TfL's editorial style guide

MAYOR OF LONDON

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON
EVERY JOURNEY MATTERS

This style guide is updated on a regular basis. For the most recent version, go to tfl.gov.uk/style-guide. If you would like additional copies, email publishing@tfl.gov.uk

The editorial style guide is not a list of definitions. Instead, it gives guidance on when and how to use abbreviations, punctuation, numbers, our branding, and terms related to equality and inclusion. It also indicates when certain words need to be favoured or avoided, as well as when the upper or lower case needs to be used. Finally, when a word is listed without an explanation, it has been included to show how it should be spelt. Accepted abbreviations are indicated in brackets.

Aa

able-bodied	Avoid using this term as it is inappropriate
	See also **disability**

abbreviations/ acronyms	Spell out on first mention in body text, including the abbreviation or acronym in brackets. Use upper case for all abbreviations and acronyms (except TfL and the Met): LU; BBC; RMT
	After the first mention, always use the abbreviation or acronym: United Nations (UN). If the possessive is used, the abbreviation must also be possessive in the first mention: Transport for London's (TfL's)
	If a term is only used once in a document, you don't need to include the abbreviation afterwards
	Do not use full stops or include spaces between initials: TfL; BBC; mph; eg; No 10; WH Smith etc
	Use 'm' (for millions) and 'bn' (for billions) for sums of money and measurable quantities: £10bn; 1bn litres of water. However, spell out for people and countable nouns: three billion commuters; 10 billion tickets
	Use lower case for standard measurements: kg; km; lb; mph **but** use upper case for KB; GB; MB
	Exception: Spell out metres to prevent confusion with abbreviation for millions

Aa

abbreviations/ acronyms	**Note: 1)** Do not include a space between the number and the unit: 20km; 50kph; 100KB
	2) Never add an 's' to measurements: 20km, not 20kms
	Use lower case for ie and eg. These should be limited or replaced by simpler alternatives: use 'that is' or 'for example'
	Online exception: There are a few recognisable acronyms that we do not always spell out in full in the first mention. These include TfL, DLR, DVLA and BBC
accents	On words commonly accepted as English, use only when they make a difference to pronunciation: cliché, exposé
	Foreign words should be given their accents
accessibility	The ease with which all passengers can gain access to our services
	See also **disabled access**
	Online exception: Specify whether you are referring to 'transport accessibility' or 'website accessibility' in every case – unless it is clear
acting	Not interim

Aa

active voice	Avoid the passive voice. 'A hit B' describes the event more concisely than 'B was hit by A'
additional space	Should only be used when referring to a new feature, for example more space on new trains. This should not be used as a general term when referring to passenger benefits as the extra room created will be absorbed by increased demand and therefore won't be noticeable
addresses	Always write out addresses as follows: Transport for London Windsor House 42-50 Victoria Street London SW1H 0TL See also **contact details**; **phone numbers**
adult-rate	Include a hyphen when using adjectivally: I need to buy an adult-rate ticket
adult-rate annual Travelcard (Gold Card) holder	It is also acceptable to use Gold Card holder
adult-rate season ticket	
adult-rate Travelcard	

Aa

adverbs	Do not use a hyphen after adverbs ending with '-ly': rapidly growing economy, carefully crafted answer
adviser	Not advisor
aeroplane	Not airplane
age	under-XXs (n): Under-16s under XX (adj): If you are under 16 over-XXs (n): Over-60s over XX (adj): If you are over 60 XX-years-old See also **older people; youngsters**
Americanisms	Favour British spelling and phrases: programme, not program (except for computer programs); realise, not realize; centre, not center. The only exception is proper nouns: World Trade Center; US Defense Department
among	Not amongst

Aa

ampersand (&)	Use only when included as part of a proper name: Hammersmith & City line; Waterloo & City line; Elephant & Castle station
	Do not use as an abbreviation in titles or text, except in page titles on our website
	Online exception We use the ampersand in headings that appear in site navigation. We never use the ampersand in text unless it is a recognised title/brand such as Hammersmith & Fulham, Marks & Spencer
an	'An' precedes any word beginning with a vowel and any word beginning with an 'h' if the 'h' is silent, so 'a hotel' but 'an honour'
anticipate	Does not mean 'expect'. If you 'expect' to have a busy day, you can 'anticipate' it by getting up early
antisocial	Not anti-social
Anytime Day Travelcard	Replaces Day Travelcard (Peak). Valid for travel all day and for journeys that start before 04:30 the following day
Art on the Underground	Formerly 'Platform for Art'
app	Acceptable abbreviation for a software application

Aa

Asian communities	Use when referring to Chinese, Far East Asian, Indian, Japanese and Pakistani communities. If referring to an individual, it should be used as an adjective, not a noun: an Asian woman, not an Asian; Asian people, not Asians **Note:** The term Oriental should not be used See also **race and ethnicity**
Auto top-up	Use to describe the Auto top-up facility available for pay as you go Oyster cards

Bb

Bank Holiday	Always use upper case
	Use only when referring specifically to Bank Holidays, otherwise use the more general term 'public holiday'
	See also **public holiday**
Barclays Cycle Hire	Do not use
	See **Santander Cycles**
Barclays Cycle Superhighways	Do not use
	See **Cycle Superhighways**
benefit	Benefited/benefiting. Not benefitted/benefitting
billion	Use 'bn' for sums of money and measurable quantities: £10bn; 1bn litres of water
	Note: Do not include a space between the number and the unit: £1bn; £20bn
	Spell out for people and countable nouns: three billion commuters; 10 billion tickets
	See also **numbers**
bio-diesel	Not biodiesel
bisexual	See **sexuality**
black	See **race and ethnicity**

black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME)	Spell out whenever space allows, rather than using BAME
	Note: This replaces black minority ethnic (BME), which should no longer be used
	See also **race and ethnicity**
black cab	Use 'taxi' instead
	Note: Black cab can be referred to at the first mention of 'taxi' if it is helpful to readers: we license taxi (black cab) services in London
blind	This term implies total sight loss. Consider using visually impaired person/passengers etc if referring to people with sight loss as it is a more inclusive term
	Note: It is acceptable to use specific terms such as blind or partially sighted if it is relevant to the topic
	See also **disability**
Blue Badge holders	
board	Use lower case unless referring to a named board: BBC Board members
borough	Use lower case unless referring to a specific (named) borough: London boroughs; the London Borough of Brent

