

Style Guide

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Introduction

A style guide ensures consistency and reduces arguments where there are a multiple spellings or punctuation. It allows the reader to concentrate on the message without being distracted by variations in one text. For consistency, The AAS will use UK English across all its communication.

Spellings

Spell checks have limitations as they tend to auto correct words into US spellings so use them with caution. Use an English dictionary to check for correct spellings of words if in doubt.

The user should configure UK English as the default spell check by resetting the language on the control panel of their computer.

For example, British English uses **ise** instead of **ize** and **s** where the US would generally use a **z**. We would therefore write:

- **recognise** instead of **recognize**
- **organisation** instead of **organization**
- **analyse** and not **analyze**
- **mobilise** not **mobilize**
- **programme** and not **program**.

Also note that words ending in **ou** in British English end in **or** in American English, for example The AAS would use:

- **colour** (not color)
- **honour** (not honor)
- **flavour** (not flavor), etc

The US swops around **r**'s and **e**'s and use fiber instead of the British **fibres**, center instead of **centre**, theater instead of **theatre**, kilometer instead of **kilo-**

metre. In this example, a correct spelling for The AAS would be one that uses the words in bold.

Words that end in **ce** in British English end in **se** in the US. For example, The AAS should write:

- **defence** and not defense
- **offence** and not offense, etc.

Where British English uses **ce** and **ae**, the US have a single e. For example the correct spelling for the AAS would be:

- **anaemia** and not anemia
- **paediatric** and not pediatric, etc.

The US does not distinguish between practice/practise or licence and license. For The AAS, which conforms to British English, the distinction would be that practice and licence are nouns while practise and licence are verbs.

The only exception to the above rules is with official names of organisations and places, etc. These shall retain their US spelling eg maintain as **Centers** for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Capital letters

Use capital letters sparingly and if in doubt use lower case.

Use capital letters for proper names, days of the week and titles. So write: Deborah, Lucy, Gordon, Nairobi, the East African Community, Monday, Tuesday, Saturday or Miss Karuru, Mr Ochieng, The AAS Strategic Plan, etc.

Use upper cases for job titles (Executive Director) but use lower case for points of the compass (north, south) and the words: email, internet, etc. Governments can

be capped eg use the Kenyan **Government** says...

Use upper case for geographical areas eg, West Africa, North Africa, the Middle East, etc. The Earth should be in upper case.

Collective nouns should be in lower case eg the police, the press, our family, cabinet, etc.

Abbreviations and acronyms

Don't use full stops for abbreviations and names with initials. i.e. we do not say The A.A.S or D.E.L.T.A.S Africa or Prof. Dr. instead we write The AAS, DELTAS Africa, Prof, Dr

Write the full name the first time you use it then use the shorter version/ abbreviation from then on eg The African Academy of Sciences (The AAS). Occasionally swop the abbreviation with a label in your document to avoid overusing the latter e g use the Academy instead of The AAS. The exception is units expressing distance eg use we walked for 5 kilometres

Units of measurements and sums of money

are abbreviated eg 145 cm, \$1 , R50 bn, Ksh 4 m
But use one million Kenyans, Africa's population to double to **2.4** billion by 2050

Punctuation

Apostrophes

These indicate either a possessive or that a letter or letters have been omitted in a word.

Examples of possession: The Academy's strategy, Kiba's research, Matthews' study, etc

Omissions (didn't, isn't)

Don't use apostrophes for plurals that are possessive.

For example, write: 1990s, Angolan MPs.

Apostrophes are needed to pluralise letters of the alphabet eg Let us dot the i's and cross the t's. There should also be an apostrophe in time: In an hour's time or in two weeks' time.

Commas

Use commas to separate words in a list or to make the text easily digestible: The fellows who attended the conference were from Botswana, Ethiopia, Egypt, Tanzania and Zimbabwe

Don't use commas in a job description: Chemist Shem Wandiga. Avoid a definite article if using a job title as it necessitates the use of a comma but that makes it clunky. Eg use The AAS President Prof Felix Dapare Dakora **not** The AAS President, Prof Felix Dapare Dakora

Colons and semicolons

They are punctuation marks. Colons are used to introduce a list preceded by an independent clause and other sentences or questions. An example would be: The activities of communication strategy are listed below:

- Recognising excellence
- Implementing science programmes

Semicolons join sentences more tightly than a full stop would: It rained all morning; it rained all afternoon. They also separate items in a list, particularly those are already punctuated by comma:

Some of the members of The AAS Senior Management Team are Nelson Torto who is the Executive Director; Director of Programmes Tom Kariuki; Juliette Mutheu-Asego, Head of Communications & PR.

Tom Kariuki, a biochemist; Kevin Marsh, a malaria researcher and Professor at Oxford University.

Brackets (parentheses)

Use brackets to enclose brief explanations eg AESA activities are aligned to STISA-2024 (the African Union's blueprint for science).

Dashes

A dash is used to either enclose parenthetical phrases - statements that qualify or explain something - or to break up the text, or add emphasis. You can use them in place of brackets or commas and semicolons.

