noun, i.e. "Click here for watch-backs"