Bb

Borough Spending Plans (BSPs)	Do not use. Now the Local Implementation Plans (LIPS)
brand names	Our products and brands should follow this style guide to ensure consistency: Oyster card, not Oystercard; Congestion Charge, not Congestion charge
	For other brands, do not use design or typographical elements that, in effect, turn a name or brand into a logo. This is to prevent confusion, especially for visually impaired readers
	Do not use the ©, ® or ™ symbols unless legally required to
	However in print and online, where a recognised brand name includes a capital letter in the middle or a lowercase at the beginning, we usually retain those styles. For example, LinkedIn, YouTube and easyJet
British Transport Police (BTP)	Like 'police', the BTP should be treated as a collective noun and followed by a plural verb: the BTP are **not** the BTP is
	See also **police**
Bridge	Generally upper case when referring to a specific bridge

bulleted lists	Start each point with a capital letter but do not use any punctuation at the end (not even at the end of the final point)
Bus & Tram Pass	Not 'Bus Pass'
Bus & Tram Discount photocard	Used to purchase a discount-rate Bus & Tram Pass season ticket
buses	Use lower case when referring to buses as a mode of transport: London's buses also accept Travelcards See also **London Buses**
Bus Pass	See **Bus & Tram Pass**
bus Saver	No longer issued except for corporate sales
bus station	Use lower case: Finsbury Park bus station; Edmonton bus station
BusTag	
business	Use lower case unless referring to a named organisation or firm: we support the business; the Small Business Bureau
Byelaws	

Cc

©	Do not use the © symbol unless legally required to
cab	In most cases 'taxi' should be used instead. 'Cab' must not be used when referring to private hire services. Normally 'taxis' and 'private hire services' should be listed separately. However, in some cases 'cab' can be used as a generic term to cover both taxi and private hire services This will normally be when referring to minicabs rather than all private hire services (eg 'Don't risk taking an illegal cab', 'illegal cabs are unsafe')
capacity	The volume of train services we are able to run. Or in the context of a station, the amount of space available. This is an important benefit of the Tube improvement plan. When referring to increased capacity, provide the number of additional passengers being carried where possible (rather than the percentage increase). Avoid giving the impression that extra capacity means more space as the extra space created will, in most cases, be absorbed by increased demand

Cc

Capital	Use 'Capital' (with an upper case C) when referring specifically to London
	Use lower case when referring to other capital cities
	See also **London**
capital letters	Avoid where possible as it can imply shouting
	See also **Plain English: Accessibility**
	See also **brand names; job titles; titles of reports /sections/sub-headings etc**
CCTV	
central London	See also **London**
check before you travel	Phrase used to encourage checking for disruption before travelling
Child photocard	Only issued for National Rail
	Current TfL photocards issued to under-16s are on Oyster; 5-10 Oyster photocard and 11-15 Oyster photocard
	Note: Child photocard should only be referred to when this type of card specifically needs to be mentioned
child-rate season ticket	Not child rate season ticket (without hyphen)

Cc

child-rate Travelcard	Not child rate Travelcard (without hyphen)
closed-circuit television (CCTV)	
closures	Temporary closure of a line, section of line, or station
collective nouns	Treat as singular, except staff and police: the committee has but the staff are; the police want A pair and a couple are both plural
colons	Use lower case after a colon unless the words are a quote or a proper name
commas	Use commas to separate clauses within a sentence, or when starting a sentence with a time or date. For example, 'On 8 August 2011, the trains entered service'
Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)	See **Equalities and Human Rights Commission**
committee	Use lower case unless referring to a named committee: Transport Committee for London

Cc

company names	Always treat as singular See also **abbreviations/acronyms; brand names**
compass points	Use lower case except when including as part of a proper noun: north; east; south; west **but** South East England See also **London**
Conditions of Carriage	
Congestion Charge/Charging	Use upper case except when using **charge** or **charging** on their own: pay the charge online; when you enter the charging zone
Congestion Charge Auto Pay	
Congestion Charging scheme	Use lower case when referring to 'the scheme' on its own
Congestion Charging zone	Use lower case when referring to the zone on its own: People living within the zone are eligible for a discount

Cc

contact details

See also **addresses**; **phone numbers**

Online rules:
Order your contact points as below (your list may only include some of these):

• Search our common questions

• [Link to specific contact form if available]

• Email address ('Email:')

• Phone ('Phone:')

• Fax ('Fax:')

• Postal address ('Address:' or 'Post:')

The layout on the page should follow this format:

Label in bold, colon, details on one line except for Address/Post, where it will follow the usual address style and start on the next line.

For example:

Guild of Registered Tourist Guides
Email: guild@blue-badge.org.uk
Phone: 020 7403 1115
Fax: 020 7378 1705
Address:
Guild House
52d Borough High Street
London SE1 1XN

contractions	Contractions – such as 'don't', 'isn't' or 'can't' – can be used sparingly to make communications more friendly and less corporate. However, don't use them to such an extent that your text appears sloppy or rude
cooperate/ cooperation	Not co-operate/co-operation
coordinate/ coordination	Not co-ordinate/co-ordination
Countdown	
Crossrail	Not Cross Rail or Cross rail
customers	Refer to 'customers' rather than 'passengers'

Cc

Cycle Superhighways	Write out in full when possible. It is acceptable to refer to 'Superhighways' in longer documents to avoid repetition.
	Note: Each route is referred to as CS1, CS2 etc followed by the route name, so CS3: Barking to Tower Gateway, CS7: Merton to City, etc. This format will need to be replicated across all routes
	The scheme should always be referred to as safer rather than safe
	Online exception Can use CS1, for example, on second reference. Do not need to add colon and full route in every reference

dates	Day, month, year, in that order, with no commas: 1 December; 1 December 2015; Tuesday 1 December 2015; 01/12; 01/12/15
	Note: Do not abbreviate days or months if space allows them to be spelt out in full
	If necessary, abbreviate days and months to three letters (**exception:** Thursday – use five letters)
	Do not use 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc
	Do not add spaces on either side of hyphens when listing inclusive dates: 11-15 April, 2005-2006, 10 May-10 June
	A forward slash is used when listing years in reports or titles: 2006/07
	Don't use the full second year, so 2013-14, not 2013-2014
	Use hyphens for longer periods: 2013-17
	Use commas for non-consecutive years: 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019
	Note: No spaces on either side of the forward slash
	If abbreviating individual dates, also use forward slashes: 01/12; 01/12/06 **not** 01-12; 01-12-06

