

Zalando style guide



Writing style manual

Consistent details including capitalisation, punctuation and numerical guidance.

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Authors: writing@zalando.de

How to use this guide

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Default language

British English is our core company language.

As a European-founded, Berlin-based company, British English is our core company language. That means we always write base copy in British English first, then translate copy for our 25 European markets. We also use British English for our UK and Ireland domains.

Device settings:

- Zalando devices are set to British English by default.
- If you're using other devices, make sure they're set to British English — not American English.
- As you write, check that autocorrect isn't changing British spelling into American spelling.

Exception: Coding:

- If you're coding, or documenting code, you can use American English.
- This is standard in software engineering.

Sign language

We only use British Sign Language (BSL) and not other sign languages.

British English versus American English

British English and American English are similar, but many words are spelt slightly differently.

You'll find guidance on vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar differences in other sections of this guide. For now, here are a few examples to give you an idea of key spelling differences:

Dos (British English):

- -ell- (for example {e.g.}, cancelled, jeweller, marvellous).
- -ise (e.g. apologise, fantasise, idolise).
- -yse (e.g. analyse, paralyse).
- -re (e.g. metre, lustre).
- -ogue (e.g. catalogue, dialogue).

- -our (e.g. colour, armour, flavour).
- -ll (e.g. travelling, labelling).
- -t (e.g. burnt, dreamt, leapt).

Don'ts (American English):

- -el- (e.g. canceled, jeweler, marvelous).
- -ize (apologize, fantasize, idolize).
- -yze (e.g. analyze, paralyze).
- -er (e.g. meter, luster).
- -og or -ogue (e.g. catalog, dialog).
- -or (e.g. colour, armor, flavor).
- -l (e.g. traveling, labeling).
- -ed (e.g. burned, dreamed, leaped).
- -ense (defense, offense, license).

Got/Gotten:



Do (British English): got
"I've got used to", "I've got
accustomed to."



Don't (American English): gotten
"I've gotten used to", "I've gotten
accustomed to."

For more details, [read our glossary of British English versus American English terms](#).

Capitalisation

How we capitalise text

We use sentence case in our writing, including headlines, labels, marketing campaigns and internal events. That means we only capitalise the first word of each sentence, and proper nouns like names and brand names.



Sentence case:
"We sell lots of New Balance shoes."
"That person is called Jeff."



Title case:
"We Sell Lots of New Balance Shoes."
"That Person is called Jeff."

Exceptions:

- If brands or partners capitalise their names or products a certain way, do the same. For example, it's "ZEOS" not "Zeos", "adidas" is all lowercase and "PUMA" is all capital letters. [Check the shop site](#) for correct spelling and capitalisation.
- Branding may use title case or ALL CAPS for styling/branding effect, e.g. Summer Garden.
- Zalando owned events and external publications use title case, e.g. [Annual General Meeting](#), Media Days, Earnings Call, Annual Press Conference, Annual Report, Half-Year Report, Logistik News. Make sure to use the same casing throughout all documents/writing (e.g. in headlines, bodycopy, links, document titles)

Capitalisation of proper nouns versus common nouns

Proper nouns:

In English, proper nouns are names that identify specific places, people or things. They distinguish people, companies, teams, titles, songs and more. For example, "Jennifer", "Nike", and "Zalando" are all proper nouns.

Common nouns:

In English, common nouns are general names for places, people or things. They aren't capitalised unless they are the first word in a sentence. For example, "sport", "kids" and "family" are all common nouns.

Categories:

Collections of products at Zalando are called categories. You'll see these listed on our website, and we treat them as proper nouns. So in this case, "Sports" and "Kids & Family" are capitalised.



Capitalisation of "team", "job families", "titles", "projects"

Our teams are named in this format:
[Department] team

The department name should be capitalised. The word 'team' isn't capitalised.
For example: "This year, the Marketing team successfully executed 25 brand campaigns."

Don't capitalise job family function names.
For example, "a product designer" is a generic description within a job family function.

Do capitalise specific job titles or grades.
A specific "Product Designer" is a C6 contributor.

Capitalisation of "committee/board"

When used as a generic term, committees and boards aren't proper nouns. So, don't capitalise them.

For example:

- "This year's nomination committee will be meeting soon."

If the committee or board has a specific name, then it is capitalised:

- "Zalando Sustainability Committee 2024."
- "It was great to see how the Zalando Sustainability Committee 2024 achieved their KPIs in Q3."

Note the word "the" is not part of the name so it is not capitalised.

Legal terms

Always capitalise references to legislation.
For example: "Section 289a (1) HGB."

Grammar and punctuation

Quotation marks

How to use quotation marks:
When quoting, we normally use curly double quotation marks (" ") — not single marks ('').
We prefer curly marks, but straight marks are acceptable in internal emails.

