English style guide

What's new in Version 3

- More information about gender-neutral and inclusive terminology (see pp. 4/5/6)
- More inclusive reference material (see pp. 36/37)
- Use of alumnus, alumna, alumnae and alumni (see p. 10)
- Quote attribution rules (see pp. 11/12)
- More information about the use of the truncations St. and St (see p. 13)

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Contents

1   Introduction

These guidelines primarily aim to help non-native speakers when writing in English. They consolidate recommendations on a) general writing style, b) English grammar and typography, and c) professional correspondence in English. The guide draws on several authoritative sources; superscripted numbers placed throughout refer to a list of references at the end of the document for those who are interested. Please send questions, suggestions and other feedback to translation@hk.ethz.ch.

1.1   General notes on writing in English at ETH

ETH Zurich uses British English with "-yse"/"-ise" spellings (e.g. analyse, theorise). Consult the Cambridge Dictionary when necessary. Other tips are available on the Oxford Dictionary website, including a look at the differences between UK and US English when it comes to spelling and common expressions.

English prefers simple sentences. Active verbs also make for more effective writing: "ETH researchers have created a new molecule" rather than "A new molecule has been created by ETH researchers". Passive voice is sometimes unavoidable, but it should not be the norm in your writing. Journalistic writing in English (with the exception of newspaper reporting) tends to employ a vibrant rhetorical style, even when dealing with scientific and technical topics. Reader interest is piqued and maintained through idioms and word choice, rhetorical questions and/or apparent paradox, and similarly lively stylistic devices. That said, given that English writing at ETH Zurich will often be addressing non-native speakers, authors should also take the needs of this audience into account. This would include sticking with idioms and expressions that are fairly widely known and not too regional, as well as adopting a slightly more reserved writing style than one might use for native speakers.

1.2   Inclusive language

Inclusive language is a key aspect of ensuring equal treatment of all members of our society in terms of sex, gender, disability, etc. In keeping with its social and leadership competencies, ETH Zurich engages in respectful and inclusive communication free of discrimination. As language is constantly evolving, we urge you to remain open to new developments in gender-sensitive and disability-inclusive language. ETH Diversity is currently compiling an inclusive communication guide that addresses various aspects of diversity (such as gender, race, social status).

1.2.1   Gender-sensitive language

Male singular pronoun: Do not use the male singular pronoun to stand in for all people. Avoid word choices that may be interpreted as implying that there is only one (male) gender:

- use "chair" or "spokesperson" instead of "chairman" or "spokesman"
- use "human-made" instead of "man-made"
- use "humankind" instead of "mankind"

Female/woman: Avoid using the term "female" when referring to humans; use "woman" instead:

- woman student
- women professors

Note 1: Male student, male professor (not man student or man professor), non-binary student, non-binary professor

Note 2: If it is necessary to mention sex when referring explicitly to biological or medical facts, we would recommend using phrases such as "a person's sex assigned at birth is female". Take care when referring to hormones or body parts as being "male" or "female". Use gender-neutral terms whenever possible:

- teaching staff
- faculty

Use of plural: Use plural constructions whenever possible, e.g. "Students should submit their applications tomorrow", or rephrase the sentence to omit sentence structures that prefer one gender over another.

For more information about gender-sensitive and other aspects of non-discriminatory and inclusive language at ETH, consult [ETH Diversity](#). The Swiss Federal Chancellery's [English Style Guide](#) also recommends the use of the "singular they". For example: "One student failed their exam. They then decided to change their major" ("Gender-neutral language", p. 50). Another example: "Identify the person responsible and take their advice."

1.2.2   Gender-neutral writing in correspondence

Gender-inclusive writing, which avoids references to gender whenever possible, is increasingly becoming standard practice in correspondence. It may be essential to apply gender-inclusive guidelines when writing to the following audiences:

- individuals whose gender is unknown – assuming gender based on a person's first name is not best practice.
- non-binary individuals (that is, individuals who do not fully identify as a woman or a man)

Omit the courtesy title (Ms, Mr) in the salutation and instead write "Dear" + the person's first and last name. For example, use:

Dear Thomas Edison,

and not

Dear Mr Edison,

1.2.3   Disability-inclusive language

When writing about disability, avoid defining people by a shared impairment: "blind people" or "disabled people", rather than "the blind" or "the disabled". Use positive language: "wheelchair users" instead of "confined to a wheelchair" or "wheelchair-bound" etc. Contact [ETH Diversity](#) if you have further questions about disability inclusive language. The UK Office for Disability Issues' [guidance on inclusive language](#) and [the British Council guide to promoting disability equality are other useful sources of reference](#), the latter of which advises that "disabled people" is most common in the UK although some prefer "people with disabilities".

1.2.4   ETH-specific disability-inclusive terminology

In autumn 2020, the Executive Board gave the green light to the implementation of the Barrier-Free at ETH Zurich project. Barrier-free means that a building, facilities and a path of travel can be approached, entered and used by persons with physical or sensory disabilities, including those in a wheelchair. Another, very common term for barrier-free is accessible, which refers to the degree to which the environment, products and services are accessible to people with disabilities. Examples of the use of barrier-free and accessible:

barrier-free infrastructure, barrier-free design, barrier-free access; accessible content, accessible events, accessible lift (for disabled users), accessible public toilet facilities (wheelchair accessible), accessible entry (wheelchair accessible).

1.3 When in doubt...

Check institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge Universities to get a sense of how things are done in the English-speaking world or to research academic and administrative terms. Please be aware that English-language material from continental universities, although it does provide a precedent in some sense, can nevertheless contain linguistic errors and "Swinglish".

The Swiss Federal Chancellery (Bundeskanzlei) has published a comprehensive English style guide. In addition to its general tips on writing in English. It also has an extensive online TERMDAT four-language glossary (EN, DE, FR, IT) of terminology relating to Switzerland, including the names of cantons, cities and regions; terminology relating to the Swiss federal government and department/office names; and miscellaneous political terminology.

The ETH Corporate Communications website contains extensive information about the university's corporate design in German and English. In addition to providing information on typography and text formatting, this material also includes guidelines on graphic design and the use of the ETH logo.

1.4 Corporate Communications QTerm database

Corporate Communications maintains a database of terminology specific to ETH and Switzerland in general. It is in German and English and is constantly updated. You can access it via the following link: Corporate Communications QTerm database. Simply click on "Sign in". You can find detailed instructions about how to use it on the ETH Corporate Communications website.

2 English grammar and typography

2.1 ETH-specific and academic guidelines

The following section features material from the rest of the Style Guide that specifically relates to academic language and ETH Zurich style conventions in English. You will therefore find this material repeated at various points throughout the guide according to its area of application (e.g. **Capitalisation**).

2.1.1 General ETH conventions in English

ETH Zurich uses British English. Use "-yse"/"-ise" spellings (e.g. analyse, theorise).[1,2,3,4] Consult the Cambridge Dictionary for reference when necessary. Other tips are available on the Oxford Dictionary website, including a look at differences between UK and US English when it comes to spelling and common expressions.

"ETH Zurich" and "ETH" do not take an article, i.e. it is not "the ETH Zurich" or "the ETH".[4] This may seem counterintuitive (especially given that the university is called *die ETH Zürich* in German), but it is in line with a general trend of universities with similar names: MIT (not "the MIT", despite being "the Massachusetts Institute of Technology"), UCSF and the other nine University of California campuses, UCL (University College London), and LSE (the London School of Economics and Political Science).

When the name functions as an adjective, however, "the" is necessary: "the ETH Zurich Department of Physics", "the ETH Zurich museum *focus*Terra", etc.

Do not capitalise "university" when it refers to ETH Zurich: "ETH Zurich is one of the leading international universities for technology and the natural sciences. The university has more than 23,000 students from over 120 countries." Keeping "university" lowercase aims to avoid confusion with the University of Zurich. Take care to avoid ambiguity in this respect when writing/translating text about ETH/UZH joint projects etc.