Dd

dates (continued)	Do not use an apostrophe for decades, except when using the possessive form: the station opened in the 1960s but it is a 1960s' station
	See also **plurals; possessives**
	Online exceptions: Always include the year as it isn't always obvious online
	09:00-17:00, Monday to Friday (put different days on a new line, don't separate with a comma)
	When space is an issue, such as in tables and publication titles, you can use truncated months: Jan, Feb, Mar, Aug, Oct, Nov, Dec
	Don't use 'quarter' for dates; use the months, for example: '[dept] expenses, Jan to Mar 2013'
Day Travelcard (Peak)	
Day Travelcard (Off-Peak)	Valid from 09:30 Monday to Friday, and all day Saturday, Sunday and public holidays, up to 04:30 the following day

Dd

deaf	This term implies total hearing loss. Consider using hearing-impaired people, customers etc as it is a more inclusive term. However, it is acceptable to use the term 'deaf' or 'hard of hearing' if it is relevant to the topic or if referring to the deaf community as a whole
	Note: The deaf and hard of hearing community should be identified separately from the disabled community: disabled and deaf communities
	See also **disability; hearing-impaired**
departments	Use upper case for departments: Corporate Finance; Group Communications
departure boards	Real-time information showing next train time at specific stations
de-train	
Dial-a-Ride	Now London Dial-a-Ride. Write out in full on first mention. It is acceptable to refer to Dial-a-Ride in longer documents to avoid repetition. Do not refer to DaR

Dd

disability

Use positive language about disability, avoiding outdated terms that stereotype or stigmatise. Do not use 'cripple', 'handicapped' or 'wheelchair-bound' and avoid referring to people as nouns (eg 'the disabled') or as suffering from, or afflicted by, a condition

It is preferable to use 'xxx' people rather than people with 'xxx': disabled people (not people with disabilities); hearing-impaired customers; visually impaired users; wheelchair user; people with learning difficulties; mobility-impaired passengers

It is acceptable to use specific terms, such as blind, deaf or partially sighted if it is relevant to the topic

However, whenever possible, it is preferable to describe the barriers that disabled people experience rather than impairments linked to a person's medical condition: hearing-impaired passengers or people who use our services who may experience communication barriers; passengers who experience communication barriers; passengers who experience physical barriers

Note: This can also include people with luggage, pushchairs, bulky items or similar

disability (continued)	**Note:** The deaf community should be identified separately from the disabled community: the disabled and deaf communities See also **able-bodied; blind; deaf**
Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)	Largely replaced by the Equality Act 2010
disabled access	Use this term when referring to disabled accessibilty, as 'accessibility' has a wider meaning. See also **accessibility**
disabled person's Freedom Pass	Use upper case when referring to the disabled person's Freedom Pass
Disability Rights Commission (DRC)	See **Equalities and Human Rights Commission**
discount-rate ticket	
disruptions	Interruption to normal weekday or weekend services as a result of improvement work or other incidents

Dd

Docklands Light Railway (DLR)	Write out in full on first mention in body text, including the abbreviation in brackets. After that, use the abbreviation
	Online exception: It is acceptable to use DLR in all instances. In text, Docklands Light Railway may also be used in full if it adds clarity
double-decker bus	
draft documents	When drafting documents, use Arial, 12pt with 1.5 line spacing for ease of readability and making amendments
DVLA	Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency; not normally necessary to spell out

11-15 Oyster photocard	
18+ Student Oyster photocard scheme	
Earl's Court station	Unlike the area or the exhibition centre, the Tube station has an apostrophe
Earls Court	Unlike the Tube station, neither the area nor the exhibition centre have an apostrophe
early evening closures	Weekday line/station closures required in advance of normal engineering hours. Typically from around 22:00
earn your travel back	
East End of London	See also **London**
east London	See also **London**
eg	Not e.g. See also **abbreviations/acronyms**
elderly	Refer to older people rather than elderly people
eLearning	
Elephant & Castle station	Unlike the area, the Tube station has an ampersand (&)

Ee

Elephant and Castle	Unlike the Tube station, the area does not have an ampersand (&)
email	Not e-mail
	Always give the full email address when providing a hyperlink.
	For example, 'Email: guild@blue-badge.org.uk' not 'Email: Blue Badge'
emphasis	Do not use capital letters or italics to emphasise text
Emirates Air Line	Sponsored by Emirates Airline
endorsement	We cannot be seen to endorse external companies/suppliers
equality and inclusion	See individual entries: **able-bodied; age; Asian; black, Asian, and minority ethnic; blind; deaf; disability; gender; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community; race and ethnicity; sexuality; transgendered**
Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)	EOC/DRE/CRE have all been amalgamated
Equality Act 2010	Replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs)	TfL has a duty as a public body to demonstrate that it has taken into account the needs of all groups covered by the Equality Act 2010. For TfL, an EqIA allows us to demonstrate how the duty has been taken into account
Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)	See **Equalities and Human Rights Commission (CEHR)**
ethnicity/ethnic group	See **race and ethnicity**
external suppliers	We cannot be seen to endorse external companies/suppliers

Ff

faith and belief	Use 'people of faith', 'people of belief' or 'faith communities' when referring to groups of people with a shared faith or belief. Do not use the term 'religious communities' as this has a different meaning and refers to organised religious communities (eg monastic communities)
	Note: It is acceptable to be specific if it is relevant: a Sikh temple; a Muslim festival
FAQs	Acceptable abbreviation for frequently asked questions
	Avoid the common error of adding an apostrophe: (FAQ's)
	Online exception: We don't use FAQs on our website. There are three main reasons for this:
	• Generally, we find FAQs duplicate other content on the site
	• You can't front-load FAQs so we are not helping usability
	• You could unnecessarily add to search results with duplicate, competing text

Ff

FAQs (continued)	Content should not be in FAQ form if there is another, appropriate format. If you have genuine FAQs, they should be added to the Help & contact database
fare payers	Not farepayers (but taxpayers)
fax numbers	Use 020 XXXX XXXX
fewer	'Fewer' is used for countable nouns and means smaller in number: fewer coins; fewer passengers; fewer tickets Do not confuse with less, which is used with singular nouns or quantity: less money; less time; less fat
figures	Never start a sentence or title with a figure. If a sentence or title begins with a number, it must be spelt out See also **numbers**
fire service	Use lower case unless referring to a named brigade: The fire service has been called; a letter from the London Fire Brigade
First Class ticket	

Ff

first person	Use 'we', 'us' or 'our' rather than 'TfL' as it's more personal. Write as if you 'are' TfL. The only exceptions are statutory documents where the third person is necessary, such as the Annual Report and Accounts

Online exception:
In most cases we use 'we' to mean TfL and 'you' to mean the user. In some circumstances, such as terms and conditions, we use the third person for clarity – for example 'TfL and its subsidiaries'.

