

# RPR - Style Guide

**Kindly note:** The Ramjas Political Review follows the official Oxford Style Guide, with a few changes suitable to the Indian context. All those who are interested in submitting the entries to the RPR are advised to go through it.

## Abbreviations and Ampersands

**Full stops** are not used in abbreviations, acronyms, or contractions. - ‘10am’ not ‘10a.m.’

This refers to abbreviations in all languages (‘etc’ not ‘etc.’ and ‘ibid’ not ‘ibid.’)

**Any abbreviations**, acronyms or contractions need to be spelled out in full unless, in which case include the abbreviation afterwards in brackets after initially explaining the full use of it. After the first use, the abbreviation could be used without explanation in the running text.

**Ampersands (&)** should not be used in body text – they can only be used in the following ways:

- For titles, if said titles originally use them, e.g. ‘Extensionality & Existence’
- On the cover page as a creative choice, e.g. ‘Interviews with the Pope, Winston Churchill, & Robin Hood’
- When referencing institutions that include an ampersand in their name, e.g. ‘P&G’

Ampersand use should follow the relevant precedent regarding spacing etc.

**Initials** in names should not have a space between each letter. - ‘RK Narayan’ not ‘R K Narayan’, or ‘R.K. Narayan’, unless the person in question has established a specific name form, e.g. ‘PJ Harvey’.

## Capitalisation

**Capitalisation** should be limited to specific titles and proper names, unless a relevant editorial choice necessitates it, e.g. ‘nationalism’ rather than ‘Nationalism’. This latter use is at the discretion of the author and editor.

Regular use examples are:

- The Archbishop of Canterbury is The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby. [Note the capitalisation of the initial ‘The’ for clerical titles.]
- All archbishops in the United Kingdom have been men.

**Title capitalisation** should be of all words other than articles, prepositions, or conjunctions, e.g. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

E.g.:

- ‘government’ is always left uncapitalised except when referring to the Indian Government.
- ‘Wi-fi’ is a trademarked term, so it is always capitalised and spelled as such.

## Names

**Names and titles** are always capitalised, e.g.: ‘Prime Minister Narendra will address the nation at 8pm today.’

**The full name and any relevant titles** of an individual should be given at first mention, and never initially assumed. After this, the individual may be referred to by their surname, title, or other relevant name.

- ‘Dr’, ‘Mr’, ‘Mrs’ etc., without a full stop, take surnames (e.g.: Dr Manmohan was the Prime Minister of India when the attacks of 26/11 had taken place.)

# Punctuation

**Apostrophes are only ever used to indicate missing letters in a word. This includes the possessive apostrophe.** Possession is denoted with ‘s’ for nouns not ending in ‘s’ or ‘z’, and a single apostrophe is used otherwise.

E.g.:

- Antony’s bowel problem
- Gabriel García Márquez’ book *The Murderers’ Confessions*
- Seamus’ brother Nathan

Compound nouns (or groups of nouns making a single concept) that indicate possession only require an apostrophe at the end of the terminal noun.

E.g. ‘I really enjoy Mills and Boom’s earlier works.’ or ‘My mother-in-law’s jawbone’.

Check for any exceptions to these rules that have crept in in specific instances (e.g.: Earls Court, All Souls College).

Apostrophes may also be used to express lengths of time, **but only where the apostrophe may be replaced by the word ‘of’ without altering the meaning.**

E.g. ‘I gave him three weeks’ warning of our copy-edit deadline.’

**Apostrophes should generally not be used to form any kind of contraction, such as ‘don’t’ or ‘wouldn’t’ unless it is in quotation.** If an exception is required, contact an editor.

**Brackets** come in two usable types:

**Parentheses ( )** can be used to provide short bits of non-defining information (i.e. where the sentence meaning is not altered by the removal of the bracketed phrase); **they should not be used in place of commas or m-dashes to mark off a subordinate clause!**

**Square brackets [ ]** are used to denote comments, corrections, references and translations, usually in quotations, made by subsequent authors or editors to aid comprehension out of context.

