



# Style Guide

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# 1 Introduction

All the comments in this style guide are intended to be used as a guide only, and should not be followed where the context makes them inappropriate or there are customer-specific or job-specific instructions to the contrary.

This Style Guide is not primarily designed as a monolingual guide for writing in English, but as a guide for those translating from German into English.

The intention is to produce clarity and consistent style in LingServe translations as far as possible. Due to its evolution and the diverse contemporary applications of the English language, English orthography, grammar and style are codified to a much lesser extent than many other languages. The aim of this style guide is not therefore to prescribe 'correct' usage, but merely to achieve consistent usage in LingServe translations. In terms of vocabulary, always bear in mind that the need for consistency has to be balanced with the need for variety and the avoidance of repetition.

No language is static and, broadly speaking, LingServe takes a progressive view in terms of adopting and adapting to changes in language. Where such change leads to a diminution of clarity or precision, however, LingServe policy is to resist such change. In the context of translation, there are good, practical reasons for this approach.

We do not adhere to outdated, Latin-derived rules of English grammar, preferring to be guided instead by contemporary standard usage. To quote Noam Chomsky:

“The intuition of a native speaker is enough to define the grammaticalness of a sentence; that is, if a particular string of English words elicits a double take, or feeling of wrongness in a native English speaker, it can be said that the string of words is ungrammatical.”

Because this viewpoint is almost diametrically opposed to the standard view of some of our customers that language is governed by fixed and immutable rules, it is particularly important that we have a set of guidelines to which we can refer and consistently adhere.

Any comments or suggestions for future updates are gratefully received and should be addressed to [service@lingserve.co.uk](mailto:service@lingserve.co.uk). Because the English language is dynamic, and acceptable usage is constantly changing, we attempt to model our style on current usage in the quality press in the UK, and the Financial Times in particular.

Some sections of this guide have been adapted from the English style guide published by the EU translation department. The full version of that document is available on the internet at [http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/documents/styleguide\\_english\\_dgt\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/documents/styleguide_english_dgt_en.pdf). The EU style guide is the only one listed here that is specifically aimed at translators. Other sources that have been used include the Guardian style guide ([www.guardian.co.uk/styleguide](http://www.guardian.co.uk/styleguide)), the Daily Writing Tips website (US-oriented) ([www.dailywritingtips.com/](http://www.dailywritingtips.com/)) and the Columbia Guide to Standard American English ([www.bartleby.com/68/a0.html](http://www.bartleby.com/68/a0.html)).

N.B. If you spot any errors / inconsistencies, they are almost certainly deliberate on our part and have been inserted so as to test your powers of observation. Please let us know so that we can remove them and put others in their place!

## 2 Grammar

### Apposition

#### Use of commas with nouns in apposition

When the appositive noun (the second one) is essential to the meaning of the sentence, it is said to be 'restrictive'. In that case, no comma is used. When the appositive noun provides additional information that could be omitted without altering the sentence's main thought, it is said to be 'nonrestrictive' and commas are used.

There are a couple of simple tests that can be applied when deciding whether it is necessary to set off the second noun (in apposition) with commas.

- a) *The world's top footballer, Lionel Messi, has been ruled out for a month due to injury.*
- b) *The footballer Wayne Rooney has been suspended for three matches.*
- c) *The footballer involved in the incident, Wayne Rooney, has been suspended for three matches.*

Test 1: Is the noun notionally in brackets, as is the case in sentences a) and c)? If so, use commas.

Test 2: Is there just one (use commas) or multiple (do not use commas) possibilities for the noun in apposition?

**Help to or help + bare infinitive:** Both forms are grammatically correct, but preferred LS usage – for consistency – is the slightly more formal 'help to'.

Example sentence (from LS Style Guide): "Leaving out the full stops is more natural to the German reader's eye, generally makes for a tidier appearance and can *help to* avoid space issues."

**Time phrases:** Use apostrophes in phrases such as two days' time, twelve years' imprisonment and six weeks' holiday, where the time period (two days) modifies a noun (time), but not in nine months pregnant or three weeks old, where the time period is adverbial (modifying an adjective such as pregnant or old) – if in doubt, test with a singular such as one day's time, one month pregnant.

#### Examples

- *six months' paternity leave* (time phrase modifying a noun)
- *two nights' bed & breakfast* (time phrase modifying a noun)
- *six months overdue* (time phrase modifying an adjective)

#### Singular or plural

Singular when the emphasis is on the whole entity:

*Chelsea is a well-run football club.*

*The Advisory Committee has met twice this year.*

Plural when the emphasis is on the individual members:

*Chelsea are a well-organised team.*

*A majority of the Committee were in favour.*

Singular for countries, institutions and organisations:

*The United States is reconsidering its position.*

*The Commission was not informed.*

A singular verb is common in English with a double subject if it is felt to form a whole:

*Checking and stamping the forms is the job of the customs authorities.*

Use the plural where it sounds intuitively right even if strictly grammatically incorrect.

*There are a number of new features.*

**Note:** US usage differs – see [singular verb form](#).

*Graffiti*, despite its plural origins, is singular. Ditto for *data*.

### 3 Punctuation

As a general principle, do not feel bound by the punctuation of the source language.

Punctuation rules and conventions vary from one language to another.

#### **Apostrophe**

Possessive apostrophe for nouns ending in ‘s’

There are no definitive rules about whether or not to write a simple apostrophe (James’) or an apostrophe and ‘s’ (James’s). LingServe policy is to be guided by pronunciation and in the first instance – for consistency – with any specific entries in TermStar. Place names may have an established spelling and should be verified online if possible. Note that some place names omit the apostrophe altogether (e.g. Kings Cross).

In some cases, it might be advisable to avoid an awkward construction by simply reformulating:

*e.g. ‘In Hugo Boss’s home town, just 30 minutes ...’*

*could be reformulated as ‘In the home town of Hugo Boss, just 30 minutes...’*

#### **Colon**

The colon is used much more frequently in German and is often best omitted in English and replaced by a full stop, comma, semicolon or dash. One instance where a colon is used in English is where the second part of the sentence explains the first.

*e.g. There were no cats in the house: the dog had chased them out.*

Colons do not require the next word to start with a capital, although in some contexts this may be appropriate, e.g. where the word after the colon starts a new line or is essentially a new sentence. A typical example is the start of a press release:

*Berlin, 17 July 2012: Transactions with a combined value of €7.33 billion were processed on the financial marketplace platform in the second quarter of 2012.*

Note that US English tends to have a capital letter after a colon. In the following example, the colon would be followed by lower case ‘the’ in GB and ‘The’ in US:

Your training programme: the new, modular Skill Level MASTERS.

### **Comma**

See also section on [American versus British English](#) for lists.

Use commas as an aid to understanding, but generally the fewer the better. Commas are useful in long sentences, but should be used only where the break is a natural one.

