

Nine Dates with Content and Coffee

Date 4: English House Style



香港中文大學

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

English Styles

Three Senses:

- Writing
- Styling
- Printing



Writing: Re-think what grammar teachers taught us

Avoid split infinitives

- We aim **to** actively **engage** our stakeholders in the coming celebrations.

Avoid ending a sentence with a preposition

- I stopped at the entrance to the park and saw the trailer Dave lived **in**.



Avoid beginning a sentence with a conjunction

- The chairman took the stage. **And** the floor fell quiet.

Avoid contractions

- In a free enterprise system the free lunch is usually packaged as “loans” or “taxes on corporations” that **won't** cost the taxpayer a cent.

Daniel E. Koshland, Jr., “The Laws of Sociodynamics”, *Science*, 27 July 1990.



A note on plurals

Plural nouns are not defined by sense but by preceding quantifier:

- ...on more than **one** occasion, ...
- 'Full many **a** glorious morning have I seen'
(Shakespeare, Sonnet 33)



A singular noun does not become a plural one even if other nouns are connected to it by *with*, *as well as*, *in addition to*, etc.

- John, together **with** Jane, **has** joined the Dean's List.
- What he said **as well as** how he said it **was** detestable.



Compound nouns

- sons-in-law
- masters of ceremony
- deans of students



Others

- between / among
- each other / one another
- enquiry / inquiry
- graduate / graduand
- alumni / alumnus / alumna
- consist / compose /comprise
- compare to/ compare with



consist, compose, comprise

In the sense of 'contain' or 'made up of', these words should be carefully distinguished in their usage:

- A molecule of water **consists of** two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom.
- A molecule of water **is composed of** two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom.
- A molecule of water **comprises** two hydrogen atoms and oxygen atoms.



compared to, compared with

compared to: stating the similarity

- The colour of the linen is **compared to** that of a pearl.

compared with: subject to scrutiny to bring out similarities or differences

- The manager **compared** the interns from University X **with** those from University Y in terms of their attitudes and skill-sets.

[compare / contrast]



Styling

- **Triplets**

In good English writing, connected concepts or examples tend to appear in triplets, for precision as well as for inclusiveness.

- **Alliteration**

Words that follow one another have the same opening consonants.



Triplets

- If any person over the age of 16 years who has the **custody**, **charge** or **care** of any child or young person under that age wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons or exposes such child or young person ... such person shall be guilty of an offence.

s. 27, Offence Against the Person Ordinance (Cap. 212)



- His cartoons, starring **Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck and a dozen other barnyard thespians**, were the star attractions of countless children's Sunday afternoons—and internal lives.

Richard Corliss, 'Chuck Reducks', *Time*, 4 March 2002.



- Events in **Eastern Europe, the Far East, and the United States** indicate that there are laws of sociodynamics every bit as fundamental as the laws of thermodynamics.

Daniel E. Koshland, Jr., 'The Laws of Sociodynamics',
Science, 27 July 1990.



Alliteration

- friend and foe
- sight and sound
- without fear or favour
- saints and sinners



- Korea's relation with America have long
seesawed between **p**eace and **p**eril.
Hannah Beech, 'Winning Respect', *Time*, 24 June 2002.
- Tokyo and Seoul are at a safe and
expensive distance from **M**oscow and
Manchester and **B**erlin and **B**uenos Aires.
Tim Parks, 'Soccer: A Matter of Love and Hate', *New York Review
of Books*, 18 July 2002.



- 「尋尋覓覓，冷冷清清，淒淒慘慘戚
戚」
李清照

- ... so dim, so dark, so dense, so dull,
so damp, so dark, so dead, ...
林語堂



Printing: Spellings

- Note that the **-ize** ending (viz., **-ise**), though widely used in the US, is NOT an Americanism
- **adviser**, **advisor**—nothing to do with UK or US (**adviser** more frequently used by 6–20 times)
- programme (British)
- program (American)
- computer program (always)



Note further:

- labelling (UK); labeling (US)
- enrol (UK); enroll (US)
- benefiting; benefitting (either)
- focusing; focussing (either)



Printing: plurals

- curriculum, curricula
- focus, foci
- forum, fora (forums)
- formula, formulas (formulae)
- gymnasium, gymnasia



- radius, radii
- stratum, strata
- syllabus, syllabuses (syllabi)
- symposium, symposia



A conflict of styles

It [British football] was, according to a sneering *Sunday Times* in 1985, “a slum game played by slum people in slum **stadiums**” ...Fast-forward three decades and the game in Britain has changed almost beyond recognition: shiny all-seater **stadia** are bedecked with logos signalling lucrative sponsorship deals,...

