

University of Bonn

Language Style Guide

American-English

August 2020

Diese Stilvorgaben richten sich vor allem an Mitarbeiter*innen der Universität Bonn und dienen der einheitlichen Außendarstellung. Die Universität Bonn benutzt American-English. Bitte konsultieren Sie das [deutsch-englische Glossar der Universität Bonn](#) für Übersetzungen von Einrichtungen, Studiengängen, Instituten und andere Bezeichnungen. Zudem können Sie das „[Wörterbuch des Hochschulwesens](#)“ im Intranet herunterladen.

This style guide is aimed at members of the University of Bonn and serves to ensure consistency in communication and presentation. The University of Bonn uses American-English. Please refer to the [English-German Glossary](#) for translations of institutes, degree programs and other official designations. You can also download the [Wörterbuch des Hochschulwesens](#), a dictionary of higher education terminology, from the intranet.

University of Bonn

Use University of Bonn instead of Bonn University and Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn. The name is always capitalized.

Do not capitalize references to a university, etc. after stating the proper name:
Harvard University is old. The university has many employees.

Styles and Formats

Addresses

are generally not translated. If it is an international shipment University of Bonn and Germany can be used:

Charlotte Smith
Welcome Center
102 Poppelsdorfer Allee
53115 Bonn, Germany

Dashes

There is no space before and after en dash and em dashes.
The years 1993–2000 were heady ones for the computer literate.
The chancellor—he had been awake all night—came down in a weird mood.

Dates

Month Day Year: January 7, 2018 or 01/07/2017
With weekday: Thursday January 7, 2018
1960s, 60s

Slashes

There is no space before or after a slash.
A slash most commonly signifies alternatives/different options.

Telephone Numbers

Phone: +49 228 674-5320

Time

Use 12-hour cycles referring to am or pm with a colon between the hours and minutes, a space after the time, but without periods between a.m.
12:59 am 7 pm

Units of Measure

Provide the metric or English equivalent in parentheses directly after the measurement, to make sure all international readers can understand:
She is six feet two inches tall (1.85m).

Websites

Unless a translation source document does so, do not include “http://” or “www.”

Academic degrees

Written without periods:

Bachelor of Science - BSc

Master of Science - MSc

Bachelor of Arts - BA

Master of Arts - MA

PhD (Do not translate "Doktorgrad" etc. with PhD – use doctoral degree, doctoral candidate/student, etc.)

"Diplom", "Magister" and "Habilitation" are not translated

If unspecified, use apostrophe and do not capitalize:

bachelor's degree

master's degree

Foreign Words and Phrases

Foreign words and phrases in text are italicized (except online, please use quotation marks).

Whenever possible, foreign terminology should be translated into English. But for cases where there is no equivalency, or when companies/organizations have specific German titles that should be kept for branding reference, the foreign term can be left in italics, with an English explanation given in parentheses.

Roman letters of non-English alphabets that do not exist in the English alphabet should be kept (ä, ç, è, †, ñ, ö, ß, ž, etc.).

Gender

Wherever possible, try to be fair to all sexes without sacrificing grammatical correctness.

Try to avoid "he/she" cases. If unavoidable, "their" is permissible in journalistic/marketing copy. Official/formal documents should use "he or she" / "his or her."

Italics

In print materials, use italics for names of albums, books, films, newspapers, magazines, plays, works of art, etc.

Online, quotation marks are generally preferable to italics as they are easier to read.

Please use italics for foreign words and phrases in an English text (don't use quotation marks).

Currencies

One-character monetary symbols are followed immediately by the amount; multiple-character symbols are followed by a space, then the amount:

€75.10 \$29.95 CAN\$ 6 million

It is also OK to spell out currencies, if done consistently: 100 euros (not Euros)

Use the following symbols

Australia	Australian dollar	AUS\$
Canada	Canadian dollar	CAN\$
European Union	Euro	€
Hong Kong	Hong Kong dollar	HK\$
Malaysia	Malaysian dollar	M\$
New Zealand	New Zealand dollar	NZ\$
Singapore	Singapore dollar	S\$
UK	pound Sterling	£
USA	dollar	\$ (or US\$, if context is unclear)

Angles

180-degree turn or 180° turn are both okay to use.

Temperatures

Give Celsius temperatures and, if applicable, provide Fahrenheit temperatures after in parentheses. Don't leave a space between the number on the one hand and the degree symbol and C on the other:

The water temperature rose to 65°C (150°F).

Abbreviations

Names of people

Use full stops but no spaces between the letters:

L.W. Montgomery

Names of places

Use commas after names of states within sentences. Do not use periods between state abbreviation letters:

Harvard University, in Cambridge, MA, is one of the most prestigious schools in the world.

University of Bonn, in NRW, Germany is one of the best research universities in the world.

Names of organizations

Unless an abbreviation or acronym is so well-known that it is used more often than the full form (BBC, NASA, WDR), write the name out when you mention it first, then the abbreviation in parentheses. After that, try to avoid repeating the abbreviation in every other sentence and write things like "the agency" or "the organization" instead.

It is funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG).

Please check online for correct organization/company names. There are some idiosyncratic ones out there, such as "NAFSA: Association of International Educators".

If the acronym used in the text is based on a foreign-language name, write out the foreign name at the first occurrence in parentheses, followed by a comma and the foreign acronym:

The German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, DAAD) is a large organization.