Commas can, however, be critical to the meaning of a sentence:

a) *The chief choreographer fired all the dancers, who were women.*

b) *The chief choreographer fired all the dancers who were women.*

Sentence a) implies that all the dancers were women and all of them were fired.

Sentence b) implies that all of the female dancers were fired but the male dancers were spared.

Opening salutations should be followed by a comma, both in standard correspondence and in publications directly addressing the reader.

Thus:

*Dear Mr Smith,  
Dear customer,  
Dear shareholder,*

Contrary to standard German practice, the opening word of the following sentence should be upper case.

Closing remarks should also be followed by a comma:

*Yours faithfully,  
Yours sincerely,  
Kind regards,  
etc.*

### **Commas after introductions**

Introductory clauses 'set the stage' for the main part of the sentence and start with adverbs such as *after, although, as, because, before, if, since, though, until, when*. These kind of introductory clauses should be followed by a comma, as in the following examples:

After the cat sat on the mat, the dog began to bark.

Because the cat ran away, the mice were able to play.

Introductory phrases also set the stage for the main part of the sentence, but they are not complete clauses, i.e. they do not have a subject and a verb that are separate from the subject and verb in the main part of the sentence. Common introductory phrases include infinitive phrases, participial phrases, appositive phrases and prepositional phrases.

To keep in shape for the competition, athletes need to exercise every day. (Infinitive phrase, main clause)

Talking incessantly, Paul finally brought us round to his point of view. (Participial phrase, main clause)

A popular and highly decorated player, Gerrard was the clear favourite to become England captain. (Appositive phrase, main clause)

On this beautiful day, the cat sat on the grass outside. (Prepositional phrase, main clause)

Single introductory words, such as *however*, *still*, *furthermore* and *meanwhile*, require a comma, particularly considering the scope for ambiguity in their use (Still, the river flowed. vs. Still the river flowed.)

Furthermore, the economy is performing better than expected.

Meanwhile, the recovery in Japan now appears secure.

In indications of time, the LingServe rule of thumb is to only use a comma in order to avoid ambiguity, to add emphasis or to indicate a pause in speech. Otherwise, no comma is used:

In 2011 the number of overnight stays rose by 10 per cent on the same period of the previous year.

Do not use a comma when the sentence begins with gerund or infinitive phrases, as in the following examples:

Stopping the cat from sitting on the mat was one of the biggest challenges for the owner of the house.

To stop the cat from sitting on the mat would be foolish.

### **Full stop**

No further full stop is required if a sentence ends with an abbreviation that takes a full stop (e.g. 'etc.') or a quotation complete in itself that ends in a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark before the final quotes:

e.g. *Walther Rathenau once said: "We stand or fall on our economic performance."*

When using full stops as omission marks (aka ellipsis points), always use three points preceded by a hard space (Ctrl/Shift/Space). In MS Word, type the hard space and then use Alt + Ctrl + (full stop) to insert ellipsis points. If a sentence ends with an omission, no fourth full stop should be added. If any other punctuation mark follows, there is no space before it.

### **Hyphen**

LingServe practice is to use hyphens where they aid clarity and avoid ambiguity, but to omit them if they serve no obvious purpose.

Note: within this document, any reference to 'hyphen' is the character on a standard keyboard between 0 and = (*Bindestrich*). Any reference to 'dash' is the character created by the keystroke combination Alt+0150 (*Gedankenstrich*).

A general rule of thumb is that attributive compound adjectives should be hyphenated, but this is not a hard and fast rule.

e.g. *a unit-linked policy, a medium-sized company* BUT *a city centre location*

Words that may be written either with or without a hyphen in GB English but generally without a hyphen in US English should be written without:

e.g. *cooperation, ongoing, coordination, proactive*

In adverb-adjective modifiers, no hyphen is needed when the adverb ends in *-ly*:

e.g. *an occupationally exposed worker, a beautifully phrased sentence, a fully fledged investment banking institution*

Numbers are hyphenated when they are spelled out:

e.g. *twenty-eight, sixty-five*

Written-out fractions should be hyphenated to emphasise the fact that they are being used as a single unit of measurement that therefore takes a singular verb. The hyphen should only be omitted when you are *referring* to the fraction as a separate entity rather than as part of something else:

e.g. *two-thirds of the bus was empty*

e.g. *a two-thirds majority; an increase of three-quarters*

e.g. *Gillian promised me two-fifths of her birthday cake*

But: *I was disappointed because neither of the two fifths had a cherry*

Tip: If there appears to be subject/verb disagreement, it's worth trying to rephrase the sentence to avoid it altogether. So the above example would become '*The bus was two-thirds empty.*'

Hyphenated compounds may be coordinated as follows:

e.g. *gamma- and beta-emitters, long- and short-term objectives*

Where compounds are not hyphenated (close compounds), or should you choose to write them so, they should not be coordinated but written out in full:

e.g. *minicomputers and microcomputers, hardware and software, not mini- and microcomputers, hard- and software*

Statements of distance used adjectivally should not be hyphenated on the grounds that the meaning is generally clear and it is aesthetically better:

e.g. *the 65 kilometre tourist route, the 100 metre high church spire*

Note: A misplaced hyphen can completely alter the intended meaning, as illustrated by the following example (from the BBC website):

*"Flying ant-spotters are being asked to submit their sightings throughout July and August on the Society of Biology's website."*

The spotters in question actually remain firmly on the ground in order to observe flying ants.

### **Reported speech**

The punctuation of the direct form of reported speech is an area where the house rules of publishers, editors and academic institutions vary immensely. LingServe takes the following approach.

Sentences that report direct speech have two parts – the reporting clause ('he said' etc.) and the actual words of the speaker.

The actual words of the speaker are always placed in speech marks (""). The two parts of the sentence are generally separated by a comma. This comma is placed inside the speech marks when the reporting clause comes after the quote, as in the example below:

*“The cat sat on the mat,” said John Smith.*

The speech marks are preceded by a colon when the reporting clause comes before the quote.

*John Smith said: “The cat sat on the mat.”*

Note that the first letter of the speech being reported has an initial capital.

When the reporting clause interrupts the reported speech, the punctuation mark after it is governed by what follows. If the clause comes between two separate sentences of the speech, it is closed by a full stop. If the clause breaks a sentence of the speech, use a comma.

*“The cat,” said John Smith, “sat on the mat.”*

*“The cat sat on the mat,” said John Smith. “It was a sight to behold.”*

The comma is omitted in cases where the quote ends with a question mark or exclamation mark.

*“The cat sat on the mat?” queried John Smith.*

### **Speech marks/inverted commas**

For reported speech, use double speech marks. There is perhaps a stronger preference for double speech marks in US English and single speech marks in GB English, but for ease and consistency we should adopt the same usage for both. For a quotation within a quotation, use single speech marks.