(*TLS*, 19 & 26 December 2014, p.29)



Printing: numbers

Use words for **one** to **nine**, numerals from **10** onwards:

- The **24** students were divided into **four** groups.
- When I count from **one** to **nine**, do nothing; when I count to **10**, push this button.



Follow this practice in:

- First, fifth, ninth, 10th, 21st, 100th

Exceptions:

- at beginning of sentence:
Twenty years ago, they met in college.
- numbers appearing in tables and graphs



Exceptions:

- Numbers listed for comparisons:
- There are **4** Nobel laureates, **1** Fields medalist, **29** members of IEEE ... among CUHK faculty.



Printing: italics

Titles of the following should be in *italics*:

- books, magazines, newspapers, journals
- films, pieces of music, works of art,
- TV and radio programmes



Foreign words/expressions should be in italics:

- Renoir is famous for his *mise-en-scene*.
- *Cha chaan tangs* are cheap local eateries.
- Mr. Lau was conferred a doctor of laws *honoris causa* by the Chinese University.



Do not italicize:

- café
- vice versa
- ad hoc
- in situ
- lecture/conference titles



Printing: punctuations

Hyphen, en-dash, em-dash

- Use a hyphen as in:
- well-taken
- high-level
- state-of-the-art
- in-house
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor



Use an en-dash as in:

- ...accounts for 20–25% of ...
- the school year 2012–13
- (different from: 2005–2008)
- the 2012–15 triennium
- The Queensway–Wanchai one-way fare is \$4.



Use an em-dash as in:

- The triennium—which means a period of three years—is almost over.
- The ending of the novel reaffirms what everyone believes—that there is nobility in man's sufferings.



OXFORD REFERENCE 

Fowler's Modern English Usage



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*"...still a little book, small enough and important enough
to carry in your pocket, as I carry mine."
— Charles Osgood*