Hyphens

Use a hyphen to show that a two or more words are to be treated as a single unit eg sub-Saharan Africa, Deborah-Fay.

Emphasis

Use italics or bold to emphasise a word or phrase in a sentence. Don't use both.

Quotation marks

Quotation marks should be single (") in headlines and quotes within quotes and inside quote boxes.

They should be double when quoting someone. Lillian said: "Science can and will transform Africa into a healthy, food-sufficient, energy-surplus and environmentally sustainable continent."

Bullet points

If the sentence before the bullet point ends with a colon start each point with an upper case for the first letter but use lower case for the rest. Don't punctuate at the end of each line and finish the last one with a full stop.

The activities of communication strategy are listed below:

- Recognising excellence
- Implementing science programmes.

If the bullet points are questions, use upper case letters to start each one

A/an

Use 'an' before any word or abbreviation beginning with a vowel - a, e, i, o, u, y - sound (an animal). Use 'a' with consonant sounds - those that are not a vowel (a cow).

Ampersands

Use them sparingly unless they are part of a name as in the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Currency, numbers and dates

Currency

Use the symbol for the currency rather than writing it in words as it is easier to read.

Numbers

Write numbers one to nine as words and 10 upwards as figures. Put commas in numbers of 1,000. Every three zeros should get a comma: 540,000,179

Don't start a sentence with a figure.

Use hyphens in phrases where a number's part of the adjective, like the two-year strategy, and in fractions: two-thirds majority.

Use 'to' when you're writing words (five to seven experts) and a dash (not a hyphen) when you're writing figures (100-500 scientists attended the event) in a span.

Weight of measurements (5 km), currencies (\$5) and page numbers (page 76) should be in figures.

Use per cent or%. Percent is American.

Write telephone numbers with an international dialing. Write the international code, space - area code, space, first three figures of local number, space, last figures of local number: +254 2 806 067 4

Time and dates

Use a 12 hour clock with am or pm after the figure. The meeting starts at 5 pm. Dates are written as 5 January 2015; 6-10 June 2015.

Don't say 0.5 days but half a day or use an apostrophe if you are talking about a decade. It should be 1920s not 1920's. Write the twentieth century.

Names and titles

People older than 18 are men and women not boys and girls. Avoid using ladies or gentlemen. Use

titles: Dr

Professor should be written in full at first mention and subsequently abbreviated. If you use a title for one individual in a document, use titles for all others mentioned for consistency.

Do not use male terms generically eg chairman. Specify the gender or use chairperson, spokesperson, etc.

If you use caps in a title, maintain that.

Use italics for titles of books, magazines, reports, journals. A journal paper must be in single quotes with the first letter in upper case.

Singular or plural

Collective groups (companies, governments and other bodies) are singular (The committee has or have).

That or which

That defines and **which** gives extra information, often in a clause with commas round it.

The strategy that the Academy developed. The strategy, which the Academy developed, has been published.

He, she and they

Use their and they if you are not sure if the individual is a man or a woman.

Words not in English

These should be written in italics eg *jambo*, *mzuri* unless it's a word that is familiar with the general public and the targeted reader.

“

If you want to be taken seriously, BE
CONSISTENT. Consistency leads to
Excellence.

”

Words

Watch out for the following:

- **compare** to
- **different** is followed by from
- **fewer** refers to discrete objects; **less** to mass or volume
- **enquiry**: question; **inquiry**: investigation
- **affect**: to influence, to move emotionally; **effect**: to cause something to occur.
- **only** must be positioned before the word qualified: Africa only has 0.1 per cent of the global share of,
- **very**. Doesn't add anything. Avoid it

Avoid using old-fashioned words as in below:

- **whilst** becomes **while**
- **therefore/ thus** become **so**
- **upon** becomes **on**
- **amongst** becomes **among**

Tautology and language

Avoid repetition and be concise. Don't use words that mean the same thing in one sentence or use the same word in one sentence or repeatedly in a singular text. **An energy platform for energy research** is repetition. Instead write: **A platform for energy research.**

The AAS developed the platform in order to is tautology. Instead remove in order to and write: **The AAS developed the platform to ...**

Avoid adjectives. They don't add anything. Instead of writing: **The president was very excited**, skip very and write, **the president was excited.**

Use active instead of passive language, especially in press releases, brochures or documents that will be made available to a wide array of readers (fellows, media, partners and the public). Active language resembles spoken word, is accessible and less clunky. For example write:

- The African Academy of Sciences developed the Strategic Plan

And not

- The strategic plan was developed by The African Academy of Sciences

Or

- The Academy provided funding for the scholarships

And not

- The funding for the scholarships was provided by the Academy.

Paragraphs

Use short paragraphs, especially for material that will be published online, as they are easier to read. Further, make use of short, straight to the point sentences. Avoid long winding sentences like a plague.

“
No weapons are more potent than
BREVITY and SIMPLICITY.”
Katherine C. Thurston

Support

If there are areas of the style guide that the reader doesn't understand or is in doubt about, please contact the communication department at communication@asciences.ac.ke



The African
Academy of Sciences



asciences



www.aasciences.ac.ke