Single inverted commas *can* be used for titles of books, films, plays, music, art, etc. and for other instances where an individual word or phrase needs to be distinguished from the surrounding text, but note that in the case of titles, the use of initial caps is usually sufficient in English to make the title stand out from the surrounding sentence, where this may not be the case in German. For example, the phrase Destination Germany stands out without the use of inverted commas. Double inverted commas should be reserved for reported speech.

Only use inverted commas where they are either necessary or helpful, i.e. where they are likely to aid the reader of the text. The source text should not be the basis for deciding whether or not to use speech marks – it may be necessary to add them in the translation where there were none in the source text or vice-versa.

In cases where it is not possible to use italics, e.g. certain web applications or where an entire section of text is already in italics, use single inverted commas instead.

## **4 Spelling**

### **e-words**

*email* rather than *e-mail*, but all other compounds (e.g. *e-business*, *e-commerce*) hyphenated and lower case.

### **-ise / ize**

Both spellings are correct in British English, but the *-ise* form is the preferred LingServe spelling. Texts specifically requiring US English should use the *-ize* form. Note: there are some exceptions to this rule, e.g. 'advertise' in US English.

### **Transliteration**

In general, Russian names should end in *y* after a consonant and in *i* after a vowel, with one exception: *Yuri*, since two *y*'s in a short name looks strange.

Hence *Yevgeny*, *Georgy*, *Dmitry* and *Vasili*, but *Alexei*, *Andrei Sergei* and *the Bolshoi Ballet*.

Names should also be spelt phonetically and as simply as possible: for example with the standard Russian *e*, pronounced *ye*, we should write *Yegor* not *Egor* and *Yevgeny* not *Evgeny* or *Eugene*. In the few cases where names are identical bar one character to western spelling, the western version should be used, e.g. *Alexander* not *Alexandr*.

An exception to the phonetic rule is the Russian letter *ë* (pronounced *yo*), which is generally transliterated into English as *e*. Notable examples include Gorbachev and Khrushchev.

Certain Cyrillic names have become established in their German (or French) transliterated form and that spelling should therefore be retained in English, e.g.: Wladimir Klitschko (instead of Vladimir) and Wassily Kandinsky (instead of Vasili). Such exceptions to the general rule should be documented in TermStar.

Transliteration tables for Cyrillic and Greek can be found in the EU Style Guide.

## **5 Numbers**

### **Billion**

The German *Milliarde* should always be translated as *billion* in English, i.e. the American and modern British usage = one thousand million. The old 'British' billion (i.e. one million millions) should be considered obsolete due to potential for misleading the reader.

### **Million**

Write out the words *million* and *billion* in continuous text. Do not use *mio*. The abbreviations *m* and *bn* can be used for sums of money (including euros) where space is an issue. It should be closed up to the figure (example: *£370m*, *\$230bn*).

### **Numerals or words**

There is a convention in English and German that the numbers zero to twelve should be written out in full and from 13 upwards as figures. This convention applies both to ordinal and cardinal numbers. It does not apply, however, in all contexts. In deciding whether to write numbers in words or figures, the primary consideration should be consistency within a text. However, we also strive to achieve consistency across all texts, hence the following general rules should be applied:

Use figures in tables, charts, etc. and write words out in full in continuous text.

Three exceptions:

1. Use figures when stating a range of numbers (e.g. 9-11).
2. Use figures when stating a percentage (e.g. 12 per cent).
3. Use figures in conjunction with units of measurement (e.g. 5kg not five kg; 10m<sup>2</sup> not ten m<sup>2</sup>).

Hundreds/thousands/millions/billions: Unless the text is very statistical and full of numbers, the general rule for continuous text still applies of a preference for words over figures. With the exception of translating 'TEUR' etc. (see Currencies section), do not mix figures and words e.g. write 500/5,000,000 or five hundred/five million **but not** 5 hundred/5 million.

It is OK to mix figures and words where some numbers are whole and some have a decimal point, e.g.: "The number of overnight stays declined by 14.4 per cent from 5.8 million to five million."

Try to avoid starting a sentence with numbers written as figures (including numbers prefixed with a currency symbol). It is OK if the number is written out as a word.

If figures are stated with a decimal point in the source text, it should be retained in the translation (even if the number after the decimal point is a zero).

## 6 Format

### Addresses

It is common in German to use a one- or two-digit country code in addresses. This is not usual in English and should generally be replaced by writing out the name of the country beneath the town/postcode:

Musterfirma GmbH	becomes:	Musterfirma GmbH
Musterstraße 20		Musterstrasse 20
D-70234 Stuttgart		70234 Stuttgart
		Germany

*Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren* should generally be translated as *Dear Sir or Madam*, followed by an empty line and the initial letter of the first word of the next line in upper case.

<b>for:</b>	<b>write:</b>
Prof. Dr. H. Schmidt	Prof. H. Schmidt
Herr (Frau) Dr. Müller	Dr Müller
Dipl.-Ing. W. Braun	Dipl.-Ing. W. Braun

### Currencies

As a general rule, use the symbol where one exists (e.g. €, £, \$). Place the currency symbol in front of the amount. Write amounts with a decimal point and two decimal places in English  
20,- € → €20.00

If the currency is written as a symbol (e.g. £, \$, €), there should be no space between the symbol and the first figure. If the currency is written as an abbreviation (e.g. DM, FF, EUR), there should be a space between the currency abbreviation and the figure. Typing a hard space (Ctrl/Shift/Space) ensures the symbol and figure stay together if automatically carried over to the next line.

Plus or minus signs should be in front of the currency symbol with no space: -€10,000. In continuous text, where it is clear from the context that a figure is negative, the amount should not have a minus sign in English (contrary to the normal German practice).

e.g. *ein Verlust in Höhe von – 10 Mio. € = a loss of €10 million*

The plural of *euro* is *euros*, not *euro*. Lower case (also for *dollars*, *pounds*, *yen*, etc.); it should never be written as *EURO* (as is sometimes seen in German).

### **TEUR/TC & Mio. €**

The conventions for stating amounts in German differs from that in English which gives rise to problems with translation. As a fundamental rule, the English should never be more precise or less precise than the German figure (i.e. do not round up or down!) and anything more than three decimal places looks odd in English and should therefore be avoided.

In continuous text, change to *€ million* (e.g. *TEUR 2.754 = €2.754 million*; note that the German thousand separator becomes a decimal point) or, for amounts up to TEUR 999, change to *€ thousand* (e.g. *TEUR 100 = €100 thousand*). This should never be written as *€100,000*, as the German *TEUR* clearly implies rounding to the nearest thousand, which is not unambiguously the case if writing out *100,000*.

In tables, if figures are stated in thousands, this format should be retained. The correct heading is *€ '000*.

Ensure that the thousand separators and decimal separators are transcribed appropriately to the unit used.