Official department names should be capitalised – "the Department of Architecture" – but not their descriptive forms ("the architecture department").[1]

Capitalisation of names of groups, teams, departments and projects: capitalise the name but write the word group/team/ department/project in lower case:

> Social Media team
>
> Computational Analysis group
>
> Human Resources department
>
> The rETHink project

Subjects and degree programme titles. Academic subjects and fields are generally not capitalised ("He took a chemistry course to broaden his horizons"), except when used as part of official degree programme titles: "a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry"[2] etc.

Autumn Semester (AS) and **Spring Semester (SS)** should be capitalised.[2,6]

2.1.2   Academic degree names

Bachelor's, Master's. Bachelor's and Master's (degree/course/programme/etc.) should always be capitalised and **almost always be possessive**.[1,6]The only time "Bachelor" or "Master" gets used without an apostrophe-s at the end is when writing out full degree names like "Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy" or "Master of Science in Science, Technology and Policy" (all elements of full degree names should also be capitalised). Less formal degree names use the possessive form and normal capitalisation: "did his Bachelor's in philosophy", or "received a Master's degree in science, technology and policy".

Doctorate/doctoral. At the doctoral level, ETH Zurich awards "Doctor of Sciences" degrees
(**Dr. Sc. ETH Zurich**) – not PhDs – and therefore reference to these programmes and degrees must be a variant of "doctorate", "doctoral" etc. written in lower case.[6] For example, there are no "PhD candidates" at the university, but rather "doctoral candidates". The degree itself is a "doctorate" or a "doctoral degree". A postdoctoral researcher or postdoc is a person professionally conducting research after the completion of their doctoral studies.

2.1.3   University-related job titles and professorships

Despite the fact that English tends to use very few capital letters, UK universities favour capitalising university-related job titles and professorships. This applies when titles refer to specific individuals, regardless of whether the job title comes before or after the person's name.[1,2]

Thus you should write "ETH Zurich Vice President for Human Resources and Infrastructure Roman Boutellier", but also "Günther Dissertori became the Rector of ETH Zurich in 2022" and "Detlef Günther, Vice President for Research and Corporate Relations, is also Professor for Trace Element and Micro Analysis in the Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences."

When referring to multiple title holders or a professor/professors in general, do not use capital letters: "The ETH Executive Board includes three vice presidents" or "Prior to becoming the ETH Zurich Rector, Springman had been a professor at the university for more than 15 years."[1,2.] Capitalise the word professor only when used as part of an academic's formal title; for example "The paper is the latest contribution to research carried out by Professor Tanja Stadler."[1]

2.1.4 Honorifics for academics

With the exception of adjunct professors, **all types of professors at ETH Zurich have the right to use the title "professor"**. Professors should be addressed as "Professor Jane Doe" not "Prof. Dr. Jane Doe"– even if they also hold a doctoral degree. Professors are likewise generally not addressed as "Dr Jane Doe", as this is technically below their rank. Do not abbreviate "Professor",[3] even in addresses or image captions, unless absolutely necessary (and then with a full stop: Prof. Keller).

For all academics, whether addressed as Professor or Dr, ordinary courtesy titles like Mr, Ms and Mrs are not added to the form of address.

2.2 Numbers

2.2.1 Words vs numerals

Use words for numbers from one through ten; use numerals for anything greater than that.[1,2,3]

2.2.2 Special cases of numeral use

Units of measurement, time and percentages. Always use numerals with units of measurement, time and percentages,[1,3] whether the numbers are greater or less than ten. Put a space between the numeral and unit when it is written out; do not include a space when the unit is abbreviated:[1,2,3] 4 kilometres (**4km**), light travels approximately 300 metres (**300m**) in 1 microsecond (**1µs**), 88 percent (**88%**) of the population have been vaccinated, etc.

If a **sentence starts with a number**, always spell it out[2,3] (one reason why it's best to avoid starting sentences with a year or a very large quantity): Seventy-six trombones led the big parade; fifty-five percent of people agree with the government's policy.

Use numerals for all numbers in sentences that contain **number ranges or several numbers, where some are less than ten and some are more than ten**:[1,2,3] There were 15 ducks and 1 goose sitting in the field. Suddenly 10 or 11 of the ducks got startled and took flight.

For **round numbers in the millions and higher**, use a numeral along with the word or abbreviation: 10 trillion cells make up the human body, more than 2 million seconds in the average month, etc.[1] Use the following abbreviations for these units: million = m, billion = bn, trillion = trn. **Note that in English, a billion (1,000,000,000) is equivalent to a *Milliarde* in German. A *Billion* in German (1,000,000,000,000) is a trillion in English.**

2.2.3 Number-formatting conventions

Separating larger numbers. Numbers in the thousands and above are separated by commas (1,000), not apostrophes (1'000 – Swiss *Hochkomma*), in general texts. Some scientific texts and financial reporting use spaces as separators (1 000). This practice should not be taken over in journalistic or other non-technical texts.

Decimals (including those expressed in percent) take a full stop:17.3, 99.9%.

Percentages. Write out "percent" as one word in running text (99.9 percent**)** whenever possible. Use the symbol without a space (99.9%) in tables and charts.

Ordinals. As with cardinal numbers, write out ordinals from one through ten (first, second, third etc.) and then use numerals (11th, 12th, 13th etc.).[1] The letters should **not** be superscript.[1] If it is necessary to use numerals with smaller numbers, make sure they are correct: 1st (11th, 21st, 31st), 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and so on.

2.2.4 Dates, times, currencies, abbreviations

Dates. In running text, always place the date before the month (which should be spelled out) and include a four-digit year: **30 November 2015**.[1,2] If it's necessary to save space in tables and charts, write dates European-style (**17.10.2017**).[6] Using a zero before single digits improves readability and alignment in tables (**09.05.2013**). However, don't add a zero in running text (**3 January 2022**). If for space purposes, it is necessary to write the date in a table without the year, write it as follows (**01.07–31.12**).

Times. Always use the 12-hour clock in journalistic texts,[2] with a full stop separating hours and minutes where necessary, followed by "a.m." or "p.m.": **5.45 p.m., 9.05 a.m**., **9 a.m**. **Please note that 12 a.m. is midnight and 12 p.m. is noon.** In running text, using "12 midnight" or "12 noon" instead of 12 a.m./p.m. for these times can avoid confusion.[1]

The 24-hour clock is often used in schedules and other texts relating to university operations. The proper format for these times is also a full stop separating hours and minutes, but no "a.m." or "p.m.": **17.45, 9.05, 9.00** etc.

Currencies. Always use numerals with currencies,[1,2] and either use symbols before the amount or spell out units following the amount: $100.00 or 100 US dollars, €100.00 or 100 euros, etc. For currencies like the Swiss franc that do not have a symbol, use the ISO code **before** the amount or put the units into words following the amount: CHF 2,000,000 or 2 million Swiss francs. Avoid using the abbreviation Sfr.

2.3 Capitalisation

English uses far fewer capital letters than German. Nevertheless, capital letters do have their place, especially in university job titles, academic and administrative terminology, and acronyms/initialisms. A few pointers:

2.3.1 University-related job titles and professorships

Despite the fact that English tends to use very few capital letters, UK universities favour capitalising university-related job titles and professorships. This applies when titles refer to specific individuals, regardless of whether the job title comes before or after the person's name.[1,2]

Thus "ETH Zurich Vice President for Human Resources and Infrastructure Roman Boutellier", but also "Günther Dissertori became the Rector of ETH Zurich in 2022" and "Detlef Günther, Vice President for Research and Corporate Relations, is also Professor for Trace Element and Micro Analysis in the Department of Chemistry and Applied Biosciences."