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FOREWORD BY ROGER ANGELL



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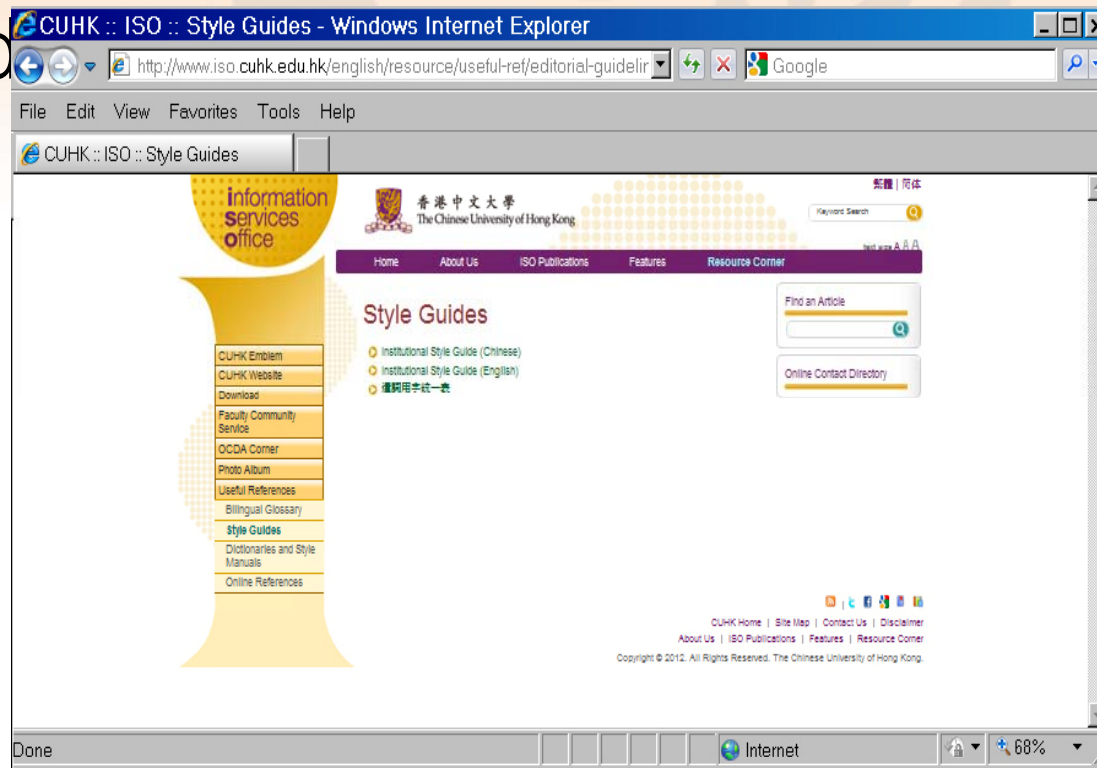
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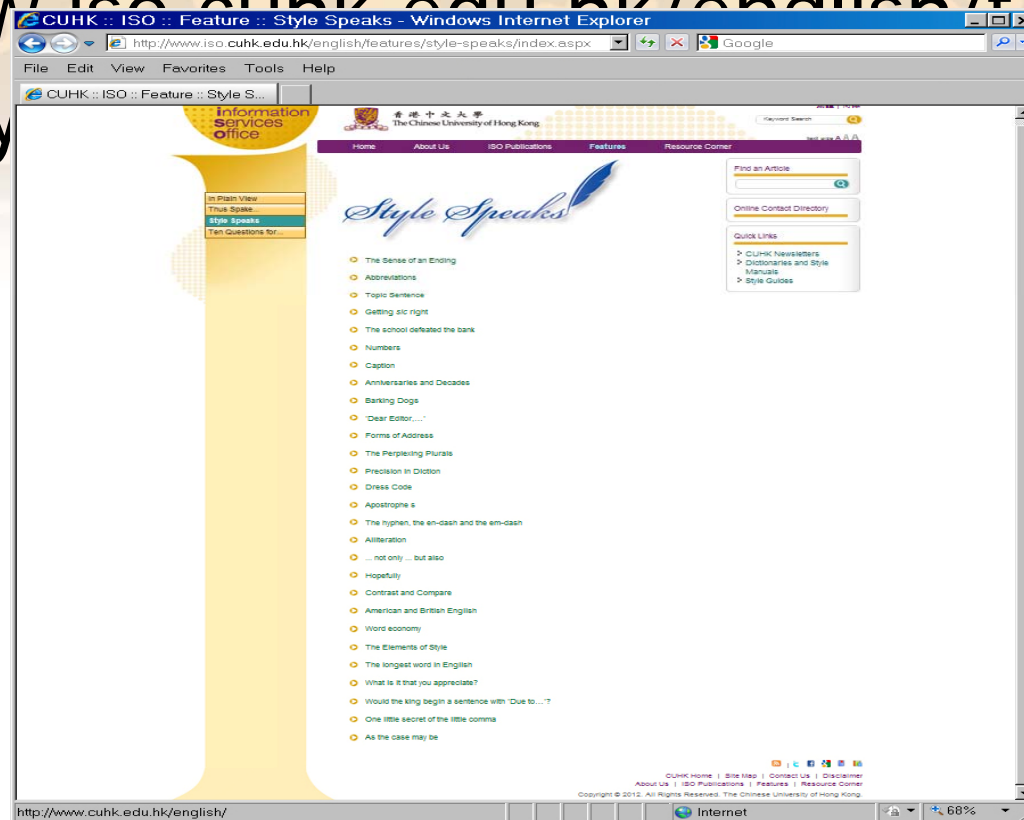
ISO Style Guide (English)

- <http://www.iso.cuhk.edu.hk/english/documents/resource/useful-ref/style-guide>



'Style Speaks' from *CUHK* Newsletter

- <http://www.iso.cuhk.edu.hk/english/features/style-speaks/>



- Don't forget what good a good dictionary can do to you
- Not just the general dictionary, but also specialized dictionaries, e.g.,
- Dictionary of abbreviations
- Dictionary of quotations
- Dictionary of scientific terms