If the figure stated in thousands extends into seven figures (i.e. a number in excess of one billion), state the figure in millions – this avoids the problem of having six decimal places if converted into billions (e.g. *TEUR 1.681.245 = €1,681.245 million*) (cf. procedure for 'thousands of millions' with three decimal places below).

The abbreviation 'K' for thousand should only be used in English in the context of salaries (e.g. *£30K*).

Note: There is no space between the currency symbol (€/\$/£ and the number in English).

Numbers may sometimes be stated in thousands of millions in German. In such cases, state the figure in *billions* in English, retaining the German thousand separator as a decimal point (e.g. *6.159 Mio. € = €6.159 billion*).

Note that this method does not work if the German includes a figure after the decimal point (e.g. *EUR 6.159,5 Mio.*) as this would result in four decimal places in the English. In this instance it is therefore necessary to retain the German format for the figure and change the decimal point/comma accordingly (i.e. *€6,159.5 million*).

### **Figures**

*€50.00* or *fifty euros*, not *fifty EUR* or *fifty €*

*250kW* or *two hundred and fifty kilowatts* or *250 kilowatts* but not *two hundred and fifty kW*

*205µg* or *two hundred and five micrograms*

There should be a space between the number and the abbreviated unit of measurement if the abbreviation is more than two characters in length, e.g. *80 km/h*, *50 mph*.

Exception: If the abbreviation is upper case, there should be a space, e.g. *20 MB*.

Do not combine single-digit figures and words using hyphens (e.g. *a 2-hour journey*) but write out:

*a three-year period; a five-door car  
a seven-year-old wine; two four-hectare plots*

When two numbers are adjacent, it is often preferable to spell out one of them:

*ninety 50-gram weights; seventy 25-cent stamps*

### **Headings/picture captions**

The use of initial caps is more common in US English than GB English, but there is no general consensus amongst different US style guides. The LingServe convention is therefore to use lower case (except the first word and proper nouns) in all cases, but with a measure of discretion to use capitals, for example to distinguish between main section headings and sub-headings where a document is broken down in that way, or if a customer specifies a different convention.

There should be no full stop at the end of headings or picture captions. As German has the same convention, if a German source text does have a full stop at the end of headings in order to create a particular effect, consider retaining this in the English

### **Lists / bullet points**

Ensure wherever reasonably possible that lists of items all start with the same part of speech (imperative verb, noun, gerund, etc.).

Where the bullet points comprise a list of single words or short statements, there is no need to punctuate the list (except for a full stop at the end), e.g.:

A positive working environment is defined by the following characteristics:

- teamwork
- creativity
- trust
- opportunities for career development
- a sense of loyalty.

Where the bullet points comprise longer statements that are not discrete sentences, start each item with lower case and punctuate with semi-colons, e.g.:

On the bright side:

- two thirds of survey respondents felt proud to work for the University
- two thirds felt a strong sense of loyalty to their faculty or division
- three quarters felt they were encouraged to use their initiative
- two thirds felt there was equal access to training and development opportunities.

Where the bullet points comprise discrete sentences, punctuate with full stops, e.g.:

The key findings of the survey are as follows:

- The most popular reason for choosing the University is its academic reputation.
- Nearly 90 per cent of the respondents feel they have chosen the right course or programme.
- More than 75 per cent of respondents are satisfied with the facilities provided (office and laboratory space, computers, etc.).

Whichever type of list you use, introduce it with a colon and end with a full stop.

The list of points may extend over several pages, making it essential not to introduce it with an incomplete sentence or colon. The same format applies where there is a list of complete sentences with no introductory sentence.

### **Percentages**

Generally speaking, % should be used in tables, charts, etc. and *per cent* in continuous text. Try to be consistent even if the source text isn't. *Percent* is US usage. There is no space between the number and the % sign.

### **Telephone number formats**

Unless a text is clearly for use within Germany only, insert the international dialling code with a '+' in front of it to indicate the international exit code and placing the zero at the start of the city dialling code in brackets.

e.g. *069 12 34 56* -> *+49 (0)69 123 456*

No space between (0) and STD code and no spaces in the STD code.

Also note that German usage groups telephone numbers in pairs, whereas English tends to group them in blocks of 3 or 4 digits (e.g. *(0 12 52) 33 60 52* cf. *(01252) 336 052*). If inputting text from hard copy, convert to English format. If overtyping, use your discretion depending on the amount of extra work involved and intended use (e.g. if purely for internal information, not important; if intended for publication, anglicise the format).

It is also common for German telephone numbers to include hyphens/slashes. These should be deleted.

If a hyphen and slash are used to denote different extensions, use 'or' in English, e.g. *069 / 123-456-10/-20* -> *+49 (0)69 123 456 10 or 20*

*0049 (0)69 12345*

*0049 (0)69 123 456*

*0049 (0)69 123 4567*

*0049 (0)69 1234 5678*

*0049 (0)69 123 456 789*

*0049 (0)69 123 456 7890*

Area codes should always be grouped in English, even if split it into pairs in German, e.g. *0 45 54 70 56 533* -> *+49 (0)4554 705 6533* (in this instance, the dialling code of Wittenborn is 04554).

Use the following abbreviation convention:

Tel.:

Fax:

These may seem like unnecessary/inconsequential changes but all add to the overall impression of the text, making it appear less foreign and less 'translated' to the English-speaking reader.

An obvious exception to the above is where the number is clearly and exclusively intended for use by someone in a specific foreign country, where it would be appropriate to use, for example: *0049 69 123 456*.

A further exception is where numbers have clearly been grouped in a certain way for a reason (e.g. memorability or to indicate extensions after a root number). In these cases, the source language format should be retained.

### **Times of the day/dates**

10am/10pm; 2.30am/2.30pm for UK English, 10 a.m./10 p.m.; 2.30 a.m./2.30 p.m. for US English.

12:00 = noon, 24:00 = midnight.

To avoid any possible confusion for an international readership, change purely numerical dates in the source text to the following format:

*31 December 2010* (not *31<sup>st</sup>* or *31. December*).

In this format, always use all four digits for the year. If space is an issue, use the following format:

▶ *31 Dec 2010*

Any jobs that specifically require US English should show dates in the following format:

▶ *December 31, 2010*

If abbreviation is necessary, use the following format:

▶ *Dec. 31, 2010*

If abbreviated, days of the week and months should be reduced to three letters (with no full stop for GB English).

Ranges should use a closed-up hyphen:

Mar-Sep, Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm

There is a comma between the day of the week and the date:

The fireworks display starts on Saturday, 11 August 2014 at approx. 10.40pm.

(US: The fireworks display starts on Saturday, August 11, 2014 at approx 10.40 p.m.)

If the date range is part of a sentence, it should be written out as 'from 18 to 20 April'.