We use first person descriptions for personalisation, particularly on transactional buttons, so:

• Find a station near me

• Show me where I am on this map

• My account

• My profile

• Plan my journey (not plan your journey)

It is acceptable to use second person when you are giving instructions in text. For example, 'You can pay the Congestion Charge in a number of ways. It's quickest and easiest if you register for a customer account online'

flyover	Generally lower case

Ff

focus	Focuses/focused/focusing. Not focusses/focussed/focussing
Freedom Pass	Use upper case when referring to the Freedom Pass in text
	See also **disabled person's Freedom Pass; older person's Freedom Pass**
frontline	Not front line, when referring to staff
fuel cell bus	
full stops	**Online rule:** Standard Teaser text should not end in a full stop
	For text links within copy, use a full stop at the end of the sentence, even if the sentence ends in a link (do not link the full stop)
	Page description for metadata should not have a full stop

Gg

Games	See **London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games**
gay	See **sexuality**
GB	Acceptable abbreviation for gigabyte. Do not include a space between the number and the measurement: 2GB
gender	Avoid causing offence by using outdated or patronising terms and include references to gender only when it is essential. Using the plural can be helpful: customers; local people; employees
	The term 'manned' should be replaced in all cases with 'staffed'
	Do not refer to women as ladies or girls
	Also do not use 'female' or 'male', use: woman/man, women/men
	See also **sexuality; transgendered**
GLA Group	Not GLA group
Gold Card holder	It is also acceptable to use **adult-rate annual Travelcard (Gold Card) holder**

government	Use upper case only when referring to a specific government: we work with the Government. Use lower case when referring to local government or when using in an adjectival context: government expenditure; government funding
Greater London	See also **London**
Greater London Authority (GLA)	
Green Line coaches	
Greenways	
group	Use upper case only when referring to a named group: the TfL Group
Group Day ticket	
Group Travel ticket	
gyratory	Generally lower case

Hh

headings	See **titles of reports/ sections/ sub-headings etc**
hearing-impaired	See also **disability; deaf**
Heathrow Express	
Help Point	
hyphens	See page 85

iBus	
ie	Not i.e. See also **abbreviations/acronyms**
inner London	See also **London**
intelligent transport system (ITS)	
interchange	Use lower case: Vauxhall Cross interchange; strategic interchange
internet	Not Internet (with upper case I)
into	Is one word but 'on to' are two separate words
intranet	Not Intranet (with upper case I)
-ise endings	Use 'ise', not 'ize': emphasise, realise (not emphasize, realize). The only exceptions are capsize and proper nouns (eg company names)
italics	Do not use italics in print or on our website
iTrace	

Jj

Jam Cams	Acceptable term to use when referring to the traffic cameras that observe and report live traffic congestion on major roads
job titles	Use upper case when referring to a specific role or named person: the Managing Director; Joe Bloggs, Press Officer
	Use lower case if writing generally: service assistants, station managers
	When quoting a named individual, no comma is required if referring to a person by title: Prime Minister David Cameron said: '…'. However, commas must be used to separate a descriptive title: David Cameron, Prime Minister, said: '…'
	Online exception: Use lower case wherever possible (still capitalise at the start of a sentence or bullet). Although there may be certain exceptions, generally when there is only one holder of the particular office, such as Mayor of London, Commissioner or Queen
Journey Planner	Our travel tool that assists real-time route-planning across the modes

Kk

KB	Acceptable abbreviation for kilobyte. Do not include a space between the number and the measurement: 120KB
kilometres	Refer to km instead of miles where possible
	See also **abbreviations/acronyms**

Ll

learnt	Past tense and past participle of learn. Do not use learned unless using as an adjective
lesbian	See **sexuality**
lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) community	
less	'Less' is used with singular nouns and quantities: less money; less time; less fat Do not confuse with **fewer**, which is used with countable nouns and means smaller in number: fewer coins; fewer passengers; fewer tickets
level access	A route from street to train that doesn't require the use of stairs or escalators See also **step-free access**
licence	Noun: you will need a licence
license/d	Verb/adj: a body authorised to license drivers; he is a licensed driver
Limited/Ltd	Can usually be dropped from company names (except for legal documents and similar)
line	Use lower case when referring to Tube lines: Hammersmith & City line; Northern line

lists	Do not add a comma before 'and' at the end of a sequence unless one of the items includes another 'and': We ate oranges, apples and bananas **but** we ordered chocolate cake, cheese and biscuits, and ice cream
	Semi-colons can be used to clarify meaning and separate items listed in a catalogue-type sentence: Refurbishment works will include new lighting at the station entrance and on the platforms; new escalators at the North Lane and South Way entrances; and the instalment of CCTV cameras
	See also **bulleted lists**
live travel news	Our travel tool that shows real-time and planned service disruption
Local Implementation Plans (LIPs)	
local season ticket	Do not use See **Point-to-Point season ticket**
log in/login	Do not use 'login' or log in'. 'Sign in' is preferred

Ll

London	Use upper case for Greater London; the East End and West End of London. Use lower case for central inner/outer London; north/south/east/west London; northeast/ southwest London etc
	Use upper case when referring to London and the South East or London and the North.
	See also **Capital**
London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games	Refer to as the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the 2012 Games or the Games
London Buses (LB)	Do not use 'Buses' (on its own) when referring to London Buses, our subsidiary responsible for overseeing contracts with private bus operators
	See also **buses**
London Cycle Guides	
London Dial-a-Ride	Formerly Dial-a-Ride. Write out in full on first mention. It is acceptable to refer to Dial-a-Ride in longer documents to avoid repetition.
	Do not refer to DaR
	Online exception: Use Dial-a-Ride, not London Dial-a-Ride