When referring to multiple title holders or a professor/professors in general, do not use capital letters: "The ETH Executive Board includes three vice presidents" or "Prior to becoming the ETH Zurich Rector, Springman had been a professor at the university for more than 15 years." Capitalise the word professor only when used as part of an academic's formal title; for example "The paper is the latest contribution to research carried out by Professor Tanja Stadler."[1]

2.3.2 Academic degree names

Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Bachelor's and Master's (degree/course/programme/etc.) should always be capitalised (and almost always be possessive). All elements of full degree names should be capitalised: "Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy" and "Master of Science in Science, Technology and Policy". Less formal degree names use the possessive form and subject in lower case: "she did her Bachelor's in philosophy", "received a Master's degree in science, technology and policy".

Doctorates/doctoral degrees. At the doctoral level, ETH Zurich awards "Doctor of Sciences" degrees (**Dr. Sc. ETH Zurich**) – not PhDs – and therefore references to these programmes and degrees must be a variant of "doctorate", "doctoral" etc. and almost always written in lower case. For example, there are no "PhD candidates" at the University, but rather "doctoral candidates". The degree itself is a "doctorate" or a "doctoral degree". A postdoctoral researcher or postdoc is a person professionally conducting research after the completion of their doctoral studies.

2.3.3 Miscellaneous academic capitalisation

Do not capitalise "university" when it refers to ETH Zurich: "ETH Zurich is one of the leading international universities for technology and the natural sciences. The university has more than 23,000 students from over 120 countries." Keeping "university" lowercase aims to avoid confusion with the University of Zurich. Take care to avoid ambiguity in this respect when writing/translating text about ETH/UZH joint projects etc.

Subjects and degree programme titles. Academic subjects and fields are generally not capitalised ("He took a chemistry course to broaden his horizons"), except when used as part of official degree programme titles: "a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry"[2] etc.

Official department names should be capitalised – "the Department of Architecture" – but not their descriptive forms: "the architecture department".[1]

Autumn Semester (AS) and **Spring Semester (SS)** should be capitalised.[2,6]

2.3.4 Good to know

Alumnus, alumna, alumnae, alumni, alum: Alumnus – one male graduate; alumna – one female graduate; alumnae – group of female graduates; alumni – group of male or mixed gender graduates; alum – a graduate (not gender-specific).

2.3.5 Acronyms and initialisms

Use all caps for **acronyms** (abbreviations that are read as words: NATO, AIDS, etc.) and **initialisms** (abbreviations that are read as individual letters: ETH, EPFL, etc.).[1,3] **Two of the ETH Domain's research institutes – Eawag and Empa – form an exception to this rule**, as their acronyms are written as normal words (with only initial capitals). Avoid using ETH Lausanne – always use EPFL.

When introducing an acronym or initialism for the first time in a text, put it in round brackets after the full name: "the Energy Science Center (ESC)".[1,2,3] **Do not omit the round brackets**, as is sometimes done in German ("the Energy Science Center ESC"). Note that ETH Zurich often uses German acronyms for English organisation names, e.g. "the Swiss Seismological Service (SED)".

Very generally speaking, **acronyms** (read as words) do not require "the" before them (e.g. Eawag, NASA, UNICEF); for **initialisms** (read as letters), you should generally use the article (e.g. the BBC, the WHO, the FBI).[3] However, there are quite a few cases of initialisms that do **not** take the article: first and foremost for us, "ETH" – and other universities as well (EPFL, MIT, UCSF, LSE and so on).

2.3.6 (Sub)headings, headlines and titles of works

(Sub)headings and headlines. Use **sentence-style capitalisation**, i.e. capitalise only the first word and any others that would normally be capitalised in running text:[1,2] What physics students can learn from philosophers; A rail expert for the Executive Board.

Titles of books, magazines, journal articles, book chapters, films etc. Capitalise the first word and all other words in the title except articles (a/an/the), prepositions (to/through/towards/since/with/etc.), and conjunctions (and/or/but/then/because/etc.):[1] *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, ETH Zurich's *Globe* magazine.

2.4 Punctuation

2.4.1 Quotation marks ("...")

Always use double quotation marks:[2,4] "ETH is a shining beacon, steadily rising in stature across the rankings' first five years [...]". Note that **quotes inside of quotes** will therefore take single quotation marks to distinguish them:[2,4] "Rankings editor Phil Baty was quoted as saying that 'ETH is a shining beacon, steadily rising in stature across the rankings' first five years, thanks in part to its focused global outlook.'" Take care to avoid carrying over any non-English quotation marks (e.g. «Swiss-style *guillemets*» or „*Anführungszeichen*").

Use curly quotations, " ", not unidirectional ones " ".

Punctuating quotations. Place commas and full stops inside quotation marks when they are part of a full sentence in a quotation. For example:

"I have a dream," said Mr King.

When quotation marks are used for an individual phrase, leave punctuation outside the quotation marks.[2] For example:

Heinrich is convinced that we can resolve these challenges, and so he does not like the term "resource curse".

Place question marks and exclamation marks according to whether they are actually part of the quoted material.[1] For example:

He cried, "You did what?"

Did you just say, "I'm out of here"?

2.4.2 Quote attribution rules

a) **Every quote should be clearly attributed so audiences know exactly who said what.**

"This is not acceptable," said Peter Stano, a spokesman for the European Commission, the bloc's executive body.

"We don't have enough money to buy cement or proper bricks," says Rajab. "We know that this will go down. But what can we do?"
(The preceding sentence makes it clear to whom the quoted speech is attributed – in this instance, Rajab. There is no requirement to repeat the attribution.)

b) **A colon should be used to introduce a quote in the following cases because the quote is preceded by a full independent clause:**

The former public appointments commissioner, Peter Riddell, has already voiced concerns: "Just as political activity should not be a bar to appointment, so it should not be a qualification."

One researcher who exhibited her research at the Festival recalled her experience: "The best part for me was seeing members of the public understand what I do."

Echoing the thoughts of his fellow players, Jones perhaps said it best: "We never wanted to disappoint him under any circumstances."

James Lewis, a cyber security expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said there was discussion as to whether there should be efforts to go further and hack criminal ransomware gangs, known as "hacking back": "People are talking about hackback — it's back on the radar and that's probably driven by the Colonial incident."

c) **If there are sentences between a source's first quote and their next one, refer back to the source or remind the audience of the source's qualifications:**

"Liverpool is one of the most famous clubs in England," said Richard Johnson, a football trainer at Manchester United. One of this season's top performers, the club remains unbeaten. "They remain the only English team to win in three consecutive seasons," he went on. *(Without "he went on", attribution would not be clear.)*

2.4.3   Apostrophes (') and commas (,)

Apostrophes are used with a noun to indicate possession:

ETH Zurich's world-renowned research

and for contractions:

He is going → He's going.[1,2;]

Today it's supposed to rain.[1]

The possessive form of any singular noun and of plural nouns not ending in the letter "s" is indicated by an apostrophe followed by the letter "s":[5]

an actress's role

women's rights

The possessive "s" is omitted, however, after a plural ending in the letter "s": [5]

researchers' earnings

Some place names containing a possessive omit the apostrophe (Earls Court, Kings Cross), while others retain it (St John's Wood, King's Lynn).[5]

Commas are placed between clauses in sentences[2] and elsewhere as needed to indicate a natural pause/breath in the sentence.

A comma is used to separate the first and second items in a list of three or more items:[5]

Robin mowed the lawn, Sam did the cooking and Kim lazed around.

UK English generally does not favour the mandatory use of Oxford commas (the last comma in a list right before "and"). Use a comma before the final "and" only when necessary to avoid confusion:

The doctor suggested an aspirin, half a grapefruit and a cup of broth. But she ordered scrambled eggs, whisky and soda, and a selection from the trolley.

Commas in linked clauses. Use a comma to separate two clauses linked by a conjunction such as "but", "yet", "'while" or "so" to form a single sentence:[5]

The committee on commas agreed a final text, but the issue of semicolons was not considered.

When individual items in a list already contain commas, use semicolons to separate them: David Sedaris's current US book tour includes stops in Portland, Maine; Spokane, Washington; and San Francisco, California.