Anfang August = early August

Mitte August = mid-August

Ende August = late August

*Unless it is clear from the context that Anfang/Ende really do refer to the first and last days of the month.*

### **Years**

Use a closed-up hyphen for ranges. The century is only mentioned after the hyphen if it has changed:

e.g. *1870-1901, 1905-10, 1914-18, 1996-2006*

Note also:

*from 1990 to 1995* (not *from 1990-95*)

*between 1990 and 1995* (not *between 1990-95*)

*1990 to 1995 inclusive* (not *1990-95 inclusive*)

Note that *1990-91* is two years. Single marketing years, financial years, etc. that do not coincide with calendar years are denoted by a forward slash, e.g. *1990/91*, which is twelve months or less.

When the day of the week appears together with the date, we use the following conventions.

## 7 American vs British English

### LingServe policy

With the exception of translations for customers for whom US English is the default language (see customer-specific information in AVIS), use British English by default, unless US English is specified for the translation in hand or it becomes apparent during the course of translation that US English would be more appropriate (if in doubt, check). In the case of financial texts where companies are reporting to US GAAP use US English in order to avoid inconsistencies within the text.

Regardless of whether you are using GB or US English, ***always assume an international readership*** and try to use terminology that will be commonly understood. Avoid the obvious sporting analogies (e.g. batting on a sticky wicket), cultural references and colloquial language. Translations into English, particularly from German customers, are often not specifically for native English readers (US or British) at all, but for an international readership in general. In other words, the choice of US or GB English is often less related to the end use and readership of a text and more to do with the perceived preference of the individual customer, or in the case of GB English, simply the default applied by LingServe.

LingServe policy is to keep our versions of GB and US (and other country-specific) English as consistent with one another as possible and to restrict variations between them – as far as reasonably possible – to those rules that absolutely have to be adhered to such as spelling conventions (e.g. colour/color) and differing vocabulary (e.g. trunk/boot). Where American terms are becoming established in UK usage (or, less commonly, vice-versa), they should be used – in line with our policy of consistency (e.g. use ‘trade receivables’ rather than ‘trade debtors’ for ‘Forderungen aus LuL’ even in GB English). Where it is possible to use a neutral word (e.g. translating ‘Benzin’ as fuel rather than petrol or gas), this is the preferred option in all texts. For a list of individual spelling differences, see the Conventions annex. See also G/Glossaries/British~American Wordlist for list of differences.

### Abbreviations / acronyms<sup>1</sup>

Abbreviations (govt., dept., mgmt., etc.) should be written with full stops in both US and GB English.

Conversely, acronyms (USA, BBC, NATO) should be written without full stops between letters. They are often used in US English, but this is by no means universal and in declining use, and is not normal practice in GB English. Leaving out the full stops is more natural to the German reader’s eye, generally makes for a tidier appearance and can help to avoid space issues.

In British English, Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr, Ltd are written without a full stop. The general rule is that if the abbreviation has the first and last letters of the word, there is no full stop, so although Dr is without, ‘Prof.’ is written with a full stop. In US English, all are written with full stops.

### as of / as at

Only use ‘as of’ in the sense of ‘from this date forward’ and always use ‘as at’ to mean at a particular point in time (Stand 31. Dez. 2006 = As at 31 Dec. 2006). This is closer to standard British usage, but US usage of ‘as of’ could be confusing to a non-American.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this style guide, no distinction is made between acronym and initialism. The term acronym applies to any compound created from initial letters, whether pronounceable or not.

### **Canadian English**

Canadian vocabulary is largely identical to American; spelling conventions are a mixture of US and GB. For details, see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian\\_english](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_english).

### **Caps in headings/titles**

See [Format section](#).

### **Comma before the last item in a list**

Unlikely to be noticed by any but the most pedantic reader, use a comma for US English (The farm has pigs, goats, sheep, and chickens.) but omit for GB English (The farm has pigs, goats, sheep and chickens.)

### **Conjugation of collective nouns**

In GB English, collective nouns often take a plural verb (*The jury return their verdict in the morning*). In US English, collective nouns should always take a singular verb. (Source: *Daily Writing Tips*).

### **Dates**

Date formats vary according to GB or US usage – see [times of the day/dates](#) in the Format section.

Time/date range: Use the American ‘through’ (e.g. November 15 through December 24) **only** if the text is exclusively for a North American readership. Use ‘to’ or avoid altogether by using a hyphen if for an international audience.

Note that standard US usage is not to use the preposition ‘on’ with reference to dates.

e.g. *Abraham Lincoln was born February 12, 1809.*

*The baseball game will be played Saturday, March 10.*

But this format should only be used in texts exclusively for a North American readership.

### **Floors of buildings**

A possible cause of genuine confusion. The appropriate translation will also depend more on the context in which the translation is being used. If someone is being directed to the first floor of a building in Germany, calling it the second floor (as per standard US usage) will only confuse. Only an issue if US English requested. Decide on case-by-case basis.

For *Erdgeschoß*, ‘ground floor’ would be the preferred generic translation as it is less potentially confusing to a US reader than ‘first floor’ would be to a GB reader.

### **Full stops in titles, abbreviations and acronyms**

In US English, titles (Mr./Mrs./Ms./Dr.) are written with a full stop. In GB English, titles whose final letter is the same as that of the full word (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Dr) are written without a full stop and those where the final letter of the abbreviated form is different to that of the full word (e.g. Prof, Capt.) are written with a full stop.

### **Named for/after**

Either can be used in US English. For consistency, always use the standard GB ‘named after’ in US and in GB English.

### **Optional hyphenation**

Where hyphenation would generally be considered optional, write as a single word (cooperation, outpatient). This is closest to US usage and, generally speaking, the direction in which GB usage tends to move as words become more established (c.f. re-cycling/recycling).

General circumstances requiring hyphenation include repetition of an 'a' or 'i' (e.g. anti-irritant) or potential ambiguity (re-count = count again, as opposed to recount = tell a story).

An ongoing list of our preferences regarding hyphenation of words where this may be considered optional can be found in the Style conventions dictionary.

### **Outside / outside of**

Always use 'outside' in both US and GB English.

### **Singular verb form**

In standard US usage if an entity acting as the subject is in the singular, the verb will be in the singular form regardless of whether it implicitly relates to a number of individuals. So, for example, 'Spain is a good soccer team.'

### **Words ending in 'og(ue)'**

Many sources indicate that either spelling (dialog/ue, catalog/ue, prolog/ue, etc.) is acceptable in US English, but the LingServe convention is 'dialog' for US English and 'dialogue' for GB English.

### **Words ending in 'ward(s)'**

Words such as toward(s), backward(s) generally take the 's' in GB English but not in US English. Not a hard and fast rule.