If you need to set a quote inside a quote, you should set the secondary quote in single curly marks.



Regular quotation marks:
In the play Hamlet, the main character famously says, "To be or not to be."



A quote inside a quote:
Mr Becker told us, "We are in a period of transformation — our COO says to 'hang tight for further updates', so we will need to wait and see".

Punctuation and quotes:

- 
- We place end-of-sentence punctuation outside our quotation marks.
For example: "She said, 'B2B'."
 - We never use German styling for quotes („“), or any other styling.
 - Double-check you've placed all your marks the right way around. For example "hello", not "hello".

Multi-paragraph quotes:

If a quote spans several paragraphs, you don't need to use quotation marks at the end of each paragraph. Only at the end of the final paragraph.

Quoting sources

Quoting primary sources:

Primary sources (e.g. quotes from Zalando videos, interviews and press releases) should be attributed in the present tense:

- "I'm pleased to join Zalando", she says.
- "I'm pleased to join Zalando", they say.

Quoting secondary sources:

Sources coming from outside Zalando should be given in the past tense:

- "We're looking forward to seeing next season's looks", he said.
 - "We're looking forward to seeing next season's looks", they said.
-

Apostrophes

We only use curly apostrophes.

The correct form is always "I'm", not "I'm" or "I`m" — or any other variation.

Oxford comma

We don't use the Oxford comma (also known as the serial comma). That means we don't place a comma before the last item in a list.



Do

In the collection, there are tops,
shoes and socks.



Don't

In the collection, there are tops, shoes,
and socks.

Exception:

If an extra comma will add clarity, then it should be used.

For example:

- He likes to wear red, orange, pink and purple, or blue jumpers.

Here, 'pink and purple' is a colour combination so we add a comma afterwards to make it clear 'blue' is not also part of the combination.

Contractions

We use contractions like don't or won't rather than writing do not and will not. It's more informal, and more conversational.



Abbreviations and acronyms

Avoid abbreviations:

It's clearer to write a sentence in full than rely on abbreviations.

How we use acronyms:

Write names in full and leave the acronym in brackets afterwards.

You can then use the acronym after that point.

For example:

- Zalando Fulfilment Solutions (ZFS) uses the Zalando platform. ZFS is crucial for our partners.

Exceptions:

For internal comms and with partners, it's OK to use standard industry acronyms like SKU or KPI. Just double-check the 'standard' term you're using really is standard — and not Zalando-speak!

If in doubt, write it out in full.

Lists

Lists are a great way of breaking up complex and long information. They should be presented either with bullets (•) or numbers followed by full stops (1. 2. 3.) — never with dashes or hyphens. They should have at least two items and ideally no more than seven.

Bulleted lists:

We use these for things that have something in common but don't need to appear in a particular order. For example, services, app features or product features.

Numbered lists:

We use these for things that are done in a particular order. For example, steps or instructions that customers would need to follow.

Note: If you're looking for guidance on writing lists as part of a sentence, please see the Oxford comma section.

Full stops

Sentences and footnotes:

Every sentence and footnote should end with a full stop, no matter how long or short they are.

For example: Be brief. Make every word count.

Exception:

Don't use a full stop if your sentence ends with an emoji.

Headlines:

Don't use full stops or other punctuation at the end of a headline.

Lists:

If each list item has three words or fewer, don't end any of them with full stops — not even the last item.

For example:

This shirt comes in:

- blue
- red
- green



If at least one item is a full sentence, use a full stop after each item.

For example:

- I think the best colour for this shirt is blue.
- I like red.
- I don't like green.

Social media:

Don't use full stops at the end of Instagram, TikTok or X (previously Twitter) captions. Do use full stops at the end of LinkedIn captions.

Exclamation marks

We use exclamation marks sparingly, as they can make our writing feel like shouting.

If you need to use exclamation marks, limit it to just one. Fewer is generally better.

Don't use two or more exclamation marks together (!!, !!!, !!!! ...).

Spaces

Only use one space after punctuation, such as a full stop, dash, exclamation mark or comma.

Punctuation:

Don't use a double space after punctuation.



Do

We sell shirts, and we also sell shorts! Plus, we sell shoes.



Don't

We sell shirts, and we also sell shorts! Plus, we sell shoes.

Percentages:

Don't add a space in front of percentage signs.



Do

50% of the population.



Don't

50 % of the population.

Percentage points:



Do

+2.2 pp from yesterday



Don't

+2.2%pt from yesterday, +2.2%ppt from yesterday, +2.2%pps from yesterday

Slashes:

Don't add a space before or after forward slashes (/).



Do

The Oxford comma/serial comma.



Don't

The Oxford comma / serial comma.

Hyphens and dashes

Em dashes, en dashes and hyphens – overview:

- Em dashes (—) are the longest of the three.
- En dashes (–) are medium-length.
- Hyphens (-) are the shortest type of dash.

