



Style Guide

Use British English and not American English

- ✓ s instead of z: emphasise, analyse
- ✓ our instead of or: labour, neighbour
- ✓ adviser instead of advisor
- ✓ Exception: focused and focuses instead of focussed and focusses
- ✓ Exception: quotations or extracts (maintain original spellings)
- ✓ Exception: proper nouns (World Health Organization)

THE USE OF AI TOOLS

To ensure the integrity of ORF publications in all their formats—both short-form and long-form—ORF requires the disclosure of the use of AI for research and writing. Detailed guidelines are contained in an institutional AI Policy that can be accessed [here](#).

ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

- ✓ No periods, all caps: UN, NATO, WTO, COMESA, ASEAN
- ✓ Spell out for the first time and use acronym thereafter.
- ✓ No apostrophe before 's' in the plural form (NPPs, UAVs)
- ✓ Use article before acronym depending on how it sounds (a NATO mission, an MOX plant)
- ✓ When the acronym can be read out like a word, do not use the article 'the' before it (WHO, BRICS); use 'a' and 'an' appropriately if it is used as an adjective (a WHO programme)

CAPITALISATION

- ✓ Use only when necessary
- ✓ Not to be used in the general sense:
 - The Indian government/the government vs. Government of India
 - The defence ministry vs. Ministry of Defence
 - The army vs. the Indian Army
 - The State of Lebanon vs. the Lebanese state
- ✓ Capitalise a region (the Global South, Far East Russia, India's Northeast, the West) but not when describing a direction (western Tibet, southern France).

- ✓ Designations are capitalised when used as a prefix to the name (Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee), but in lower case otherwise (the Indian prime minister). For ministries and organisations, capitals are used when the full title is used, as in Ministry of Defence, but not when it is defence ministry.
- ✓ Capitalise: specific terms like the Indian Army, Indian Air Force, or Indian Navy. Do not capitalise army, navy – they are in lower case when standing alone or not part of an official title.
- ✓ Capitalise: the Second World War, First World War
- ✓ In regular title capitalisation (headline style), the first and last words and all nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs and subordinating conjunctions (if, because, as, that) are capitalised.
- ✓ Articles (a, an, the), coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, for, nor) and prepositions, regardless of length, are lowercase unless they are the first or last word of the title or subtitle.

CENTURIES AND DECADES

- ✓ Spell out (in lower case) references to centuries. Decades may be spelt out or written numerically with apostrophes. Eg: The twentieth century; during the eighties and nineties/the '80s and '90s.
- ✓ If decades are identified by their century, numerals are used. Eg: The 1880s/1990s - no apostrophe is needed.

CURRENCIES

- ✓ Format: US\$100, 100 euro, INR 100, £100
- ✓ Keep unit consistent.
- ✓ If more than one denomination used, provide equivalent in primary currency.

DATES

- ✓ Day Month Year format: 5 September 1990
- ✓ When referring to collective period of years, no apostrophe before the 's'. Eg: during the 1990s; in the '60s

FULL STOPS

- ✓ Use periods in the case of initials, as in S.S. Gill
- ✓ Abbreviations and contractions consisting of upper and lower cases take full points as in Mt. (Mount), St. (Saint), Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy); exceptions to be made for Dr (Doctor)

Revd (Reverend: not Rev), Mr, Mrs, Mme, Mlle (Mademoiselle), Prof, Col, where full points are not required.

ITALICS

- ✓ Use of italics should be kept to the minimum.
- ✓ Italicise: Names of books and journals.
- ✓ Italicise: Non-English words, but only the first use. Succeeding uses will not be italicised.
- ✓ Italicise: Titles of plays, films, TV shows
- ✓ Do not italicise: titles of articles, Ph.D. theses, and unpublished material.
- ✓ Do not italicise: the Bible, the Koran, the Bhagavad Gita, and the like.
- ✓ Adjectives derived from the names of sacred books are generally lowercase (biblical, scriptural), but a few retain the initial capital like Koranic or Vedic.
- ✓ Do not use 'etc.' when listing examples. Give the examples, and preface the last one with an 'and'.

NUMBERS

- ✓ Spell out numbers from one to nine; use numerals thereafter (one-nine; 10-...) except when number is part of a measurement (5 kWh, US\$2 billion)
- ✓ Avoid using Indian number system unless context-specific (100,000 instead of 1,00,000)
- ✓ Commas in thousands: 1,840
- ✓ Hyphenate fractions: one-third, two-thirds, one-sixth
- ✓ When both a whole number and a fraction are spelt out, use a hyphen only in the fraction, as in one and three-quarters.
- ✓ Decimal numbers are always in numerals, as in 1.05.
- ✓ In decimals, use the full point. Eg: 7.06, 0.76 (not .76)
- ✓ In scientific and statistical copy, use the symbol '%' for a percentage - no space between numeral and symbol - 35%); in humanistic copy, the word 'percent' should be used (one word and not two)
- ✓ Distances, weights, measures—miles, kilometres, pounds, kilograms, feet, inches—are usually indicated in words; long or complicated figures can be given in numerals.
- ✓ Roman numerals to be preferred in such cases as Krishnaraya II – which are not to be broken up in mid-sentence and are not be followed by a full point except at the end of a sentence.
- ✓ Use figures in 9:00 a.m., words in nine o'clock; no hyphen in half past nine

PUNCTUATION

- ✓ Single space after periods
- ✓ Do not overuse commas (for example, delete unnecessary commas after ‘that’ or ‘while’)
- ✓ Asking a question:
 - Frame it either as a question: Will the government deliver? Can India find a way to engage with China in Afghanistan?
 - Or, if being written as a normal sentence: The question to ask is if the government will deliver. | The question that arises is whether Indian can find a way to engage with China in Afghanistan.
- ✓ Colons and semi-colons: Ensure you are using the right punctuation mark. Do not overuse them.
- ✓ Hyphens: Add when using a term as an adjective before a noun (a long-term plan) but not otherwise (the plan is long term)
- ✓ Use double quotes for quotations; single quotes to emphasise a term or phrase
- ✓ Keep quotation marks and endnotes outside the period or comma:

The term increasingly being used is ‘Beijing Consensus.’¹ According to the latest NASSCOM report,¹ ...

OTHER RULES

- ✓ Phrases with ‘such as’ and ‘including’ never end with ‘etc.’ or ‘among others’. Eg: The indicators include level of urbanisation and migration trends NOT The indicators include level of urbanisation, migration trends, etc.
- ✓ Countries (and ships) are ‘it’ and ‘which’, not ‘she’ or ‘who’.
- ✓ No ‘the’ before a country’s name unless plural names (the UAE, the US, the Philippines).
- ✓ Know the difference between ‘would’ and ‘will’; ‘could’ and ‘can’; ‘might’ and ‘may’.
- ✓ Avoid using ‘Also’ at the beginning of sentences. Use other conjunctions instead (further, moreover, in addition...) but avoid overusing them too.
- ✓ Avoid using ‘But’ at the beginning of sentences. Use ‘However’, instead. Even better to move the ‘however’ after the opening brief phrase.
- ✓ Avoid using ‘in fact’.

- ✓ Avoid using 'Interestingly'. Assume that because you are writing it in your piece, it IS interesting.
- ✓ Avoid repetition of words, phrases, punctuation.
- ✓ Do not use:
 - Hence (antiquated)
 - Discuss about / mention about (no 'about' needed)
 - 20 years back (use 'ago')
 - In order to (it suffices to simply say 'to')
 - It is not... rather, it is.... (use 'instead')
 - 'besides' when using it as to mean 'also,' 'in any case,' or 'anyway'