## **8 German terms**

### **England / Großbritannien**

Germans often use *Großbritannien* or even *England* when they really mean the United Kingdom. Great Britain comprises England, the Principality of Wales and Scotland; these three together with Northern Ireland form the United Kingdom. Choose the most appropriate term for the context. If in doubt, play safe and translate the German literally. Avoid the colloquial *Britain* and *British* in legal or formal texts. Never use *Ulster* for the province of Northern Ireland. Ulster includes the Counties of Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan plus Northern Ireland.

The geographical term *British Isles* includes Ireland and the Crown Dependencies (Isle of Man and Channel Islands).

### **Frau**

As a matter of courtesy use *Ms* in English unless you have reason to think the person concerned prefers otherwise. Note that the German *Frau* is likewise a courtesy title; a *Frau* is not necessarily a *Mrs* (i.e. married).

### **im Auftrag / in Vertretung / in Vollmacht / per Prokura (i.A. / i.V. / ppa)**

Other than in legal texts where it may be important to indicate the presence of the signing authority in the original German correspondence, these should simply be omitted in accordance with usual English convention. The precise nature of the signing authority attached to each of these forms will in any case vary from one organisation to another. In the English-speaking world the usual convention is for the person signing correspondence to enter their job title / position (e.g. head of department, senior vice president, managing director) beneath their signature and name. This provides an indication of the person's

signing authority and position in the company. They can always be omitted in Daimler texts (see TS entry for i.V.).

## 9 Miscellaneous

### a/an

In the case of abbreviations and acronyms, be guided by pronunciation (e.g. *a BMW, an MG*).

Note also that LingServe style is to use *a* rather than *an* as the indefinite article before nouns beginning with *h*, e.g. *a hotel, a house* (rather than *an hotel, an house*).

### Abbreviations

A list of LingServe's preferred abbreviations can be found in the Style conventions dictionary.

### Acronyms

When using English translations of German laws, institutions, associations, etc. for which there is a generally recognised German acronym, insert the German acronym in brackets after the full English title (not necessary if repeated frequently within the same text). This removes any possible ambiguity that may arise in translation.

German Income Tax Act (EstG)

Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (BMWA)

German Spa Association (DHV)

### Alternative spellings/formulations

Some words or names have acceptable variant spellings. For the purposes of consistency, the following are the designated LingServe preferences:

Words ending in *-able*: as a general rule, where the root word ends in an e, the e should be omitted (e.g. *movable, shakable*). The exception is words in which the final e is preceded by a soft c or g, in which cases the e should be retained (e.g. *serviceable, chargeable*).

A list of alternative spellings can be found in the Style conventions dictionary.

### Buildings & structures

Museumsplatz = Museumsplatz square

Oberbaumbrücke = Oberbaum bridge

Maximilianmuseum = Maximilian Museum (u/c as name of an institution)

Museum Ludwig = Ludwig Museum (natural English word order)

Königssaal = Königssaal hall

### Compass points

No capitals for *north, north-west, north-western*, etc. unless part of an administrative or political unit or a distinct regional entity. Hence *South Africa, Northern Ireland* but *southern Africa, northern France*.

Note: *north-west*, not *northwest* or *north west*

Also: *western Europe, eastern Europe; East Coast/West Coast* (of America); *South East Asia* (on the grounds that it is now a distinct regional entity).

*West Germany / East Germany* (upper case) if specifically referring to the old *Bundesrepublik* and the former GDR; but if reference is current - merely dividing Germany into East and West - use *western Germany / eastern Germany* (lower case). By analogy, use *northern Germany, southern Germany. The North, the South, the West, the East* in upper case only in headings or for particular emphasis.

## Continent

Upper case when referring to *the Continent*, i.e. mainland Europe as opposed to the UK, but *continental Europe*.

## et seq., pp., etc.

'et seq.' can be used for section/paragraph numbers, for example in contracts and legislation, and page numbers. Used to denote singular (f.) and plural (ff.). Variant spellings 'et seqq.' or 'et sqq.' sometimes considered to be the plural form but LS usage is 'et seq.' for singular and plural.

'pp' should only be used where a specific range of pages is stated (e.g. pp 20-25). Another alternative is 'p. 21 onwards' (e.g. for S. 21 ff.).

The abbreviation etc., which is always followed by a full stop, is preceded by a comma when it follows more than one listed item but not when it follows only one item:

There were dogs, cats and rabbits, etc.

There were rabbits etc.

## Fairs and festivals

'Tage', 'Wochen' etc. should generally be translated as fair/festival unless there is an established English name for some of the larger events (e.g. Kieler Woche = Kiel Week). Where there are obvious and recognisable cognates, use them (Beethovenfest = Beethoven Festival; Darmstädter Tage der Fotografie = Darmstadt Photography Festival) and write Fair/Festival in upper case as it is essentially part of the name. Where that is not the case or the obvious translation is likely to sound odd, retain the full German name and suffix it with 'fair' or 'festival' (e.g. Schützenfest = Schützenfest fair), Potsdamer Erlebnisnacht = Potsdam Erlebnisnacht festival) and write fair/festival in lower case if it is being used descriptively.

## Gender

German texts often use only masculine denotations, where it would not be appropriate/standard practice in English. Depending on the context, the following strategies can be used to avoid the problem in translation (the numbering does not indicate any order of preference):

1. Pluralise (e.g. *all human beings are more than the sum of their parts*).
2. Use *he/she* if it does not sound too clumsy or if it is a legal or personnel-related document (where grammatical pedantry and political correctness are often more appropriate).
3. Use the masculine form, possibly with a footnote stating that all reference to the masculine form should be assumed to refer to masculine and feminine, if appropriate to the style and structure of the text.
4. It is increasingly acceptable to use a plural pronoun with a singular subject (cf. BT 1471 announcement: "*The caller withheld their number*"). Use this if appropriate to the style and register of the text.

## Foreign words

As a general rule, proper nouns should not be italicised. As with place names, below, the only exception would be if the proper noun conveys a meaning that is pertinent to the context.

a) German food & drink

*bratwurst*

*federweisser*

*schmandkuchen*

*schnitzel*  
*sekt*  
*spätzle*  
*weissbier*  
*wurst*  
*zeitgeist*  
*zwiebelkuchen*

Brand names, (e.g. Köstritzer, Rotkäppchen) should not be italicised.

Note that the initial upper case letter in German nouns should not be used in an English text, unless it is a proper noun.

b) German place names

Only italicise if the name conveys a meaning in German.

*Deutsches Eck*

*Höllental*

c) Japanese words

Most commonly encountered in commercial/industrial contexts (*kanban*, etc.) should generally be italicized, but as with other languages, strongly anglicised words should not be italicised, e.g. sushi, karate.

