

The Mallard Style Guide

Before submitting an article to The Mallard, please ensure that it meets the following style requirements and conventions. We will reject articles or send them back for rewriting if they are not up to standard. If you have any queries about these criteria, email contact@themallard.co.uk.

Language

- In general, ensure your writing is readable and concise. Have a clear line of argument. Say what you mean, and mean what you say. Avoid writing articles which are too broad or contain too many digressions.
- Ensure claims about individuals are correct and could not be interpreted as libel; consider extremely carefully before making any claims or criticisms against an individual. This is especially pertinent for highly polemical articles.
- Articles will be sent back for rewriting if they contain swear words or otherwise crass language; for example: ‘arse,’ ‘crap’ and ‘bloody.’ Swearing is only acceptable if it is part of a quotation.
- Avoid italics (apart from the exceptions pointed out in the spelling, punctuation and grammar section.) Emphasis and argument should be construed through language and sentence structure.
- As a general rule, refer to Orwell’s ‘Politics and the English Language,’ if you are ever stuck. Not only does it provide invaluable advice about how to write well, but is an example of an excellently crafted essay. It is available here: [Politics and the English Language | The Orwell Foundation](#)

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

Abbreviations, contractions and acronyms

- For abbreviations and acronyms, do not include full stops between letters except where grammatically incorrect to do so. For example, centimetre becomes cm, ante meridian becomes am, member of Parliament becomes MP, United Kingdom becomes UK.
- Full stops are usually included for Latin abbreviations. For instance, e.g., i.e., etc., viz., and et. al.
- Use abbreviations sparingly, and opt for the longer form where feasible. It is preferable to use ‘that is’ instead of i.e., ‘for example’ instead of e.g.
- Contractions ending with the same letter as the original word do not use a full stop, for example Mr and Mrs, not Mr. and Mrs.
- When using an acronym that may be unfamiliar to readers, spell it out fully the first time it is mentioned, with the acronym following in brackets; thereafter, use the acronym alone. For example, ‘the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (PCSC).’

Names and titles

- Individuals should be given their full name the first time they are mentioned, (e.g. Boris Johnson) and thereafter referred to by their surname. Title is optional (e.g. (Mr) Johnson).
- When referring to a person by their initials, use full stops after each letter. For example, H. G. Wells and J. K. Rowling.
- Titles and offices should be capitalised when prefixed to an individual, or used to replace a name, but should generally be in lower case at all other times. For example, ‘President Biden lives in the White House’ and ‘the president of the United States lives in the White House.’
- Postnominals should be used only when necessary.

Sentence Length

- Use a variety of sentence lengths to construct a strong piece of writing.
- Avoid overly lengthy sentences. As a rule of thumb, if a sentence can easily be broken up into three or more sentences, it is too long. If an article is submitted where one sentence makes up an entire paragraph, we will send it back for rewriting.

Capitalisation

- Capitalise all proper nouns.
- Capitalise the keywords in all book titles, film titles, pieces of music and other artworks.

- Do not capitalise definite articles before an institution, except where it is part of the institution's name. For example, it should be 'the Church of England,' not 'The Church of England,' but it should be 'The Times' not 'the Times.'

Times, dates, and numbers

- Use the twelve hour clock followed by 'am' or 'pm'. For example, 10.00 pm, not 22:00.
- Dates should be written in the format 'DD Month' (e.g. 21st June), with the year if appropriate.
- Use BC and AD, not BCE and CE.
- Write out all numbers up to twenty in full; only use figures for numbers exceeding twenty. The same goes for percentages: one percent and 21%.
- Use a space between a number and measurement. For example, 25 km; 10.00 am; 500 m.

Italics

- Italicise book titles, film titles, and titles for any other creative works or publications.
- Italicise foreign languages, unless they are words which have been assimilated into the English language.
- Do not italicise quotes.

Spelling

- Use British English, not American English, at all times. For example, always use the suffix -ise, not -ize.

Ampersands

- Only use ampersands when part of an official title or name.

Commas

- Use commas judiciously to break up sentences, clarify individuals' positions, and for lists. Please read longer sentences through and double check that commas are placed correctly.
- Use the Oxford Comma where necessary; this is a comma placed before the 'and' in a list to avoid ambiguity. For example, 'in attendance were King Charles' grandchildren, Princess Leonor of Asturia, and Princess Sofia. Without the Oxford comma this sentence suggests that Princesses Leonor and Sofia are the King's grandchildren.

Brackets

- Place punctuation outside of the brackets if it is only part of a sentence. If the brackets are around a complete sentence, punctuation should appear inside the brackets.

Dashes

- There are two different lengths of dashes: en dashes (the same width as a lowercase n) and m dashes (the same width as a lowercase m). Use en (short) dashes rather than m (long) dashes.

Quotation marks

- Use single quotation marks throughout. Only use double quotation marks for an inner quote: ‘aaaaa “bbbbbb” aaaaa.’
- Place punctuation inside quotation marks, such as ‘this.’

Formatting, Images and Appearance

File Format

- Always submit your article as a Microsoft Word document.

Font

- Use Times New Roman font in size 12

Spacing

- Double space your lines and paragraphs
- Do not indent your paragraphs, unless you need to display a quote.
- Quotes should be displayed where they are over 40 words long. They should be indented at both ends, like this:
 ‘Quotes should be displayed where they are over 40 words long, and indented at both ends.’

Titles and subtitles

- Head your article with a title and your name. Use the format ‘Article Title | Author Name.’
- Use subtitles only when necessary and if it aids clarity. Maintain spacing before and after the subtitle.
- Titles and subtitles should be **bold**.

Footnotes, endnotes and referencing

- Hyperlink all links in the text body. Use links only when necessary, however - when referring to a government paper, quoting statistics, or referring to a particular online publication (that is freely accessible.)
- Use endnotes, not footnotes. Where you must use endnotes, use the MHRA format. A guide is available here: [MHRA Referencing | A Quick Guide & Citation Examples \(scribbr.co.uk\)](https://www.scribbr.co.uk/mhra-referencing-a-quick-guide-citation-examples/)

Images and media

- Non-image media (e.g. tweets) ought to be included in their html format in the relevant place in the document.
- If you have a relevant image to submit with your article, please attach it to the email along with your article
- Image files should be named in the format ‘Owner, Source,’ (e.g. The Mallard, Flickr).
- Ensure that any images do not breach copyright. A safe rule of thumb is to use Wikimedia Commons and check that any image has a ‘Creative Commons’ licence and source information.