Commas separate numbers starting at 1,000. Note that scientific and financial publications often use spaces (1 000) rather than commas for this. Journalistic and general texts should not adopt this practice, however.

2.4.4 Verbs

Single or plural agreement?

(a) Collective nouns take the singular when the emphasis is on the whole entity: [5]

> The Executive Board was not informed.

Use the plural when the emphasis is on individual members:

> A majority of the committee were in favour.

(b) Percentages and fractions of countable nouns take a plural verb:

> Three quarters of the flowers were used.

But uncountable nouns take a singular verb:

> Three quarters of the flour was used.

(c) Countries and organisations with a plural name take the singular:

> The United Nations was unable to reach agreement.

Words ending in -ics are singular when used to denote a scientific discipline or body of knowledge (mathematics, statistics, economics) but plural in all other contexts.

> Economics is commonly regarded as a soft science.

> Data can be used as a plural or a singular noun.

2.4.5 Full stops (.), truncations and exclamation marks (!)

Full stops. Full stops end declarative sentences and separate decimals (17.3, 99.9% etc.). They are also used to punctuate some – but by no means all – abbreviations.

Full stops in acronyms and abbreviations. The general rule in British English is to omit full stops from all acronyms/initialisms (ETH, BBC, UN, WHO etc.) and from any abbreviations that include the first and last letter of the full word. For example, the title of "Doctor" is abbreviated as "Dr" (not "Dr.", as in American English). Other common honorifics (all without full stop) include "Mr", "Mrs" and "Ms". ("Professor" does not get abbreviated.) Abbreviations using full stops include days of the week (Mon., Tue., Wed., Thur., Fri., Sat., Sun.), months (Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.) and various Latin-derived abbreviations (a.m./p.m., e.g., i.e., et al., etc.).

Note: St**.** (= street, as distinguished from the contraction of St = Saint) and p. = page (plural: pp.). l. = line (plural: ll.).

> Oxford St., Sauchiehall St.

> St Gallen, St Andrews, St Albans

Exclamation marks. The exclamation mark is used rarely in English and should generally be reserved for true surprise or more forceful imperatives.

2.4.6 Colons (:) and semicolons (;)

Colons. Colons join two parts of a sentence when one part defines or explains the other. The two parts can be of equal or unequal length/completeness: they can both be complete sentences, or one part can be as short as a single word. Colons generally do not require the next word to start with a capital.[4] Some examples:

> Choose one of the following: red, green or blue.

The only times you would capitalise a word after a colon is in the case of a title and when it introduces two or more sentences:

> *Internal news* article: New coronavirus master plan valid from Monday (23.04.2021)
> The company had a number of options: They could close their flagship store. They could get rid of 25% of staff.

Use colons to introduce bullet lists.[2] Do not place any punctuation at the end of individual lines of a bullet list. If the bullet list forms part of a complete sentence, introduce it in the preceding text with a colon and place a full stop at the end of the last bullet.

> Throughout the course of the team-building workshop, participants will:
> - assess the current strengths and weaknesses of their team dynamic
> - analyse and formulate a team vision
> - brainstorm ideas on how to get there
> - design three immediately actionable strategies.

If the bullet list is simply a list of items, do not punctuate any of the bullets; just introduce the list with a colon. For example:

> On rainy days, you are asked to bring:
> - sturdy shoes
> - waterproof clothing
> - something warm to drink

Semicolons. Semicolons are something of a hybrid between commas and full stops. They are used to join sentences, but each sentence must be complete and otherwise able to stand on its own.[1,2] The semicolon usually implies that the sentences are more closely related than if they were separated by a full stop, but unlike with commas, you can also use a semicolon without a coordinating conjunction (see **Apostrophes (') and commas (,)**):

> We plan to review the quality of the research of the department, including its participation in interdepartmental, interdivisional and interdisciplinary activities; its research profile and strategy; and future challenges and opportunities.

Semicolons can thus be used to add variety to sentence structure in a text by combining two short, perhaps choppy sentences into a more elegant length.

Use semicolons to separate items in a list if one or more items have a comma in them:[2] David Sedaris's current US book tour includes stops in Portland, Maine; Spokane, Washington; and San Francisco, California.

2.4.7 Dashes (–), hyphens (-) and minus signs (−)

En dashes (Word shortcut: Alt + 0150) are used as the "to" in date and number ranges, e.g. pp. 157– 65.[2] The ETH Corporate Design also uses en dashes as bullets in creating lists.

Hyphens are used to join multi-word adjectives that come **before** their nouns:[1] ETH provides students with a first-rate education (but: An ETH education is first rate.). Do not hyphenate adverbs that end in "-ly" when they are used with adjectives: a hotly debated issue, **not** a hotly-debated issue.[1,2]

The minus sign looks very similar to an en dash, but it is a unique character used to express negative quantities (Word shortcut: Alt + 8722). Hyphens should never be used in place of a minus sign.

2.4.8 Brackets (curly) and [square]

Round brackets. Also known as parentheses, round brackets are used much like commas, except that the text they contain has a lower emphasis:[4]

> Four researchers from ETH Zurich have been awarded a Consolidator Grant from the ERC.

Square brackets. Square brackets (ALT+ 0091) when inserting brackets within brackets:

> This applies when the scheme is underfunded within the meaning of pension law (Article 44 Occupational Pension Ordinance [BVV 2]).

2.4.9 Footnotes ([1])

Footnotes. Footnotes should be in superscript (e.g. [4]) and be placed after any punctuation:

> For further information, please consult the Organisation Ordinance.[1]

The footnote itself should end in a full stop if a complete sentence:

> [1]Applies to all ETH members studying and working in Zurich.

2.4.10 Forward slash (/)

Forward slash. This is often used to give alternatives, as in "and/or". It is closed up when separating single words, but is written with a space on each side when one or more of the alternatives is a compound term, e.g.:

> Brussels/Luxembourg

but

> police car / fire engine / ambulance

2.4.11 Umlauts and foreign words with accents (diacritics)

Umlauts. Use accepted English equivalents whenever possible, e.g. Zurich (not Zürich), but leave umlauts when a **street or place name** has no English equivalent (Rämistrasse, not Raemistrasse). For **surnames**, check the person's preference whenever possible; if this is impossible, leave the umlaut.

Foreign words with accents/diacritical marks. If a foreign word has been naturalised into English without its original accents, leave them out (e.g. *à propos* → apropos). As many foreign words have been naturalised into English **with** their native accents (café, piñata, doppelgänger), it is best to check the dictionary to be sure. For truly foreign words, consider whether there is an equally good English alternative; if there is, use it. Sometimes a word needs to be written in a foreign language, for example, when dealing with a concept that does not have a direct equivalent in English, such as *Gymnasium*. In such cases, put the word in italics, and supply a brief description (possibly in brackets) if necessary.

2.5 Formatting titles of works

Capitalise the first word and all other words in the title except articles (a/an/the), prepositions (to/through/towards/since/with etc.), and conjunctions (and/or/but/then/because etc.). For (sub)headings and headlines, use sentence-style capitalisation: capitalise the first word and then only words that would normally be capitalised in running text. See also **Capitalisation.**

Books, magazines, films, radio and TV programmes, albums, sculptures, ballets, operas, ship names in italics:[1,2] Thomas Kuhn's groundbreaking book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, ETH Zurich's *Globe* magazine, Rossini's classic comic opera *The Barber of Seville*, the Viking ship *Vasa*.

Any italicised titles that appear as part of another title are then written in normal type: The Economist *Style Guide* (when written in normal running text: *The Economist*).

Journal articles, book chapters, poems, songs in quotation marks: "Normal Science as Puzzle-solving", "Black Holes Ain't So Black", etc.