E.g.:

- ‘I haven’t dun [sic] nuthin [sic] wrong!’

- 'This is the chase: / I am gone for ever. [Exit, pursued by a bear]'

**In both cases, punctuation should fall outside the brackets** if the bracketed phrase is not designed to be a sentence in its own right.

E.g.:

- '103% of adults in the UK cannot swim (which definitely is not a made-up fact).'  
- '103% of factual examples in this guide are ridiculous. [This may be closer to the truth.]'

**Bullet-point lists should not be used if at all possible;** exceptions may be made in direct quotations. Such list items should end with semicolons (and a full stop for the final one) if they contain grammatically correct sentences.

**Colons** are used to link two subclauses where the second follows logically from the first, but cannot be used if there is no logical link.

E.g.:

- 'I woke up at 8:57: how could I be expected to arrive at my tute at 9am?'

**Semicolons** are used to link two related parts of a sentence so long as they could both stand alone as separate sentences and do not depend logically on one another.

E.g.: 'I hate Stephen's because I am a Ramjas man; I hate Miranda because I am a human.'

Semicolons may also be used in place of commas to aid clarity in long lists where commas are already being used elsewhere.

E.g.: 'I visited Trinity College, Oxford; Trinity College, Cambridge; and Trinity College, Dublin; and detested the lot of them. [Note that an 'oxford semicolon' before a final 'and' in a list such as this is acceptable.]'

**Commas** should be used to demarcate subordinate clauses, introductory adverbs and adverbial phrases, except those, which refer to time.

E.g.:

- 'Although it was getting late into the afternoon, I still had not left my bed.' Note that this is actually a concessive clause, not a temporal one, so it needs a comma.  
- 'When it was dark, I finally got up and had a shower.'  
- 'My breakfast, eaten at 5pm, was surprisingly dissatisfying.'

Commas are often used to mark off non-defining information, i.e. information that would not alter the meaning of the sentence if removed.

E.g.:

- 'The pile of plates, which had been left to fester since mid-Hilary, had acquired their own strain of mould.'

OR:

- 'The pile of plates which had been left to fester since mid-Hilary had acquired their own unique strain of mould.' [But the pile left to fester since mid-Trinity had not yet.]

Both are correct, but differ in emphasis.

**Commas should also be used to separate multiple qualitative adjectives.** If the adjectives are not qualitative (i.e. they cannot be changed by adding 'most' or 'more' to them) then do not add commas.

E.g.: 'I hate big, fat bluebottles with their loud, incessant, merciless buzzing.'

Commas should not be used to join two sentences that do not have a coordinating conjunction (eg 'but', 'and', 'yet') or a subordinating conjunction (eg 'although', 'except', 'while'). This is known as a **comma splice** and semicolons should be used instead.

E.g.: 'I kissed a girl, and I liked it.' becomes 'I kissed a girl; I liked it.'

**Commas should be used in lists except between the last two items,** where 'and' is used. A comma before 'and' is known as the 'Oxford comma' and should be used when comprehension is aided by it.

E.g.:

- 'My only friends are a couple of trapped wasps, a magpie that sometimes defecates on my windowsill and my pet rock, Jarvis.'

- 'My favourite movies are *Dumb and Dumber*, *Batman and Robin*, and *Marley and Me*.'

**Dashes** come in three forms: hyphens (-), en-dashes (–) and em-dashes (—).

Hyphens are used to link two different noun concepts, including proper nouns, to form a compound.

En-dashes are primarily used to show ranges of numbers or time, and to link two different noun concepts one of which is already a hyphenated compound.

Em-dashes are versatile and can be used in place of a set of commas to set aside a subordinate independent clause, and should be used instead of parentheses to denote an aside. This is called a ‘thought dash’. An em-dash may also be used instead of a single colon or comma to separate two clauses or even sentences when a colon is felt to be too “hard” and a comma too “soft”.