Other examples: *bonsai*, *kaizen*, *keiretsu*, *kamikaze*.

d) Other German words

*abitur*

autobahn

Bundesbank

Bundestag

*dirndl*

*gemütlichkeit*

*lederhosen*

Lüftl

*zeitgeist*

*Zugspitzbahn*

### **Geographical features**

Lakes: If an established English translation exists, use it (e.g. Bodensee = Lake Constance); in other cases, as a general rule, retain the full German name unless the root is three syllables or more, e.g. Edersee = Lake Edersee but Danneloher See = Lake Dennerlohe. German usage also tends to split the word See from the root where it is three syllables or more (e.g. Schweriner See). Note use of upper/lower case: Lake Edersee but Edersee lake.

If the lake is named after a neighbouring town, use the non-inflected place name as the name of the lake, e.g. Starnberger See > Lake Starnberg.

N.B. Königssee is a lake; cf. Königsee, which is a town.

Rivers: always lower case, i.e. 'river Rhine' and 'Rhine river'.

Forests: In many cases, XYZ-Wald is the name for a region, not just the forest. In some instances, there are established English (proper) names, which should be used (e.g. Bayerischer Wald = Bavarian Forest, Schwarzwald = Black Forest). With lesser known *Wälder*, it is preferable to retain the full German name with lower case forest/region (e.g. Odenwald = Odenwald forest / Odenwald region).

Hills/mountains: 'Mount Zugspitze' but 'Zugspitze mountain'. Otherwise always use lower case for hills or mountains: Harz mountains, Siebengebirge hills, Taunus hills.

### **Hotel classifications**

For hotel classifications, we write out two-star, three-star, etc. in body text. However, 3-star and 4-star are fine in lists/tables, etc. Avoid replicating the popular German usage of \*\*\*\* to indicate star ratings. It can look like deleted expletives.

### **Italics**

Names of publications (newspapers, magazines, etc.) should be italicised rather than using inverted commas.

The Latin names for flora and fauna should be italicised.

Do not use italics in headings.

As a general guide, the degree of anglicisation determines whether a word should be italicised. A list of italicised words can be found in the Style conventions dictionary.

### **Ministries/departments**

For names of governmental institutions where no official English translation exists we prefer 'Ministry of XY' to 'Ministry for XY' (and 'Department for' in preference to 'Department of'. Maintaining consistency is very difficult because each of the federal states seem to translate their ministry names in slightly different ways: e.g. Ministry of Economics/Ministry of Economic Affairs.

### **More than/less than / under/over**

Conventional grammar is that 'over and under' are used to answer the question 'how much?' and more than and fewer than answer the question 'how many?' – e.g. 'fewer than ten items'. In usage, the distinction is much more blurred. Do not apply the grammatical rules rigidly, but be guided by what sounds right in the context and the formality of the text.

### **Names of institutions**

The names of companies, organisations and institutions should be spelt as they themselves spell their name. For example World Health Organization (with a 'z' even if GB English), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and The Co-operative Society (with a hyphen, contrary to style guide).

There is an increasing trend for German institutions (particularly higher education establishments) to leave their name untranslated in their literature and on their website. Despite the general LingServe policy to be guided by an organisation's own usage, we should not adopt this approach in this instance, particularly where there is a glaringly obvious English translation (e.g. Technische Universität München). Another consideration is consistency: if various similar institutions are mentioned in a text, they need to be treated consistently, which would not be the case if we rigidly followed their own usage. Exceptions to this rule are documented in TermStar.

### **Plurals of acronyms and dates**

Do not insert an apostrophe, even if the acronym ends in an 's' (MPs, 1960s, ABSs). Some US style guides appear to prefer the apostrophe, but this is not universal.

### **Plural conventions**

A list of LingServe's plural conventions can be found in the Style conventions dictionary.

## Slashes

It is LingServe policy to close up the spaces between slashes:  
There was a 50/50 split in the vote. It's a yes/no question.

## Towns & cities

When used as part of a postal address, do not translate Köln, München, Nürnberg etc. As a rule of thumb, if unsure, treat as an address if preceded by a Postleitzahl.

Autobahn/Bundesstrasse: In directions, only include the word autobahn if there is good reason, e.g. to distinguish between a scenic route and a fast route. Otherwise, simply name the road, e.g. "Take the A3 to Frankfurt, then the A5 to Kassel". Omit the title Bundesstrasse altogether (e.g. "Take the A1, then the B2").

## Town or city as a translation for *Stadt*

If a *Stadt* is classed as a *Großstadt* in German (a city with over 100,000 inhabitants), or if it is a *Landeshauptstadt*, we call it a city in English. Anything else is a town.

## Upper or lower case

Newly coined words are often written with an initial capital at first but as they become more familiar over time, tend to be written in lower case (e.g. internet). In cases of doubt, LingServe style policy is to err on the side of lower case, thus anticipating future changes. As a general guide, if an adjective is in upper case in German as an indicator of proper-name status, any corresponding English adjective should also be in upper case. So "im Alten Rathaus" should be rendered as "in the Old Town Hall", whereas "im alten Rathaus" would become "in the old town hall".

A list of LingServe preferences can be found in the Style conventions dictionary.

## US / GB differences

A list of US / GB spelling differences can be found in the Style conventions dictionary.

Canadian English: Canadian vocabulary is largely identical to American; spelling conventions are a mixture of US and GB. For details, see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian\\_english](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canadian_english).

See also: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_and\\_British\\_English\\_spelling\\_differences](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_and_British_English_spelling_differences) and G/Glossaries/British~American Wordlist for more information and examples.

## van/Van

Use upper case where only surname is given (e.g. Van Gogh), but lower case if full name is given (e.g. Vincent van Gogh).

## Wine names

Use lower case for the names of wines regardless of whether they take their name from a region (e.g. bordeaux, burgundy, champagne) or a grape variety (e.g. cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay, merlot). But use upper case when referring to the region, e.g. a burgundy from Burgundy.

Also use lower case for classifications, e.g. *kabinett*, *spätlese*.

## 10 Financial texts

This section applies primarily to annual (and interim) reports, but is also relevant for texts from the areas of banking/investment/insurance/accountancy/financial markets, etc.

See also Format section for useful information on [currencies](#), [figures](#), [percentages](#), [TEUR/TE](#) & [Mio. €](#).

### **Accounting terminology**

In the absence of any job-specific or customer-specific requirement regarding applicable accounting standards, the default LingServe preference is for IFRS terminology. However, this has to be qualified by stating that we would only introduce some recent and less intuitive IFRS coinages into our translations with a certain time delay once the terms have become established. For example, we continue to prefer 'single-entity financial statements' over 'separate financial statements' and 'balance sheet' over 'statement of financial position'. Context is also critical – for example, only use 'measurement' for 'Bewertung' in actual IFRS financial statements or technical accounting texts.

### **Minus signs**

In Fliesstext, figures stated as a loss should not be prefaced with a minus sign (as is often the case in German source texts). This may make it necessary to explicitly state contrasting figures as a profit.