London Overground	Use 'London Overground'. Do not refer to as 'Overground'
	Note: 'North London line is now 'Richmond/Clapham Junction – Stratford'
	'West London line' is now 'Willesden Junction – Clapham Junction'
	'DC line/Watford Euston DC' is now 'Watford Junction – Euston'
	'Gospel Oak to Barking (GOB)' is now 'Gospel Oak – Barking'
	'East London line' is now 'Dalston/Highbury & Islington – West Croydon/Crystal Palace/New Cross'
	All directional references should be referred to as the destination they are travelling towards, for example the 'Richmond/Clapham Junction – Stratford can be referred to as the 'London Overground to Richmond', the London Overground to Clapham Junction' or the 'London Overground to Stratford'
London Overground (LO) (continued)	Do not abbreviate to LO See also **Overground**
London Rail (LR)	

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Ll

London River Services (LRS)	
London Service Permits (LSPs)	
London Taxi and Private Hire (LTPH)	Formerly the Public Carriage Office (PCO)
London Tramlink	Do not use. Now **London Trams**. See also **tram**
London Trams	
London Transport Museum	Not London's Transport Museum
longer-period Travelcard	Do not use. However, there are some instances when references are made to longer period Travelcard season tickets. See also **season ticket**
Low Emission Zone (LEZ)	

Mm

mainline	Do not use. Refer to National Rail
Mayor of London	Use 'Mayor' (with capital M) on second mention
Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)	MOPAC has replaced the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA)
MB	Acceptable abbreviation for megabyte. Do not include a space between the number and the measurement: 2.2MB
measurements	Use lower case for standard measurements: kg; km; mph; kph but use upper case for KB; GB; MB. **Exception:** Spell out metres to prevent confusion with abbreviation for millions **Note:** 1) Do not include a space between the number and the unit: 20km; 50mph; 100KB 2) Never add an 's' to measurements: 20km, not 20kms
meet, met	Not meet with or met with
meet the manager events	Local events staffed by operational/head office staff to publicise planned improvements/closures
metres	Write out in full to prevent confusion with millions

Mm

Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA)	Do not use. Now the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)
Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)	Do not refer to the Metropolitan Police or the Met Service Like 'police', the Metropolitan Police Service should be treated as a collective noun and followed by a plural verb: the Met are not the Met is
million	Use 'm' for sums of money and measurable quantities: £10m, 1m litres of water **Note:** Do not include a space between the number and the unit: £1m; 20m Spell out million for people and countable nouns: three million commuters, 10 million tickets See also **numbers**
minicab	Not mini-cab or mini cab Use 'private hire vehicle' unless referring specifically to a minicab or minicab service. 'Minicab' can be used at the first mention of private hire vehicles if it is helpful to readers: All private hire vehicles (including minicabs) are licensed by us See also **private hire vehicle**

Mini-Hollands

mobile travel alerts	Our travel tool that passengers subscribe to which provides daily text message alerts in the event of disruption on their route
money	When referring to round sums of money, do not add '.00': £3, not £3.00; £10, not £10.00
	Use 'm' and 'bn' for sums of money and measurable quantities: £10bn; 1bn litres of water. However, spell out for people and countable nouns: three billion commuters; 10 billion tickets
	Note: Do not include a space between the number and the unit: £20m; £10bn
	See also **numbers**
more accessible	An improvement to an asset that makes it easier for customers to use
	See also **accessibility; disabled access**
more than	Use 'more than' rather than 'over' when referring to a quantity.
	For example, more than one billion passenger journeys are made on the Tube each year

Nn

names	Use upper case for named departments, initiatives, networks, organisations, projects and schemes: Group Services; London Bus Initiative; Low Emission Zone
	See also **capital letters; job titles; titles of reports/sections/sub-headings etc**
National Rail	Use upper case in all instances. Always refer to National Rail rather than mainline
	Note: When National Rail is mentioned in conjunction with Oyster pay as you go, it needs to be accompanied by the statement: 'National Rail only allows customers to pay as you go on some journeys. Ask your train operator for details'
Network Railcard	
Night bus	Upper case for 'Night'
Night Tube	refer to 'the Night Tube'
none	How many companies are going to make a profit?
	None of them are
	When 'none' is meant to indicate 'not one', it is singular: None of them is bigger than any other
northeast London	See also **London**

north London	See also **London**
numberplate	numberplate. Not number plate
numbers	In body text, write out numbers from one to nine; use figures from 10 upwards

Exceptions:

1) Never start a sentence or title with a figure. If a sentence or title begins with a number, it must be spelt out. Numbers between twenty-one and ninety-nine, when written in words, should be hyphenated. This does not apply to sums of money: £5m a year

2) Chapter/section headings do not need to be spelt out: Chapter 5; Section 2.1

Use 'm' and 'bn' for sums of money and measurable quantities: £10m, 1bn litres of water. However, spell out million and billion for people and countable nouns: three million commuters; 10 billion tickets

Do not include a space between numbers and units: 20km **not** 20 km; £10bn **not** £10 bn

Numbers larger than three figures require a comma: 1,000; 20,500

Decimals should be rounded to a maximum of two decimal spaces: 2.75 **not** 2.748

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Nn

numbers (continued)	If there is a decimal point in a number, always use figures. For example, write 'five metres of track 'but '5.3 metres'
	Do not use an apostrophe when referring to decades or plurals as this makes them possessive: 1980s **not** 1980's; under-16s **not** under-16's
	See also **Plain English: Punctuation**
	See also **dates; measurements; money**

off-peak	Use lower case and include a hyphen when using adjectivally: an off-peak ticket
	Use upper case and include a hyphen when using in conjunction with a product: Travelcard (Off-Peak)
older people	Refer to older people rather than elderly people
older person's Freedom Pass	Use upper case when referring to the older person's Freedom Pass in text
Olympics	Do not use.
	See **London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games**
Olympic Family	
Olympic Park	
Olympic Route Network	
Olympic Stadium	
Olympic Village	
ongoing	Do not use. Use continuing instead
online	One word when referring to the internet or a website. Do not use 'on-line' or 'on line'
on to	But **into**