E.g.:

- ‘The Family Guy-Simpsons crossover episode was extremely self-referential.’
- ‘If you don’t yet have a 16–25 railcard you must obviously be ineligible, mad or never travel by train.’
- ‘She wanted Timofey to lay aside every month a little money for the boy—because she could not ask Bernard Maywood now—and she might die—and Eric did not care what happened—and somebody ought to send the lad a small sum now and then, as if coming from his mother—pocket money, you know—he would be among rich boys.’ [This is an extremely sophisticated example of em-dash–use.]

**Hyphens (-)** are used to link two adjectival phrases. Adjective-noun phrases where the noun is acting as an adjective directly before a noun should not be linked thusly. If a participle is one of the linked concepts, then use a hyphen regardless of its placement in the sentence. If an adverb ending in ‘-ly’ is one of the phrases, then do not use a hyphen, although it should be used if the adverb does not end in ‘-ly’.

E.g.:

- ‘First-class degree’
- ‘That lecture you gave was absolutely first class.’
- ‘*The Thirty-Nine Steps*’
- ‘The well-trodden path’
- ‘The finely smelted battleaxe’

Hyphens can be used with prefixes to aid comprehension, especially in complex-to-read words, but there is often no hard set rule on these, so consult the dictionary for the most common usage or omit the hyphen if no conclusive answer can be obtained. They should, however, be used if the prefix occurs before a proper noun, number or date.

E.g.:

- ‘pre-eminent’
- ‘antenatal’
- ‘antidisestablishmentarianism’
- ‘anti-Corbyn’
- ‘mid-Hilary’

**Ellipses (...)** can be used to mark omissions from quotations. If they occur within a phrase they should be contained by squared brackets; if they occur at the beginning or the end of a phrase, squared brackets are not needed.

E.g.:

- 'I did [...] have sexual relations with that woman'
- 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...'

They can also be used for comic effect or for trailing off, although this is generally ill-advised for serious pieces.

E.g.:

- 'Did he really just...?'
- 'I'm not schizophrenic, I assure you... but I am!'

One and only one of either **a full stop, exclamation mark or question mark** should be used at the end of a sentence. Full-stops should never be used in titles, but exclamation and question marks can be if they fall at the end of one. Reported questions and commands should not generally end in anything other than a full stop.

- *Help!* is the fifth studio album by the Beatles.
- I asked him if he knew *Help!* well.
- 'Have you asked him if he knows *Help!* well?'

**Single quotation marks ' '** should be used for all outside quotations, and double quotation marks " " should be used for quotations within these. In the rare case, where another level of quotation is required, single quotation marks should be used again, then double for each alternating level further on. These are the British rules for quotation marks – American rules are different and should not be used.

E.g.:

- 'I've never really understood why the word "moist" is hated by people,' Will opined.
- 'I've never really understood why the word "moist is hated by people" is a confusing example, Will,' said the editorial team.

Single quotation marks should denote any title that is not a whole publication – in these cases, italics should not be used.

E.g. 'Help!' is the title-track from the Beatles' 1965 album *Help!*.

Double quotation marks may also occasionally be used as so-called “scare quotes” to relativize or polemicize a term or expression. This is somewhat colloquial usage and should be used sparingly unless required.

E.g.:

- ‘We could call this hypothetical force “God”.’
- ‘This “democracy” is a drop in the ocean compared to the tyranny of labour relations.’

**Punctuation in quoted material should always fall within the quotation.** If quoted direct speech ends either without any punctuation or with a full stop, and non-quoted text immediately follows it, then a comma is used in place of the omission or full stop.

E.g.:

- ‘Will,’ the editorial team asked, ‘what if you get items in the style guide wrong?’
- ‘I am the style guide, you fools,’ Will replied confidently.