Legal references

For legal references, use *section* (short: §) for the German "Paragraph". Use *paragraph* (short: para.) for "Absatz" and *sentence* for "Satz".

In contracts/agreements, use *item* for "Ziffer".

The following applies in accordance with § 1 para. 2 of the NRW Higher Education Act: ...

Section 1 para. 2 of the NRW Higher Education Act states that ...

Bullet Points

Capitalize first word in a bullet point entry. Use end punctuation only if each line is a complete sentence.

- Biology
- Medicine
- The University has 13 museums and collections.

Names

On first mention of someone's name, write the full name, including academic titles. On subsequent mention, write the last name. First names may be repeated later in longer texts:

Sam Smith is an undergraduate student from New York. When Smith studied abroad...

In the case of nation-specific titles, e.g. German "Prof. Dr.", just use "Professor" in journalistic texts. More official texts and documents can keep "Prof. Dr."

In general, in official documents and texts, do not make an attempt to translate a foreign academic qualification into an Anglo equivalent.

Numbers

Spell out one through nine, use numerals starting with 10.

Put commas in numbers of a thousand or more: 1,000.

In general, do not abbreviate the words hundred, thousand, million, billion, trillion, etc.—unless you are working with lists of data/statistics or other layouts where repetition or space is a factor.

When writing **ordinal numbers**, use superscript:

25th anniversary, NOT 25th anniversary

Fractions and the word percent (not per cent) should generally be spelled out in journalistic and online texts. Use discretion elsewhere.

It was discovered that two thirds of students come from Bonn. On average, 75 percent of students are satisfied.

Capitalization

In general, proper nouns are always capitalized.

Degrees and Disciplines

Unless it is the name of a specific degree program, degrees and disciplines are not capitalized.

She specializes in American history at the University of Bonn. He studies Agricultural and Food Economics at the University of Bonn. They both have master degrees. Hers is a Master of Arts in Art History.

Academic Departments

Capitalize department names:

She studies mathematics at the Department of Mathematics.

Headlines/Publication Titles

Standard US headline capitalization (first and last word, all major words: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns).

Official Titles

Capitalize all official titles when they are used immediately preceding the name:

Prime Minister Mulroney, Vice Rector Hansman

Don't capitalize when the name is separated from the title by a comma or otherwise:

Ronald Reagan, former president of the United States. Jan Jedermann is the chancellor of University of Thistown. The pope will speak on Sunday. In addition, Rector Hoch will speak on Monday.

Book Titles, Films, Albums, Songs

The first and last word, and all major words (i.e., NOT words like a, the, to, an, for, prepositions) are capitalized:
The World of Adventure; Youth Language: What Young People Are Saying

Non-English titles are NOT capitalized according to English grammar, but according to the rules applying in the respective language.

Punctuation

Colons

Use colons before a whole quoted sentence, but not before a quote that's a sentence fragment:

She said: "I studied abroad."

She added that it had been "an absolutely amazing experience."

Capitalization after a colon

In general, don't do it. Colons are followed by lower case letters, no matter if it's a list of words or a complete sentence. Only if the colon is being used to introduce paraphrased speech should it be followed by a capital letter:

He asked a simple question: Who was first?

Commas

Items in a series

Do not use a serial (Oxford) comma before the last item in a list:

They saw commas, periods and question marks.

Etc.

There is a comma before "etc." and a period after it. Avoid using etc. when it is preceded by only one item.

We talked about our studies, our families, etc.

Conditional clauses

Conditional clauses may precede the main clause or follow it. If the conditional clause comes first, use a comma. If the conditional clause comes after the main clause, do not use a comma.

If you see Dora, will you give her a message?

I'll go to Bristol tomorrow if the weather is good.

Hyphenation

Ambiguities

A little-used car is not the same as a little used car. Hyphenate a compound noun in adjectival use if there is even the slightest chance that leaving the hyphen out would make it ambiguous: "miniature-horse trainer" rather than "miniature horse trainer" or "miniature horse-trainer." Do not hyphenate compounds made of an adverb ending in -ly and an adjective (write "brilliantly lit room" rather than "brilliantly-lit room").

Capitalization

In title capitalization, capitalize the word after the hyphen:

Part-Time Study Program

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks should only be used if:

- The author quotes verbatim;

- If a certain “concept” is introduced for the first time

Quotation marks are used for names of articles, essays, poems, exhibitions, and songs.

Don’t use quotation marks around foreign words—use italics (unless the foreign word is a proper title, in which case put quotes around the italicized term).

Punctuation

When someone is quoted with a full sentence, the punctuation is inside the quote:

“It was,” the professor said, “the first time I discovered my love for teaching.”

Grammar

Which vs. That

Which informs, that defines:

This house, which Jack built, is now falling down. This is the house that Jack built.

There is a comma before which but not before that.

Salutations, Letters, Emails

Herr and Frau are translated as Mr. and Ms. (do not use Mrs. or Miss)

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren as Dear Madam or Sir / Dear Sir or Madam / or To Whom It May Concern if the reader is unknown or anonymous.

Add a comma after the greeting and the salutation. The first word is capitalized:

Dear Professor Dr. Adams,

Many thanks for your letter. I am delighted to hear of your news.

*Sincerely,
Sam Smith*