Oo

opt in/out	Verb: I would like to opt in
opt-in/out	Adjective: an opt-in clause
outer London	See also **London**
Overground	Use 'London Overground'. Do not refer to 'Overground' See also **London Overground**
Oyster Auto top-up	
Oyster card	
Oyster daily price capping	
Oyster online	
Oyster pay as you go	See **pay as you go**
Oyster photocards	5-10 Oyster photocard, 11-15 Oyster photocard, 16+ Oyster photocard, 18+ Student Oyster photocard, 60+ London photocard and Veterans Concessionary Travel Scheme Oyster photocard are currently issued
Oyster Ticket Stop/s	

paragraph	Only use left aligned text (not fully justified)
Paralympic Games	
passengers	Refer to 'customers' rather than 'passengers'
pay as you go	Do not hyphenate and always use lower case as Oyster pay as you go is not a brand name
	Note: Use 'credit' or 'balance' when referring to Oyster cards with a stored pay as you go balance. Do not use 'pay as you go travel value (cash)' or 'pay as you go cash value'
	See also **National Rail**
pay as you go credit	Use to describe Oyster cards with a stored cash value
	Note: Do not use 'pay as you go travel value (cash)' or 'pay as you go cash value'
payband	
PDF	Accepted abbreviation for Portable Document Format
	Note: When using online, include the file format and file size as part of the link to aid accessibility: Underground map (PDF 850KB)
Penalty Charge Notice (PCN)	

Pp

per cent	Two words. Do not use % except in tables or advertising copy (eg posters) **Online exception:** Use the % symbol and do not write per cent in words. There is no space between the number and the symbol. For example, 1%, 5%, 10%, etc. Not five % or 5 %
Period	Use capital 'P' plus numerals (not spelt out) when referring to specific financial/administrative periods, for example, Period 3. Abbreviate after first mention, for example P3
period ticket	Do not use. See **season ticket**
personal pronouns	Personal pronouns can be used to establish a conversational tone We are planning to invest £10bn over the next five years; If you would like more information, please contact us See also **tone**
Peter Hendy CBE	When mentioning the Commissioner of Transport for London always refer to Sir Peter Hendy CBE
phone numbers	As with printed documents, phone numbers should be split into at least three groups of digits for readability, ideally with no more than four digits in any single group. For example: 020 7378 1705; 0343 222 6666; 0762 480 4299

Pp

phone numbers (continued)	For phone numbers with international dialling codes, the convention is to write in this format: +44 (0)20 8216 6666
	Online rules: If you have multiple phone numbers on the same page, you may want to asterix each instance and refer to a line at the bottom of the page instead: *Find out about TfL call charges (page ID 3942)
	See also **contact details**
photocard	
PHV (private hire vehicle)	Write out in full on the first mention.
	Although usually used as an acronym for private hire vehicle(s), it can also be used to refer to the private hire industry in general, eg 'representatives from the PHV industry attended the meeting'
	Online exception: Do not use except on pages addressing this specific audience. Even then, it must be written out in full on the first mention on each page
Planned works calendar	Our online tool (part of Live Travel News) that shows a six-month look ahead of planned closures
Platform for Art	Do not use. Now **Art on the Underground**

Pp

plurals	Avoid the common error of adding an apostrophe when making a word or abbreviation plural as this makes it possessive: under-16s **not** under-16's; DVDs **not** DVD's; 1990s **not** 1990's See also **Plain English: Punctuation**
Point-to-Point season ticket	Previously 'short-distance season ticket'. A Point-to-Point season ticket refers to a season ticket that is valid between two named stations only
police	Use lower case unless referring to a specific force: British Transport Police; call the police **Note:** Police is a collective noun that is usually preceded by 'the' and followed by a plural verb: the police are **not** the police is See also **British Transport Police; Metropolitan Police Service**

possessives	For proper nouns ending in '-s', add 's: St James's Park
	Do not confuse with plurals, especially when referring to ages or decades:
	under-16s (plural)
	under-16's (possessive)
	Take care with plural nouns: use women's not womens'; children's not childrens'; people's not peoples'
	See also **plurals; Plain English: Punctuation**
practice	Noun: it is standard practice; piano practice
practise	Verb: he practises playing the piano every day; she is a practising doctor
Pre Pay	Name withdrawn. See **pay as you go**
price capping	Refer to **Oyster daily price capping**
private hire drivers	This term refers to drivers of all private hire vehicles, including minicabs, executive cars, limousines, chauffeur services and any other vehicle licensed for private hire use
	Note: It does not include taxi (black cab) drivers

Pp

private hire vehicles	This term refers to minicabs, executive cars, limousines, chauffeur services and any other vehicle licensed for private hire use
	Note: It does not include taxis (black cabs)
	See also **black cab; taxi**
Public Carriage Office (PCO)	Do not use. Now called London Taxi and Private Hire (LTPH)
Private Finance Initiative (PFI)	
public holiday	Always use lower case
	A public holiday can refer to any national holiday, including Bank Holidays
	See also **Bank Holiday**
Public Private Partnership (PPP)	

Qq

quantities	See **money; numbers**
quotation marks	Use single quotation marks in all cases
	Use double quotation marks if using a quote within a quote
	If a quote runs on longer than one paragraph, include quotation marks at the beginning of each subsequent paragraph but only at the end of the final paragraph
	Place full stops and commas inside quotes when they are complete sentences, otherwise place them outside: 'I want to buy a ticket,' said Mr Smith; When he said 'I promise', he didn't really mean it

Rr

®	Do not use the ® symbol unless legally required to
race and ethnicity	Avoid giving offence and include references to race only when it is relevant. The words 'black' and 'Asian' should not be used as nouns, but adjectives: 'black people' rather than 'blacks'; an 'Asian woman' rather than an 'Asian' etc. However, it is acceptable to be specific if it is relevant: local Somalian community; Bangladeshi community leaders **Note:** The terms 'Oriental', 'half-caste', 'non-white' and 'coloured' are not acceptable in any circumstances See also **Asian; black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME)**
Rail & River Rover ticket	
Realtime	One word when referring to our Realtime travel information service. Two words if using generally: real time (n); real-time (adj)
rebuild	Major structural improvements (normally in the context of a station)
red route	Not Red Route (with upper case Rs)

reduced journey times	The reduction in the time taken to complete an average journey as a result of upgrade work. Should only be used when referring to a specific change, for example greater reliability/capacity/more trains on the system per hour. Should only be used in a general sense (such as a benefit of Tube improvements) rather than in reference to a specific journey (as passengers are unlikely to experience a noticeable difference)
reduce overcrowding	Alleviating crowding and congestion at stations and on trains, for example when referring to increased capacity
reduced service	Where we offer a service that is noticeably less than normal (could apply to train frequency or escalators/lifts in operation)
refurbish	To renovate or restore a station
reliability	Consistency of maintaining a good train service
relive	Not re-live
re-open	Not reopen (without hyphen)
repair	The making good of assets and infrastructure
re-route	