## Emphasis, italicising and references

**Bold or underlined text** should not be used except with the editors’ explicit prior permission. It tends to be automatically removed in the lay-in stage in any case. Bold text has been used in this guide to facilitate comprehension and reference only – this is an exception.

**Italics** should be used for published complete works, and not articles, songs, short stories, or poems, which are marked by single quotation marks instead.

E.g.:

- ‘Pink Floyd’s *Dark Side of the Moon* is objectively a great album, and if you dislike it you are wrong.’
- ‘The aforementioned article “The Semantic Conception of Truth” can be found in the journal *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*.’

**Embedded foreign languages**, including Latin set phrases and taxonomic groups, should be italicised.

E.g.:

- ‘Add a hearty splash of vodka to the recipe, for that little *je ne sais quoi*.’
- ‘The lion (*Panthera leo*) is often known as the king of the jungle, despite not actually living in a jungle habitat.’



- 'I have looked after this child *in loco parentis* despite only being her postman.'

Any plurals, or other grammatical changes, to set terms in italics should not be italicised. E.g. 'This style guide is designed to survive for many subsequent *OPRs*.'

**Footnotes** should not be used.

**Use the APA 7th Edition for formatting.**

## Spelling and word usage

**British Spelling is used.**

**Foreign spelling**, including classical spelling, should be disregarded in favour of common British spelling, except in the case of technical terms where it ought to be maintained. Prudence is advised and, if unsure, consult an editor. Foreign and classical plurals should be used when still in common usage.

E.g.:

- 'encyclopedia', 'medieval'
- 'archaeology', 'orthopaedics'
- 'nucleus', 'nuclei'
- 'alumnus'/'alumna', 'alumni'/'alumnae' [not that the latter alternatives are the correct feminine forms].

'**Among**' is used for unspecified terms; '**between**' for specified ones.

E.g. 'Among the dead' but 'between you and me'

'**Mutual**' is used when two parties share the same feeling or relationship to a third party; '**reciprocal**' for two parties acting, feeling or relating to each other in the same way.

'**Less**' is used for quantifying nouns you cannot count; '**fewer**' for those you can.

**Effect** as a verb means to bring about or cause a result; as a noun it means a result or impact that something causes. **Affect** as a verb means to have an impact or change something, or to simulate something untrue; as a noun it means the outward psychological appearance, though is used rarely.

E.g.:

- 'It is very difficult to effect widespread cultural change.'
- 'This experiment had unexpected side-effects on the bacteria.'

- 'I was deeply affected by your hurtful words about the accuracy of the style guide.'
- 'However, my affect was one of cheery nonchalance when you said them.'

'**To imply**' is to suggest something without explicitly mentioning it and is done by the auteur of that thing; '**to infer**' is to read something that is not explicitly stated (whether it was meant by the auteur or not) and is done by the receiver of the statement.

E.g.:

- 'He implied that he never wanted to see me again after the lobster incident.'
- 'I inferred from the multiple holes in his bedroom wall that he had some serious anger issues.'

'**Comparing X to Y**' highlights similarities; '**comparing X with Y**' highlights differences.

E.g.:

- 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?'
- 'Compared with him, even the visiting schoolchildren were geniuses.'

'**I**' is a subject pronoun, so is used only when you did the verb yourself. '**Me**' is an object pronoun, so is used only when you had the verb done to you. This includes multiple subjects or objects such as 'The Devil and I' or 'Jeremy and me'. '**Myself**', '**yourself**', '**themselves**' etc. are reflexive object pronouns — they should only be used as an object pronoun if the subject is the same as the object of the verb, and never otherwise.

E.g.:

- 'You and I were the prime suspects in the case so we won't be acquitted.'
- 'He literally saw you and me committing the murder, David.'
- 'He was by himself, yes, but he got his phone out and filmed us burying the body.'
- 'No, the jury will not convict themselves of the murder instead. Don't be stupid.'

*In case of any errors or clarifications, feel free to contact us at  
ramjaspolreview@gmail.com.*