2.6 Formatting a list of references

Basic formatting of a list of references:

Last Name, First Name. *Title*. City of Publication, Publisher, Publication Date.

   a) **A work with one author:**

   Gleick, James. *Chaos: Making a New Science*. Penguin, 1987.

   b) **A work with two authors:**

   Gill, Paul, and Pitt, Neal. *The Ultimate Guide to Peer Tutoring*. Penguin, 2000.

   c) **If there are three or more authors:** list only the first two authors followed by the phrase et al. (Latin for "and others"). Note that a second line is indented:

   Clay, J., Greeves, P. et al*. Theoretical Analysis of the Particle Acceleration Process in Abrasive Water Jet Perforation*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.

Formatting an article in a journal**:**

Last Name, First Name, *Article Title*, Journal Title volume, number (month, year): page(s).

   Lippit, Yukio. *Goryeo Buddhist Painting in an Interregional Context.* Ars Orientalis 35 (2008): 192–232.

Formatting an online article:

Last Name, First Name. Title. Magazine/Newspaper, day month year. Last accessed day month year. hyperlink

   Stolberg, Sheryl Gay, and Pear, Robert. "Wary Centrists Posing Challenge in Health Care Vote". New York Times, 27 February 2010. Last accessed 28 February 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/us/politics/28health.html

2.7 Legal texts

When citing numbered paragraphs from legislation, do not use paragraph, para., subparagraph, no. , section etc. Use a pair of brackets closed up to the article number:[5]

   Article 3(1), Article 3(1)(a), Article 3a(1), etc.

3 Correspondence in English

Correspondence and other writing often take a more casual tone in the English-speaking world than in their German counterparts. Even in professional environments, correspondents quickly move from "Dear Professor X" to "Hi Rachel" when beginning their emails, and once an exchange has gone back and forth a few times within a short period, it's not unusual to get rid of salutations and closings altogether while continuing a specific discussion. It's common to exchange pleasantries or make jokes (or engage in idle chit-chat, depending on your point of view).

That said, the majority of people using English at international institutions like ETH Zurich are probably not native speakers, so it's best to take your cues from the person you're dealing when it comes to things like first names and the level of formality.

3.1 Salutations

English-speakers typically only use a person's highest academic title when addressing or writing about them. This means that those holding the title of **professor** should be addressed as "Professor Jane Doe" – not "Prof. Dr Jane Doe" as they would be in German – even if they also hold a doctoral degree.[4] Professors are likewise generally not addressed as "Dr John Doe", as this is technically below their rank. Do not abbreviate "Professor",[3] even in letter addresses or image captions. For all academics, whether addressed as Professor or Dr, ordinary courtesy titles like Mr, Ms and Mrs are not added to the form of address.

Inclusive salutation: In a letter or email to non-faculty members, we would use the inclusive salutation "Dear Jane Doe" and not "Dear Ms or Mrs Doe". For faculty members, we continue to use "Dear Professor Doe".

3.2 Email vs letters

Much of the advice available about professional correspondence concerns actual written letters, as letters have a very long history and therefore more broadly accepted conventions. By its nature email is far more ephemeral and informal, and thus the "rules of etiquette" function more as guidelines or descriptions of current practice. For example, "Best regards" or "Kind regards" are used very often to close formal business emails even though "Yours sincerely" is the traditional closing of a formal business letter – as Adrian Wallwork puts it in *English Correspondence for Academic Correspondence and Socializing*, "If in doubt how to end your email, use *Best regards*". Light-hearted expert discussions about email etiquette such as this one from *Forbes* magazine or this on businessinsider.com show the general lack of consensus.

Nevertheless, the chart on the following page shows a few options for letters that should also serve you well when writing emails.

Type of letter	Salutation	Closing	Remarks
			Always insert a comma after the salutation and close.
Formal **Known recipient**	Dear Professor Stadler,	Yours sincerely, Sincerely,	Used writing to an academic or business contact for the first time.
Formal **Unknown recipient**	Dear administration department, Dear faculty member, Dear HR team,	Yours faithfully,	This is used for initial contact with an unknown recipient in the sense that **you do not know the name/identity of the person** you are writing to**.** Make every effort to find out the identity of the recipient.
Formal **Known recipients**	Dear Professor Stadler and Dr Curry, Dear Colleagues,	Yours sincerely, Sincerely,	Repeating "Dear" for each recipient is generally not done in English.
Formal **Unknown recipients**	Dear administration department, Dear faculty member, Dear HR team,	Yours faithfully,	This is used when writing to multiple unknown recipients (probably a rare occurrence anyway) in the sense that **you do not know the names/identities of the people** you are writing to**.** Make every effort to find out the identities of the recipients.
Less formal **Single recipient**	Dear Tanja, Hello Tanja,	Best regards, Kind regards, Best,	Salutations and closings can be used together as you wish.
Less formal **Multiple recipients**	Dear all, Hello everyone,	Best regards, Kind regards, Best,	Repeating "Dear" for each recipient is generally not done in English. Salutations and closings can be used together as you wish.
Gender-neutral **writing**	Dear Thomas Edison, Dear Jane Doe,	Best regards, Kind regards, Best,	Omit the courtesy title (Ms, Mr) in the salutation.

4   The cheat sheet

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
General notes on writing in English at ETH			
Inclusive language: disability and illness	disabled people/people with disabilities blind/visually impaired people wheelchair user person (living) with cancer	the disabled the blind wheelchair-bound/confined cancer victim	See the UK Office for Disability Issues' guidance on inclusive language and the British Council guide to promoting disability equality for more information.
Inclusive language: gender	Students who fail to appear at their final exams will have to repeat the course. If a student fails to appear at their final exam, they will have to repeat the course.	If a student fails to appear at his final exam, he will have to repeat the course.	Do not use "he" and "his" to stand in for all people. Try using plural constructions (as in the first example here), "singular they", or rewrite the sentence.
Female/woman/women	woman researcher, woman judge, women professors, women students	female researcher, female judge, female professor, female students	Do not use "female". Use "woman/women" instead. Also opt for inclusive words such as "teaching staff", "faculty", "workforce". Note: male researcher, male judge, male professor; non-binary researcher, non-binary judge, non-binary professor

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
ETH-specific and academic guidelines			
British English using "s" spellings	paralyse analyse orthopaedic centre labelling (double l)	paralyze analyze orthopedic center (except when part of proper name) labeling (single l)	Check the Cambridge Dictionary in cases of uncertainty. Oxford also has good resources explaining the differences between UK and US English in spelling and common expressions.

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
No article with ETH, except when used as adjective	ETH Zurich was established in 1855. the ETH Zurich Department of Physics	The ETH Zurich was established in 1855. ETH Zurich Department of Physics	Compare: EPFL, MIT (not "the MIT"), UCL (University College London), LSE (London School of Economics).
Do not capitalise "university" when referring to ETH	The university has more than 23,000 students from over 120 countries.	The University has more than 23,000 students from over 120 countries.	Try to minimise potential ambiguity when referring to ETH as "the university" in a piece of writing that also references the University of Zurich.
Department names	Department of Physics physics department	department of physics Physics Department Physics department	Only the official name of the department should be capitalised.
Groups, teams, departments and projects	Social Media team Computational Analysis group Human Resources department The rETHink project	Social Media Team Computational Analysis Group Human Resources Department The rETHink Project	

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
Semesters	Autumn Semester Spring Semester	autumn semester/spring semester Autumn semester/Spring semester	
Subjects and degree programme titles	a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry He took a chemistry course to broaden his horizons.	a Bachelor of Science in chemistry He took a Chemistry course to broaden his horizons.	Capitalise subjects and fields only when used as part of official degree programme titles.
Bachelor's, Master's, doctorate/doctoral	Bachelor's degree/course/programme Master's degree/course/programme doctorate (descriptive name of degree), doctoral course/programme/candidate	bachelor's master's Doctorate or Doctoral	Bachelor/Master is incorrect in English except as part of an official degree title, e.g. "Bachelor of Science in Chemistry" (but "Bachelor's in chemistry"). ETH does not award PhDs, so "doctorate" and variants must be used.
University-related job titles	Detlef Günther, Vice President for Research and Corporate Relations, is also Professor for Trace Element and Micro Analysis. Günther Dissertori became the Rector of ETH Zurich in 2022.	Detlef Günther, vice president for research and corporate relations, is also Professor for trace element and micro analysis. Günther Dissertori became the rector of ETH Zurich in 2022.	Always capitalise university-related job titles and professorships when they refer to specific individuals.