Rr

roadworks

roundabout   Generally lower case

Routemaster

7 Day Travelcard	
16+ Oyster photocard	
16-17 Oyster photocard	This term should no longer be used. Use **16+ Oyster photocard** instead
St. James's Park station	
Santander Cycles	Must be written in full and capitalised on first mention. After that, 'cycle hire scheme' and 'scheme' is acceptable Santander Cycles is singular. Use 'Santander Cycles is…', **not** 'Santander Cycles are…' **Note:** **docking station** is the collective name for a terminal and the row of docking points within Zone 1 **docking point** is the device that allows a user to dock/undock a cycle **terminal** is the device at each docking station that allows a user to hire a cycle
schemes	Use lower case unless the word scheme is included as part of a title: Fleet Automated Scheme

Ss

-ise endings	Use 'ise' instead of 'ize': emphasise, realise (not emphasize, realize). The only exceptions are capsize and proper nouns (eg company names)
seasons	Lower case: spring; summer; autumn; winter
season ticket	Previously 'period ticket'. Refers to any ticket valid for seven days, one month or a longer period up to one year
sentence spacing	Use a single space between sentences. Double spaces can be problematic for visually impaired readers and readers with learning difficulties See also **paragraph; Plain English: Accessibility**
service guide	Use lower case unless referring to a named document: a range of service guides is available; the Riverboat Spring/Summer Service Guide is out next week

Ss

sexuality	Include references to sexuality only when it is essential. The words 'gay', 'bisexual' and 'transgendered' should not be used as nouns, but adjectives: 'gay people' rather than 'gays'; a 'bisexual man' rather than a 'bisexual'. The term 'lesbian' is an exception as it can be used as a noun or adjective
	Note: Do not use the term 'homosexual' as it is a medical term and so considered inappropriate. Use the term 'gay' instead: a gay man or lesbian
	See also **gender; lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community; transgendered/trans**
short-distance season ticket	Does not exist. Use **Point-to-Point season ticket** instead
sign in	We use sign in, not log in. For example, 'Sign in to my account' (not log in or login, not sign into)
	When the account has not yet been set up, we use 'Sign up' or 'Create an account'
Sir Peter Hendy CBE	When mentioning the Commissioner of Transport for London always refer to Sir Peter Hendy CBE

Ss

60+ London Oyster photocard	These cards are only valid for travel on TfL services
small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)	
smartcard	
south London	See also **London**
southwest London	See also **London**
spacing	Use only a single letter space to separate sentences. This is an example
	In both print and online, do not add extra spaces either side of a forward slash. For example, April/May, not April / May
speech marks	See **quotation marks**
station	Use lower case for Tube, bus and DLR stations: Marble Arch station. However, it is often not necessary to use the word 'station' at all: the Northern line is suspended between Euston and Waterloo
	See also **bus station; interchange**
step-free	A route between street and platform that doesn't require the use of stairs or escalators
	See also **level access**

Ss

step-free access	Use when referring to either step-free or level access but include context to prevent misunderstanding:
	Step-free access to platform/s
	Step-free access to train/s
	Step-free access to platform/s and train/s
Strategic Road Network (SRN)	
strategy	Use lower case unless the word 'strategy' is included as part of a title: Integrated Transport Strategy
Student Oyster photocard	Do not use. Refer to **18+ Student Oyster photocard scheme**
Student-rate Bus & Tram Pass	Use when referring to the **18+ Student Oyster photocard**
Student-rate Travelcard	Use when referring to the **18+ Student Oyster photocard scheme**
Superhighways	See **Cycle Superhighways**
Surface Transport	

Tt

24-hour	Include a hyphen when using as an adjective: 24-hour travel, 24-hour alert, 24-hour service
target	Targeted/targeting. Not targetted/targetting
taxi	Use only when referring to licensed taxis (black cabs)
	Note: This term must not be used when referring to private hire services or vehicles, including minicabs
	See also **black cab; minicab; private hire vehicles; London Taxi and Private Hire (LTPH)**
Taxicard	
terms and conditions	Not Terms and Conditions or terms & conditions
	Online exception: In navigation use terms & conditions, in text use terms and conditions
telephone numbers	**Note:** Use 020 XXXX XXXX or, when dialling from overseas, +44 (0) XXX XXX XXXX. Only include numbers for dialling from overseas when message is directed specifically at an overseas audience
TfL Group	Not TfL group
TfL Pension Fund	Use 'Fund' (upper case F) on second reference

TfL Road Network (TLRN)

that/which	Generally, 'that' defines while 'which' informs: This is the house that Jack built; this house, which Jack built, is now falling down
	See also **which**
the Night Tube	
third person	Use 'we', 'us' or 'our' rather than 'TfL' as it's more personal. Write as if you 'are' TfL
	The only exceptions are statutory documents where the third person is necessary, such as the Annual Report and Accounts
Ticket Stop/s	No longer used. All have been converted to Oyster Ticket Stop/s
ticket office	
time	Use the 24-hour clock in all circumstances (unless legally required to use the 12-hour clock): 08:00; 12:15; 00:01
titles of sections/sub-headings etc	Use upper case for the first letter of the first word and proper nouns only; Finance and Planning induction pack not Finance and Planning Induction Pack
™	Do not use the ™ symbol unless legally required to

Tt

tone	It is important to strike a balance between a tone that is authoritative and formal, and one that is friendly and engaging
	Make sure it sounds like it comes from an individual, not an anonymous organisation
	Write as if you are speaking
	Use plain English, avoid jargon, technical language or 'management speak'
	All correspondence, for both internal and external audiences, should be in the first person rather than the third person. For example 'we' or 'us' rather than 'TfL' or 'our services' rather than 'TfL services'
	Every journey a customer makes matters to them – so it should matter to us. Your communications should adopt a tone that shows we care about improving people's experiences on our network. For example:
	• When talking about improvements, be proud of what we're doing. When referring to works that are under way and causing disruption for passengers, your tone should be serious
	• If we're celebrating our successes, write in an upbeat style
	• When writing about consultations, be open and honest. Show that we care about people's views

touch in/touch out	
touchscreen ticket machine	
trade names	See **brand names**
tram	Use lower case when referring to trams as a mode of transport: Children can travel free on trams
	London Trams is the name of the operating company
Tramlink	Do not use. Now **London Trams**
	See also **tram**
tram stop	
Transforming the Tube/Transforming your Tube	Do not use
transgendered/ trans	Do not use 'transsexual'. Instead, refer to transgendered people as trans
	Note: Always refer to an individual by the gender by which they identify themselves
	See also **gender; sexuality**