*e.g.: Auf das Segment Kompaktmotoren entfiel ein operativer Verlust vor Einmaleffekten in Höhe von -28,5 Mio. € (H1 2008: +16,7 Mio. €),  
= The Compact Engines segment incurred an operating loss (before one-off items) of €28.5 million (H1 2008: profit of €16.7 million)*

This applies analogously to other items that are also often expressed as negative figures in German texts (expenses, provisions, statistical decline, etc.).

In more general contexts, write out the word 'minus' in front of negative figures rather than using the minus sign.

In tables, minus signs should be left as minus signs. They should not be changed to the usual Anglo-Saxon format of brackets.

### **Past tense**

Financial statements should be written in the past tense, even if the present tense is used in German as they are, by definition, reporting on past events.

### **Terminological consistency**

Check terminology used in previous year's report and try to avoid changing it if at all possible (year-on-year comparability of results is one of the key requirements for the users of financial statements). If changes do appear necessary/appropriate, make sure they are properly documented, with justification/reasons, and reviewed with the customer.

### **Upper/lower case**

Write the names of sections of the annual report in lower case, e.g. management report, risk report, corporate governance report, notes to the financial statements (when not used in headings). But write Company/Group/Bank (when referring to the reporting entity).

Use upper case *Note* when referring to a specific item in the Anhang (for clarity).

Use initial caps for the titles of IASs/IFRSs/IFRICs, etc.

### **Vorjahreszahlen**

Always specify the actual period for income statement items (or the Stichtag for balance sheet items) when stating the Vorjahreszahl in brackets, even if the source text doesn't.

*Example: Umsatzrückgang von 68% auf 51,6 Mio. € (Vj. 163,8 Mio. €)  
= revenue fell by 68 percent to €51.6 million (Q1 2011: €163.8 million)  
[in a report on Q1 2012]*



## 11 Legal / formal texts

### Capitalisation

In formal texts, it is normal to refer to the entity that is the subject of the text in upper case (the Company, the Group, the Bank, ...).

Clause headings should be capitalised for US English.

### Citation forms

In legislation, § 85 Abs. 1 lit. a should be cited in the form *section 85 (1)(a)*.

Subdivisions of a section that are not identified by a number or letter should be cited in the form *second paragraph of section 54* (or, less formally, *section 54, second paragraph*), or *the third indent of the second subparagraph of section 2(2) etc.*

In EU legislation, translate § as *Article*. In other legislation use *section* (note use of lower case).

In contracts translate § as clause in the body of the text, but just write the number alone in headings (e.g. '§1. Vertragsgegenstand' becomes '1. Subject-matter of the Agreement').

§ 1 Abs. 1 should be written as clause 1 ((1). If the source text uses a different form (e.g. § 1.1) then adopt the same form in translation (clause 1.1).

### Defined terms

Any terms that are defined should be capitalised from that point onwards in the text.

Where the terms are being defined, leave out superfluous wording such as 'hereinafter referred to as'.

e.g. Gesellschaft XXX, nachfolgend 'Kunde, becomes "Company XXX ('Customer)'"

Capitalise 'Agreement' and 'Parties' (where referring to the present agreement and the parties to this agreement) even if not specifically defined.

### Definite article

Where the parties to an agreement are given generic names (e.g. Auftraggeber/ Auftragnehmer, Vermieter/Mieter, Verkäufer/Käufer), they should be referred to in English without the use of a definite article and with initial caps. E.g. 'Seller undertakes to transfer to Buyer...'. .

Note: Restrict the use of this convention to the defined *parties to the contract* only, not to defined terms in general.

### Gender disclaimer

For ease of reading, it is often useful to use the masculine form and add the following rider:

'Any reference to the masculine gender shall be taken to include the feminine.'

### German laws

Laws should be given in full translation followed by the standard German abbreviation in brackets (for the avoidance of any ambiguity) on first occurrence in a text. Thereafter, just the German abbreviation can be used. If the German law is written out in full, it should be italicised.

*Act/bill* or *law/draft law*? Use *act/bill* for the legislation of an English-speaking country. For other countries either is acceptable. *Act* is a more natural translation for the title of a law, e.g. *Aktiengesetz* = *the German Joint Stock Corporation Act*, while *law* is better in a

description, e.g. *Aktiengesetz = the German law governing public limited companies*. Where government departments produce their own English translations of their legislation, those translations should be used. Bear in mind, particularly in less formal contexts, that *law* and, in particular, *draft law* are more comprehensible to readers who are not native English speakers.

The word 'legislation' can be used in a general sense if the source text is not referring to a specific Act/law.

The titles of laws, decrees, orders, regulations, etc. can often best be translated into English by inverting the word order so that they appear in the form customary in common law countries. Apostrophes, commas and dashes do not normally appear in such titles in English.

Example: *Gesetz über Arbeitnehmererfindungen = Employee Inventions Act*

Words such as *über* become superfluous when translated and this helps towards brevity. Note that words which would otherwise sit unhappily in the inverted title can be placed in brackets; this is standard practice in the titles of statutes and statutory instruments in the United Kingdom, e.g. *Law of Property (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act*.

Depending on the context and the intended use/target readership of the translation, discretion should be applied as to whether to precede the name of the law with the name of the country to which it applies, e.g. *Wertpapierhandelsgesetz – the (German) Securities Trading Act*.

### **shall/may/must**

**Shall** should only be used to express an obligation (Customer shall pay within ten days) and not used for future indicative (*Customer shall have ten days within which to effect payment*). Alternatively use **must**, as this clearly imposes an obligation.

Use **will**, not shall to render the future tense.

**May** is permissive and conveys discretion. (*Buyer may also purchase additional items.*)

**May not** is ambiguous and can indicate a prohibition (is not allowed to) but also the possibility that the subject may choose not to do something. Better to use **must not** or **shall not** for prohibition.

**Must** denotes all required actions, whether active or passive. (*Customer must pay within ten days / Payment must be made within ten days*)

In definitions clauses, always write 'XX means YY', not 'is deemed to mean' or, worse, 'shall be deemed to mean'

**Tense of minutes:** Minutes and similar records are generally written in the present tense in German; when translated into English they should be changed to the past tense. Where the simple past tense is used in the German, it should be changed to the pluperfect in English.

Example:

*Herr Bauer erläutert hierzu, dass obwohl die Verkäufe leicht zurückgingen, diese trotzdem höher als erwartet waren.*

Becomes:

*Mr. Bauer explained that although sales had fallen slightly, they were still higher than had been forecast.*

The future tense in German is often best rendered in English using the conditional, for coherency with the use of the surrounding past tense.

Example:

*Er erwartet, dass sich die Märkte langsam erholen werden, merkt aber an, dass Japan, wo die monatlichen Verkäufe um ca. 23 % zurückgingen, weiterhin der schwierigste Markt bleiben wird.*

Becomes:

*He said he expected the Company's markets to recover slowly, although Japan – where monthly sales had slumped by around 23 percent – would remain the most challenging market.*