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
Honorifics for academics	Professor Jane Doe (full professor) Dr Faye Curry (non-professor university teacher with doctorate)	Prof. Dr. Jane Doe/Prof. Jane Doe Professor Faye Curry	This reflects UK usage. In the US, university teaching staff are almost universally addressed as "Professor". Do not abbreviate Professor unless absolutely necessary (e.g. in a table for space reasons), and do not combine Mr/Ms/Mrs with Dr or Professor.

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
Numbers			**Write out numbers one through ten.**
Units of measurement, time and percentages	4 kilometres/4km Light travels approximately 300 metres/300m in 1 microsecond/1µs 88 percent of the population have been vaccinated	four kilometres/4 km Light travels approximately three hundred metres in 1 µs 88 per cent of the population have been vaccinated	Use numerals with units of measurement, time and percentages, including a space when written out but not with the abbreviation.
Numbers above and below ten in same sentence	There were 15 ducks and 1 goose.	There were 15 ducks and one goose.	Use numerals for all numbers in the sentence.
Round numbers in millions and higher	2 million or 2m 10 trillion or 10trn	two million or 2 m 10,000,000,000,000 or 10 trn	Abbreviations for these units: million = m, billion = bn, trillion = trn. No space with the abbreviation.
Separating large numbers	1,000 31,000,000	1'000 31'000'000	Use commas in journalistic and general texts.
Decimals	17.3	17,3	
Percentages	99.9 percent 99.9%	99.9 per cent 99.9 %	Write out "percent" as one word in running text whenever possible. Use the symbol without a space in tables and charts.
Ordinals	first, second, third etc. up to tenth 11th, 12th, 13th	1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. 11th, 12th, 13th	Make sure letters in ordinals are correct: 1st (11th, 21st, 31st), 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and so on
Ranges	18–25 9.15–10.30 a.m.	18-25 9.15—10.30 a.m.	Separate with an en-dash, not a hyphen (and not an em-dash, which is even longer).

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
Dates	30 November 2017 3 November 2017 30.11.17 (use European format: dd.mm.yy) 09.05.17 (add 0s for alignment in tables)	30th November 2017 November the 30th 2017 November 30, 2017 11/30/17 (this is US format: mm/dd/yy) 9.5.17 (more difficult to align in tables)	In running text, always put the day first (just the numeral), spell out the month and use a four-digit year.
Times **12-hour** **(preferred format)**	**5.45 p.m.** **9.05 a.m.** **9 a.m.**	**17.45** **9:05** **9h**	**Separate hours and minutes with full stops. Note that 12 a.m. is midnight and 12 p.m. is noon.**
Times **24-hour**	17.45 9.05	17:45 17.45 p.m. 9:05 9 o'clock	**Journalistic texts should always use the 12-hour clock.** Separate hours and minutes with full stops.
Currencies	$100.00 or 100 dollars €100.00 or 100 euros CHF 2,000,000 or 2 million Swiss francs	one hundred dollars EUR 100 Sfr. 2 million 2,000,000 CHF	For currencies like the Swiss franc that do not have an associated symbol, use the ISO code **before** the amount or put the units into words following the amount.

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
Capitalisation			**Use lowercase whenever possible.**
University-related job titles	Detlef Günther, Vice President for Research and Corporate Relations, is also Professor for Trace Element and Micro Analysis. Günther Dissertori became the Rector of ETH Zurich in 2022.	Detlef Günther, vice president for research and corporate relations, is also Professor for trace element and micro analysis. Günther Dissertori became the rector of ETH Zurich in 2022.	Capitalise university-related job titles and professorships when they refer to specific individuals.
Academic degree names	Bachelor's degree/course/programme Master's degree/course/programme doctorate (descriptive name of degree), doctoral course/programme/candidate	bachelor's master's Doctorate or Doctoral	Bachelor/Master is incorrect in English except as part of an official degree title, e.g. "Bachelor of Science in Chemistry" (but "Bachelor's in chemistry"). ETH does not award PhDs, so "doctorate" and variants must be used.
Do not capitalise "university" when referring to ETH	The university has more than 23,000 students from over 120 countries.	The University has more than 23,000 students from over 120 countries.	Try to minimise potential ambiguity when referring to ETH as "the university".
Subjects and degree programme titles	a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry He took a chemistry course to broaden his horizons.	a Bachelor of Science in chemistry He took a Chemistry course to broaden his horizons.	Capitalise subjects and fields only when used as part of official degree programme titles
Department names	Department of Physics physics department	department of physics Physics Department	Only the official name of the department should be capitalised.
Semesters	Autumn Semester Spring Semester	autumn semester/spring semester Autumn semester/Spring semester	

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
Acronyms and initialisms	ETH UNICEF AIDS	Eth Unicef Aids	Put acronyms and initialisms in all caps. **ETH Domain research institutes Eawag and Empa are exceptions to this rule.**
(Sub)headings and headlines	What physics students can learn from philosophers A rail expert for the Executive Board	What Physics Students Can Learn from Philosophers *A rail expert for the Executive Board*	Sentence-style capitalisation: first word and any words that would be capitalised in a normal sentence. No italics, no quotation marks.
Titles of books, magazines, films, etc.	*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* ETH Zurich's *Globe* magazine	The structure of scientific revolutions ETH Zurich's "Globe" magazine	Put in italics and capitalise the first word of the title and then all words except articles (a/an/the), prepositions and conjunctions.
Punctuation			
Quotation marks	"Double quotation marks, and single marks for 'quotes within quotes'"	«Guillemets» „Anführungszeichen"	Use double quotation marks in all cases. (Single marks for quotes within quotes.)
Punctuating quotations	He cried, "You did what?" Did you just say, "I'm out of here"? Heinrich does not like the term "resource curse".	He cried, "You did what"? Did you just say, "I'm out of here?" Heinrich does not like the term "resource curse."	Question marks and exclamation marks go with the actual question/exclamation. Commas and full stops go outside the quotation marks when quoting a phrase and inside when quoting a full sentence.

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
Apostrophes	ETH Zurich's (possessive) An actress's role Women's rights Researchers' earnings	ETH Zurichs An actress'es role Womens' rights Researchers earnings	Note that the possessive of "it" is "its" (without apostrophe). "It's" means "it is". **Not** used to separate numbers (1,000 not 1'000) or create plurals (curries, not curry's).
Commas	Robin mowed the lawn, Sam did the cooking and Kim lazed around.	Robin mowed the lawn, Sam did the cooking, Kim lazed around.	A comma cannot connect two complete sentences without "and", "or", "for" or similar connecting words.
	She ordered scrambled eggs, whisky and soda, and a selection from the trolley.	She ordered scrambled eggs, whisky and soda and a selection from the trolley.	Use a comma before the final item in a list if leaving it away will create confusion.
	1,000	1'000 1 000	Commas separate numbers starting at 1,000.
Single or plural verb	The Executive Board was not informed. A majority of the committee were in favour. Three quarters of the flowers were used. Thee quarters of the flour was used.	The Executive Board were not informed. A majority of the committee was in favour. Three quarters of the flowers was used. Thee quarters of the flour were used.	
Full stops	99.9%	99,9%	Full stops separate decimals (also in currencies).
	WHO Dr Professor	W.H.O. Dr. Prof	Do not use full stops in acronyms/initialisms (e.g. WHO). Abbreviations that contain both the first and last letter of the word don't need a full stop (Dr). Abbreviate Professor as Prof. only if absolutely necessary.

