



Press Release Writing Style Guide

Alignment

Always justify or align text left. Full justification makes reading difficult and creates sloppy spacing.

Ampersands (&)

Should only be used when it is part of the name of an organisation, or in charts and tables. In general correspondence always write 'and' in full.

Apostrophes

Are used to denote possession or a missing letter or letters:

- *Can't* instead of *cannot*
- *The company's* (singular); *the companies'* (plural – if more than one company).

Avoid jargon

Keep your language clear and simple and avoid jargon, buzzwords or 'management speak', which is a sure way to alienate, confuse and irritate your reader.

Try to avoid pretentious vocabulary and convoluted phrasing which the reader may not understand and which has vague meaning. Typical words include: *spectrum*, *leverage*, *synergy*, *value-added*.

Boilerplate

This is the IHBC's descriptor which explains what the organisation does at the end of press releases in the 'notes to the editor' section. It should be consistent on every release, short and written from an objective and factual perspective in plain English.

Bullet points

Use round bullet points and always capitalise the first letter in the first word of the bullet

Capital letters

Should only be used at the beginning of a sentence or for a proper noun such as names, places, months of the year.

Captions

A caption at the end of a photograph should not have a full stop, unless it is a proper sentence expressing a single line with a subject or a verb

Colons

Use a colon to introduce a list, before a quotation or statement or, between two segments of a sentence where the latter part of the sentence explains the former.

Company / organisation name

This should be referred to as a singular entity, i.e. IHBC 'is' and not *IHBC 'are'*

Currency

Should first be referred to by currency type, followed by the amount. Figures should also be correctly punctuated. For example: *£2 million, £2,250* was donated to...

Dates

Should appear as day/month/year. For example: *9 July, 2010* and not *9th, 3rd, 2nd*. Use 'to', 'from' or 'between' to explain date ranges, e.g.: *from July to September*. For short date ranges, like *22-30 August*, use a hyphen.

Font

Preferred non-serif is Arial 11 (sans serif fonts are easier to read)

Full stops

Full stops are not necessary at the ends of lines of information such as bullet points (which are not sentences) or address lines. However, the final bullet point should have a full stop. Don't include full stops in common abbreviations such as: *UK, CEO, MR, plc*.

Italics

Should be used for title of books, magazines, reports, films and awards

Job titles

Capitalising job titles in press releases is increasingly perceived as not only 'old-fashioned' but also 'elitist', suggesting a hierarchical organisational culture and tiered management structure. The only exception to this rule is a job advert, where the role, for example, 'Conservation Officer', would then be capped.

Executive Board

Uppercase the 'B' when writing '*Board*' because this is a proper noun

Numbers

Spell out numbers between one and nine and use figures for 10 and above
Use commas, not spaces when numbers exceed 999. E.g.: *55,000; 130,000; 1,234*

Metric symbols are not abbreviations and should be written out in full in body copy to avoid confusion, e.g.: *10 metres, 10 miles, one metre, 10 metres, 17 degrees*

At the start of a sentence, write all numbers in full

When writing the time, write *1am, 6.30pm, etc; 10 o'clock last night, but 10pm yesterday; half past two, a quarter to three, etc*. For 24-hour clock, *00.47, 23.59*.

Paragraphs

Insert one line space between paragraphs

Per cent (UK spelling)

Is written out in full and the % should only be used in tables and charts

Proof your work

More than 60 per cent of business emails and correspondence is sent with grammar, punctuation and spelling mistakes. Always proof, spell-check and read through your document before posting or emailing.

Use UK spelling: material which is intended for a global audience should follow UK English spellings.

For example:

- *Colour* not *color*
- *Programme* not *program*
- *Specialise* not *specialize*
- *Focused* not *focussed*.

Punctuation

Keep it simple and avoid writing complex sentences. Two short sentences are better than a long sentence with lots of commas.

Quotation marks, brackets and full stops

Double quotation marks enclose a direct quotation — that is, a repetition of someone's exact words. For example: *Thomas Edison declared: "Genius is one per cent inspiration and 99 per cent perspiration."*

Use single quotation marks inside quoted speech or to distance yourself from a word or phrase or, to show that you are using it ironically: *The prime minister said: "Describing the unemployment figures as 'disappointing' is an insult to the British people."*

Inside a quotation, use a suspension (...) to mark omitted material and square brackets to mark inserted material

A full stop is normally placed inside quotation marks but outside brackets when it is within quoted text: *"I'm delighted with the new facility."* and, *Profits declined (despite increased sales)*. However, if the quotation is part of another statement, the full stop goes outside the quote marks: *The project leader said: "They're coming".*

If the parenthesis is a complete sentence, the full stop stays inside the brackets: *There was a press trip in Wigan. (Another one took place in Liverpool last week.)*

Semicolons

These are used to include two or more closely related ideas in the same sentence. A stronger break than a comma is suggested to the reader, but weaker than a full stop. Semicolons also separate items in lists or two separate thoughts in a sentence.

Spacing – press releases

This should be 1.5 for body copy.