Don't use dashes or hyphens to replace bullet points.

En dashes:

We use en dashes to mark breaks in a sentence or emphasise additional information in a sentence. Place a space on either side of your dash.

For example, separate a thought or emphasis:

"Embracing diversity is critical to growing our business – and building world-class teams."

Or contain a thought within en dashes for emphasis or to mark an aside:

"Get into our new spring collection – dropping this week – and make this season your own."

Don't use dashes to indicate empty cells in a table.

Don't capitalise the first word after an en dash (unless it's a proper noun).

We also use en dashes to note ranges in numbers and dates.

For example:

"1.2m–2.6m EUR", or "From 28–31 October."

And to note negative numbers, and as a minus sign.

For example:

"There's a £50 discount, so the total is £150 –£50. That's £100."



Do

Use an en dash to illustrate time ranges.

For example: Open from 10.00am–2.00pm.



Don't

Use the word "to" to illustrate time ranges.

For example:
Open from 10.00am to 2.00pm.

Don't use the word "to" to illustrate time ranges.

Don't add a space on either side of an en dash, unless it's being used as a negative or minus symbol.

Em dashes:

These longer dashes are used in US English (and by Generative AI). We don't use these em dashes in our writing.

Hyphens:

Hyphens are used to join words, creating compound words.

For example:

- Lower-left corner
- Up-to-date prices
- 9-month plan
- A check-in meeting

There's no need to do this if the description comes after a noun, for example:

- The corner in the lower left
- The prices are up to date
- We have a plan for 9 months
- The meeting is a check in

Don't use two hyphens (--) to substitute an em dash.

Don't create hyphenated words including the word Zalando, e.g. "A Zalando-customer."



Colons

To break up thoughts or add embellishments in headlines, we prefer colons.

To break up thoughts or add embellishments in sentences, we prefer em dashes.

Ellipsis

We avoid ellipses (...) – they can make writing appear incomplete.

Exceptions:

- *Long quotes*

If you're quoting a large section of content, you can use ellipses to shorten the quote, or omit irrelevant parts. You should contain the ellipses in square brackets [] to indicate the fact content has been cut.

For example, if the original content says:

"At Zalando, we want to empower people to express themselves, from our own employees to our customers and partners. We aim to actively contribute to a world where everyone feels included and valued".

You could use ellipses to shorten to:

"At Zalando, we want to empower people to express themselves [...] We aim to actively contribute to a world where everyone feels included and valued".

- *Technical documents*

You can use ellipses to indicate omitted code in technical documents.

Ampersands (&)

Avoid ampersands:

Ampersands (&) have the same meaning as the word 'and'. We only use them in presentations and KPIs. Even then, we only use them if there's no space to write the word 'and' in full.

Emoji guideline

Please find information about correct emoji usage in our emoji guideline:

  [Advice on Using Emojis in LinkedIn Posts](#)

Numbers

Numbers in text

Write the numbers one to nine in full, and 10 onwards using digits.

For example:

- In total, the project took 300,000 hours and cost €30 million.
- We have 10 partners.
- We're currently involved in five collaborations.
- There's a zero percent chance of rain.
- In seven years, we'll have grown enormously.
- The sale lasts for 28 days.

Exceptions:

- On app/feed, please use digits to save characters and ensure better readability.

- 
- For user interface text, please use digits to save space and improve scannability.
For example:
"Only 2 left."
 - If the number is at the start of a sentence, always spell it out in full.
For example:
"Thirty new pairs of boots are going on sale at 2pm."
 - If you're referring to time or quantity, always use digits.
For example:
"It will take you 3 hours to read this document."
-

Numerical abbreviations

Write large numbers out in full – don't use abbreviations. For example:

Sub head:

- thousand, not k
- million, not m
- billion, not bn
- trillion, not tn or trn

Exceptions:

In financial presentations and user interface text, you can use numeric abbreviations. But you must use the British abbreviations — for example, 'k' not 'Tsd' for thousand.

For example:

- Time taken: 300k hours
 - Total cost: €30m
-

Ratios

Write ratios in this format:

- 4:3
 - 16:9
 - 1:1
-

Rankings

Write ranked lists in this format:

- No. 1
 - No. 2
 - No. 3
-
-

Dates and times

Dates

Write dates using long-form formats:

- UK-EN + IE-EN: 6 October 2023
- DE-DE + AT-DE: 6. Oktober 2023



Don't use the American format:
Monday, March 6 2025

If space is limited, you can use the short-form date format instead:

- UK-EN + IE-EN: 6 Oct, 2023 or 6 Oct '23
- DE-DE + AT-DE: 6. Okt., 2023 or 6. Okt '23

If space is very tight, then you can use numerical date formats:

- UK-EN + IE-EN: DD/MM/YYYY

For example: 06/10/2023 or Fri, 06/10

- DE-DE + AT-DE: DD.MM.YYYY,

For example 06.10.2023 or Fr., 06.10

Or if you're writing in an internal context, use ISO8601 date format: YYYY-MM-DD

For example: 2023-10-06

(Use hyphens, not dashes)

Days of the week

Spell out days of the week in full: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and so on.