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
Exclamation marks	"Pleased to meet you," she said. "Hey!" he shouted.	"Pleased to meet you!" she said. "Hey," he shouted.	Used sparingly in English except in marketing and other creative texts.
Colons	Discontent is the want of self-reliance: it is infirmity of will. Internal news article: New coronavirus master plan The company has a number of options: They could close down. They could lay off their staff.	Discontent is the want of self-reliance, it is infirmity of will. Internal news article: new coronavirus master plan The company has a number of options: they could close down, they could lay off their staff.	Colons join two parts of a sentence when one part defines or explains the other. Colons are generally followed by a letter in lowercase. The exceptions are when followed by a title or by two or more sentences.
Punctuating bullet lists	Throughout the course of the team-building workshop, participants will: • assess the current strengths and weaknesses of their team dynamic • etc.	Throughout the course of the team-building workshop, participants will • assess the current strengths and weaknesses of their team dynamic; • etc.	Use a colon to introduce a bullet list. Do not put any punctuation at the end of individual items. The last bullet gets a period if the list forms part of a complete sentence; if it's just a list of items, do not use end punctuation.
Semicolons	For truly foreign words, consider whether there is an equally good English alternative; if there is, use it.	For truly foreign words; consider whether there is an equally good English alternative. If there is, use it.	Semicolons are used to join sentences, but each sentence must be complete and otherwise able to stand on its own.
	David Sedaris's current US book tour includes stops in Portland, Maine; Spokane, Washington; etc.	David Sedaris's current US book tour includes stops in Portland, Maine, Spokane, Washington, etc.	Semicolons separate list items that already have commas.
Dashes	See pp. 157–65	See pp. 157-65	Used as the "to" in date and number ranges (Word shortcut: Alt + 0150)
Hyphens	ETH provides students with a first-rate education.	ETH provides students with a first rate education.	Used to join multi-word adjectives that come before their nouns

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
Minus signs	It was −10 degrees overnight.	-10	Negative quantities take a dedicated "minus sign" symbol, not a hyphen or a dash (Word shortcut: Alt + 8722).
Brackets	A researcher from ETH Zurich has been awarded a grant from the European Research Council (ERC). Within the meaning of pension law (Article 44 [BVV2]).	A researcher from ETH Zurich has been awarded a grant from the European Research Council ERC. Within the meaning of pension law (Article 44 (BVV2)).	Use curly brackets in general. Use square brackets inside of curly brackets.
Footnotes	For further information, please consult the Organisational Ordinance.[1] [1]Applies to all ETH members studying and working in Zurich.	For further information, please consult the Organisational Ordinance[1]. [1]Applies to all ETH members studying and working in Zurich	Should be in superscript and be placed after any punctuation. The footnote itself should end in a full stop if a complete sentence.
Forward slash	Brussels/Luxembourg police car / fire engine / ambulance	Brussels / Luxembourg police car/fire engine/ambulance	This is often used to give alternatives, as in "and/or". It is closed up when separating single words, but is written with a space on each side when one or more of the alternatives is a compound term
Umlauts and foreign words with accents (diacritical marks)	Zurich Rämistrasse café *Gymnasium*	Zürich Raemistrasse cafe gymnasium/Gymnasium	Leave umlauts when there is no accepted English equivalent of the name. Leave accents on naturalised foreign words according to how they are written in an English dictionary. Put truly foreign words/concepts in italics.

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
Formatting titles of works			
Books, magazines, films etc.	*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* ETH Zurich's *Globe* magazine	"The structure of scientific revolutions" ETH Zurich's "Globe" magazine	Put in italics and capitalise the first word of the title and then all words except articles (a/an/the), prepositions and conjunctions.
Journal articles, book chapters, songs etc.	"Normal Science as Puzzle-solving" "Black Holes Ain't So Black"	"Normal science as puzzle-solving" *Black Holes Ain't So Black*	Capitalise the first word of the title and then all words except articles (a/an/the), prepositions and conjunctions.
Formatting a list of references			
	One author: Gleick, James. *Chaos: Making a New Science*. Penguin, 1987. **Three or more authors:** Clayden, J., Greeves, N. et al. *Organic Chemistry*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. **Article:** Lippit, Yukio. *Goryeo Buddhist Painting in an Interregional Context*. Ars Orientalis 35 (2008): 192–232. **Online article:** Stolberg, Sheryl Gay, and Pear Robert. "Wary Centrists Posing Challenge in Health Care Vote". New York Times, 27 February 2010. Last accessed 28 February 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/us/politics/28health.html	**One author:** Gleick, James. Chaos: Making a New Science. Penguin, 1987. **Three or more authors:** Clayden, J., Greeves N, Pitt Neil. *Organic Chemistry*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. **Article:** Lippit, Yukio. Goryeo Buddhist Painting in an Interregional Context. Ars Orientalis 35 (2008): 192–232. **Online article:** Stolberg, Sheryl Gay, and Pear Robert. *Wary Centrists Posing Challenge in Health Care Vote.* New York Times, 27 February 2010. Last accessed 28 February 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/28/us/politics/28health.html	Last Name, First Name. *Title.* City of Publication, Publisher, Publication Date.

Last Name, First Name, *Article Title*, Journal Title volume, number (month, year): page(s).

Last Name, First Name. Title. Magazine/Newspaper, day month year. Last accessed day month year. hyperlink |

Topic	English: yes	English: no	Notes
Legal texts			
	Article 3(1), Article 3(1)(a), Article 3a(1)	Art 3 para 1, Art 3 para 1 (a), Art 3 (a) (1)	Write out article in full and place subclauses in brackets
Correspondence in English			See chart at the end of Chapter 3 for a quick guide to correspondence in English.

5 "False friends" and tricky translations

GERMAN	ENGLISH, RIGHT AND WRONG; WITH GERMAN EQUIVALENTS FOR ENGLISH "FALSE FRIENDS"
aktuell	current ≠ actual (tatsächlich)
Amok/Amokläufer	attacker, school/campus shooter ≠ amok "Amok" does not exist in English in this sense. To "run amok" can indicate violence, but usually of an angry mob.
eventuell	possibly, potentially ≠ eventually (irgendwann, schliesslich)
Billion	trillion (1,000,000,000,000) ≠ billion (1 billion = Milliarde = 1,000,000,000)
bis	until, by Hop up and down **until** I say stop. (continuous action) Applications must be received **by** Friday, 13 November. (deadline).
Engagement/engagiert	commitment/committed, involvement/involved, dedication/dedicated ≠ engagement/engaged (Verlobung, besetzt [toilet, telephone line])
familiär	(relating to) family ≠ familiar (vertraut, bekannt)
Fotoshooting	photo shoot ≠ photo shooting A "shooting" in English almost always involves a gun, although you will see "photo-shooting tips" and similar uses as part of an adjective.
Fraktion	faction, political party or group ≠ fraction (Bruchteil)

GERMAN	ENGLISH, RIGHT AND WRONG; WITH GERMAN EQUIVALENTS FOR ENGLISH "FALSE FRIENDS"
ggf.	possibly, if necessary/applicable/appropriate no equivalent abbreviation in English
Gymnasium	baccalaureate school (Source: Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation) ≠ gymnasium (Turnhalle) The Swiss concept of *Gymnasium* does not have an easy equivalent in the English-speaking world. The official translation "baccalaureate school" is therefore probably best used in connection with a brief explanation and/or a reference to *Gymnasium* (in italics).
Handy	mobile (phone) (UK), cell (phone) (US) ≠ handy (praktisch)
Hochschule	college/university (tertiary level institution) ≠ high school (secondary level ≈ *Gymnasium*)
Know-How	expertise, skills ≠ know-how This is a subtle distinction. In English, "know-how" has a much more practical bent and is generally used to describe hands-on skills and practical knowledge rather than technical expertise.
Kompetenz, kompetent	expertise, excellence (or institutional authority); (highly) skilled, expert ≠ competence, competent Although "competence" or "competency" can take on different shades of meaning in different contexts, in ordinary English it is essentially a mistranslation of *Kompetenz*. To be "competent" in English is nothing special and often suggests there is nothing better to be said about your skills. The use of the word in a more positive sense crops up most frequently in IT and business operations settings (as "centres of competence"). It is nevertheless widespread and understood/accepted in continental Europe, including in the name of the Swiss National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCRs). A Google search for "centre of competence" restricted to UK university websites (21,100 hits) yields far more references to continental European organisations (especially the Swiss NCCRs) than links to similarly named UK institutions. Searching the same websites for "centre of excellence" (108,000 hits) takes you directly to the homepages of UK academic and research organisations like the British Heart Foundation Cambridge Centre of Excellence at the University of Cambridge and University College London's Academic Centre of Excellence for Cyber Security Research.
konsequent	consistent, consistently ≠ consequent, consequently (folglich, deswegen)

GERMAN	ENGLISH, RIGHT AND WRONG; WITH GERMAN EQUIVALENTS FOR ENGLISH "FALSE FRIENDS"
Kontroller (Beruf), kontrollieren	management accountant; to check, monitor, verify ≠ controller, to control (except in a few specific settings) This concept can be difficult to pin down, but generally speaking, "control" in English suggests having the power to dictate the actions of others (Stephanie Shellabear, *False Friends in Business English*, p. 53). You will therefore find many cases where "control" is incorrect: e.g. things like "Kontrolle des Handgepäcks", which the Swiss Federal Chancellery translates as "hand baggage check", or "Kontrolle der Stimmberechtigung" ("verification of eligibility to vote"). In financial contexts, you will most often see references to "financial control" in the ordinary sense of financial management and keeping expenditures under control – not "controlling" in the sense of checking whether regulations are adhered to etc. The UK equivalents to ETH Zurich's "Finance & Controlling" unit are most often called the "Finance Division", "Finance Department" or "Finance Office". "Finance and Controlling" comes up most frequently in connection with accounting software from SAP (a German company).
Milliarde (see also Billion)	billion (1,000,000,000) A German *Billion* is an English trillion (1,000,000,000,000).
Mobbing, mobben	bullying, harassment; to bully or harass ≠ mobbing, to mob Workplace **harassment** can damage morale. Many schoolchildren have to contend with **bullying** at some point during their education. Any angry **mob** threw rocks at police. Elvis was **mobbed** by hordes of lovestruck teenagers. (surrounded by an aggressive or excited crowd)
Oldtimer	antique/classic/veteran car ≠ old timer (alte Hase)
Personal	personnel/staff ≠ personal (persönlich, privat)
Physiker	physicist ≠ physician (Arzt/Ärztin)
Preis	price (the cost of something), prize (an award for achievement) These are two separate meanings that each require the correct word.

GERMAN	ENGLISH, RIGHT AND WRONG; WITH GERMAN EQUIVALENTS FOR ENGLISH "FALSE FRIENDS"
Prof. Dr.	Professor "Prof. Dr." does not exist in English. Use only a person's highest title ("Professor" for full professors, "Dr" for professors of lower rank who hold doctorates) and do not abbreviate "Professor".
Public Viewing	a viewing (opportunity to see the deceased before a funeral) that is open to public ≠ public event to watch football etc.
Publikum	audience ≠ public (Öffentlichkeit)
Rezept	recipe (cooking instructions), prescription (from the doctor) ≠ receipt (Quittung) "Recipe" and "prescription" are two separate meanings that each require the correct word.
seit	since, for Joël Mesot has been the President of ETH Zurich **since** January 2019. He had been in office **for** just under three years at the time of writing. **Tip:** Using "since" when you should use "for" – e.g. "I've lived in Zurich since 10 years" – is a common error. Use "since" when referring to a specific point in the past (since last year, since 1995, since I was a child etc.) and "for" when saying how long something has been happening (for a week, for 10 years, for all eternity).
sensibel	sensitive ≠ sensible (vernünftig, sinnvoll)
sogenannte	known as (or just leave it out) ≠ so-called "So-called" in English almost always implies that the description is false or misleading.
zirka	approximately, around ≠ circa/ca in most contexts "Circa" is almost exclusively used with dates in English, e.g. "Socrates (born ca 470 BCE)", and is usually abbreviated ("c" or "ca"). For other numbers, use "approximately" or "around" to indicate that they are not precise.
z.B.	e.g. (abbreviation of Latin *exempli gratia*, meaning "example given")

Annex

Notes and sources

The following resources are provided for those interested in how the recommendations in this style guide compare with those of similar universities in the UK and other authoritative sources:

[1] *University of Oxford Style Guide* (2014). Last accessed 30 January 2024.
https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/media_wysiwyg/University%20of%20Oxford%20Style%20Guide.pdf

[2] *University of Cambridge Editorial Style Guide.* Last accessed 30 January 2024.
https://www.cam.ac.uk/brand-resources/guidelines/editorial-style-guide

[3] *The Economist Style Guide*, 10th edition (2013). Profile Books.

[4] *English Style Guide (2019).* Swiss Federal Chancellery English Language Service. Last accessed 30 January 2024.
https://www.bk.admin.ch/bk/en/home/dokumentation/languages/hilfsmittel-textredaktion.html

[5] *European Commission Style Guide* (2022). Last accessed 30 January 2024.
https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/styleguide_english_dgt_en.pdf

[6] *ETH Academic Services Style Guide.* Last accessed 30 January 2024.

https://www.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/associates/services/lehre/glossar/style-guide-rectorate-ethz.pdf

Additional resources

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False Friends in Business English (2011). Shellabear, Stephanie. Haufe-Lexware.

Scientific English as a Foreign Language (2007). Burnham, Nancy A. and Hutson, Frederick L. Last accessed 30 January 2024. http://users.wpi.edu/~nab/sci_eng/ScientificEnglish.pdf

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https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/16/ch05/ch05_sec226.html

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Promoting Inclusion. A British Council guide to disability equality (September 2009). Last accessed 30 January 2024.
https://www.britishcouncil.org/about-us/our-values/equality-diversity-inclusion

American Psychological Association. Style and Grammar Guidelines. Bias-Free Language. Last accessed 30 January 2024. https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/bias-free-language/gender

Gender-inclusive writing in English Correspondence. Government of Canada Translation Bureau. Last accessed 30 January 2024.

https://www.noslangues-ourlanguages.gc.ca/en/writing-tips-plus/gender-inclusive-writing-correspondence

Coalition for Diversity and Inclusion in Scholarly Communications. Guidelines on Inclusive Language and Images in Scholarly Communications. Gender, gender identity and sexual orientation. Last accessed 26 May 2023. https://c4disc.pubpub.org/pub/4hyglwhz/release/1

Yale School of Medicine. What Do We Mean By Sex and Gender? Last accessed 30 January 2024. https://medicine.yale.edu/news-article/what-do-we-mean-by-sex-and-gender/

Guides & Terms | Harvard University Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Last accessed 30 January 2024.

Get guided by the ESN Inclusive Communication Manual | Erasmus Student Network Last accessed 30 January 2024.

Ladau, Emily (2021). *Demystifying Disability, What to Know, What to Say, and How to Be an Ally.*

Gabriel, U. & Gygax, P. (2016). *Gender and linguistic sexism*. In Giles, H. & Maass, A. (eds). *Advances in intergroup communication* (pp. 177–192). New York: Peter Lang.

American Psychological Association. (2023). *Inclusive language guide* (2nd ed.). Last accessed 30 January 2024. Inclusive Language Guidelines (apa.org)

JAMA Network: Clayton JA, Tannenbaum C. *Reporting Sex, Gender, or Both in Clinical Research*. JAMA. 2016;316(18):1863–1864. doi:10.1001/jama.2016.16405. Last accessed 30 January 2024. https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2577142