If you need to abbreviate because space is tight, use the correct local-specific abbreviation:

- UK-EN + IE-EN: Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun
- DE-DE + AT-DE: Mo., Di., Mi., Do., Fr., Sa., So.

Decades

Write out decades in full with an 's' after the number.

For example:

- The 1990s.
- The 2010s.

Don't add an apostrophe between the numbers and the 's'.

Or, you can also abbreviate decades to their final two numbers, with an apostrophe before the numbers:

For example:

- The '90s.
- The '10s.

Date and time duration

Indicate time periods using an en dash (no spaces either side) or the word "to."

For example:

- May 2023 to May 2026.
- May 2023–May 2026.

You can also shorten dates in this format.

For example:

- 1 Dec, 2023 to 30 Nov, 2026.
- 1 Dec, 2023–30 Nov, 2026.
- Jan to Dec 2023.

- Jan–Dec 2023.



Time

We write the time using digits, with a full stop separating the hour and the minute.

We use am and pm to signify before and after noon (midday, 12.00pm). These always appear in lowercase, with no colons or full stops (except a closing full stop if they are at the end of a sentence).

For example:

- 11.00am.
- 5.30pm.

You might also want to refer more generally to:

- The morning, roughly 6.00am–12.00pm.
- The afternoon, 12.00pm to about 6.00pm.
- The evening, about 6.00pm to 9.00pm or 10.00pm.

Exception:

If you're writing a presentation and are short on space, you can use the 24-hour clock. For the 24-hour clock you should use a colon, not a full stop.

For example:

- 06:00
- 11:00–15:00

For more details, read our [localised formats overview](#).

Currency

Currency amounts

Write currency amounts with full stops separating the main currency unit (like pounds or euros) from the fractional unit (like pennies or cents).

Ten euros and ninety-five cents would be:
€10.95 — not €10,95

One hundred euros and ninety cents would be:
€100.90 — not €100,90

If the main currency amount is one thousand or more:

You must also use commas to separate numbers before the full stop. You should place a comma to separate each group of three digits.

For example:

€1,000.90 — not €1.000,90
€100,000.90 — not €100.000,90
€1,000,000.90 — not €1.000.000,90
€10,000,000.90 — not €10.000.000,90
€1,000,000,000.90 — not €1.000.000.000,90

Decimal places:

We always use one decimal place for external financial reporting.

For example, 2,533.2 — not 2,533.20.



For example, 3.5 — not 3.50.
For example, 3.0 — not 3.

Currency sign

We use currency signs (€, £, \$) rather than abbreviations (EUR, GBP, USD).

Always place the currency sign before the value, with no space.

For example:

- €30
- £30

Don't place the currency sign after the value (30€).

Don't place a space between the currency and value (€ 30).

Exception:

We use currency abbreviations (EUR, GBP, USD) for financial reporting. These appear after the number, not before it. Use the relevant official currency code, which is always capitalised.

For example:

50 EUR not 50 eur

For more details and a full list of currency codes and symbols, read our [localised formats overview](#).

Currency: localised formatting

Here are a few common currencies and their localised formatting.

Rounded

UK-EN: £10

IE-EN: €10

DE-DE: 10 €

AT-DE: €10

Decimal

UK-EN: £10.95

IE-EN: €10.95

DE-DE: 10,99 €

AT-DE: € 10,95

For more details and a full list of currency codes and symbols, read our [localised formats overview](#).

Currency ranges

Set out currency ranges with an en dash.

For example:

- €300 million–€350 million.

Or abbreviated in a table:

- €215.4m–€240.7m.



Business terms

Fiscal quarters

In a sentence:

Write Q1/Q2/Q3/Q4 followed by the relevant year in full.

For example:

Q1 2026

In a table:

Write Q1/Q2/Q3/Q4 followed by a forward slash (/) and the relevant year, shortened.

For example:

Q1/26

Note: If you abbreviate a year outside this context, you should always include an apostrophe, for example '23 not 23.

KPIs

You may remove words to make the KPI as short as possible. Even if this results in technically incomplete sentences.

For example:

"Higher scalability and flexibility with a 50% Partner Programme CAGR (2019–2023)."

shortens to:

"Higher scalability & flexibility: 50% Partner Programme CAGR ('19–'23)."

For example:

"2.8% and solid Q1 performance despite continued macroeconomic headwinds. Performance reflects our focus on profitable growth with GMV."

shortens to:

"2.8% & solid Q1 performance despite macroeconomic headwinds. Performance reflects focus on profitable GMV growth."