Tt

Transport for London (TfL)	Never T*f*L (with italicised f)
	Spell out in full on first mention in body text, including the abbreviation TfL in brackets. For all subsequent mentions, it is acceptable to use the abbreviation
	Note: The abbreviation may be used in document and section headings
	Use 'we' rather than 'TfL' where possible as it's more personal
	We can be described as London's integrated transport authority. We are also a functional body of the Greater London Authority. Do not describe us as a government body or authority
	Online exception: Use TfL. It is not necessary to spell out in full on the first mention. It may be written in full if there is space and it adds clarity
Transport for London Road Network (TLRN)	
Transport Policing and Enforcement Directorate (TPED)	Do not use. Now **Community, Safety, Enforcement and Policy (CSEP)**
Travel Assistance Scheme	

Tt

Travelcard	See individual entries: **Student Travelcard; Discount Travelcard**
Travel Information Centre (TIC)	
travel support card	Not Travel Support card
Trixi mirrors	Blind spot safety mirrors to help improve the visibility of cyclists to HGV drivers at left turns
Tube	'The Tube' (with a capital T) is acceptable colloquial shorthand for the London Underground
Tube improvement plan	Do not use. Refer to Tube improvements
Tube upgrade plan	Do not use. Refer to Tube improvements
Tunnel	Generally upper case when referring to a specific tunnel

Uu

Underground	'The Underground' (with a capital U) is acceptable colloquial shorthand for London Underground See also **Tube**
under-14s	Requires a hyphen in all cases. This is true whenever referring to age-groups: under-14s; under-18s; over-60s **Note:** Avoid the common error of adding an apostrophe when making a word or abbreviation plural as this makes it possessive: under-16s not under-16's See also **plurals**
Under-14 Oyster photocard	No longer issued. The current schemes are **5-10 Oyster photocard** and **11-15 Oyster photocard**
URL	Accepted abbreviation for 'uniform resource locator'. It refers to the web address of a particular page See also **website addresses**

Vv

validator	Do not use when referring to Oyster card readers. Use **yellow card reader** instead
variable message signs (VMS)	
Victoria Coach Station (VCS)	
Visitor Oyster card	
visually impaired	See also **disability; blind**
war(s)	Avoid mentioning wars in communications where possible. For example, rather than referring to 'post World War II' instead write 'since the late 1940s' or 'for generations'
web	Lower case
website	Not web-site or web site

Ww

website addresses	**Our website:** When using our website as a hyperlink in the body text of electronic documents, include the www: www.tfl.gov.uk. However, when using it elsewhere, or together with the website logo (as a design element), the www must be dropped: tfl.gov.uk
	Other websites: When referring to the address of a specific web page (including a site's homepage) in body text, write out the full address, but do not include http:// unless the address begins with something other than www: www.london.gov.uk **but** http://thesaurus.reference.com
	Only use one forward slash: tfl.gov.uk/roads
	Online exception: When including web addresses as links on web pages, use descriptive text or the title of the site not the full web address:
	• The TfL website not http://www.tfl.gov.uk/
	• The GOV.UK website not https://www.gov.uk/
website addresses (continued)	If you are linking to an external site, you should include the word 'website' and include it in the link. For example, 'Book a guide on the Guide London website', not 'Book a guide from Guide London'

weekend closures email	Our travel tool that passengers subscribe to that provides a weekly email detailing planned service disruption affecting the coming weekend's travel
West End of London	See also **London**
west London	See also **London**
West London Tram (WLT)	
which/that	Generally, 'that' defines while 'which' informs: This is the house that Jack built; this house, which Jack built, is now falling down
	As a general rule, use 'which' for descriptive clauses and place it between commas: The station, which has been closed for a year, will re-open on Monday
while	Not whilst
WiFi	Not wi-fi or Wi-Fi
work/life balance	

Yy

years	A forward slash can be used when listing years in reports or titles: 2005-2006; 2005/06 (no spaces on either side of hyphen or forward slash)
	Do not use an apostrophe for decades unless they are possessive: the 1960s; a 1960s' station
	See also **dates; numbers; plurals**
yellow card reader	Use when referring to Oyster card readers
	Note: Do not use **validator**
youngsters	Use 'young people' in place of 'youngsters'

Zz

-ize endings	Use 'ise', not 'ize': emphasise, realise (not emphasize, realize). The only exceptions are capsize and proper nouns (eg company names)
Zip	Oyster photocards for young people that allow them to travel free or at a discounted rate
Zone/s	Use upper case only when referring to specific zones: Zones 1-3, the station is in Zone 3. Use lower case if writing generally: single-zone tickets; two zones See also **Congestion Charging zone; Low Emission Zone**

Using plain English:
Principles

Writing in plain English doesn't mean over-simplifying your message or patronising your readers. Instead, it means using everyday words in place of jargon or official sounding terms to help readers understand your message quickly and more easily.

Principles:

- Try to keep to sentences that are no longer than 20-25 words
- Include only one main idea in each paragraph
- Establish a conversational tone by imagining you are speaking to someone
- Use 'we', 'us' or 'our' rather than 'TfL' as it's more personal. Write it as if you 'are' TfL
- Avoid jargon, acronyms and impersonal corporate language (See **Plain English: Jargon and legalese**)
- Use simple words rather than their longer equivalent: 'If' not 'in the event that' (See **Plain English: Superfluous words and phrases**)
- Don't try to include every single detail – only write what readers need to know
- Write in the active, not passive voice. A hit B is more direct than B was hit by A
- Ask yourself: Will your audience understand your message or can it be simplified further?
- Don't be afraid to give clear instructions: 'Please send it to us' is more direct than 'I would be grateful if you would please send it to us'

Using plain English:
Principles

- Use bullets and vertical lists to break up text and make information more accessible

- Use sub-headings to present information in a logical manner

- When including hyperlinks in electronic documents, don't mention that you are providing a link (ie 'click here'). Instead, describe the information you are linking to or just include the link address: more information can be found at tfl.gov.uk/news

- Include images to illustrate ideas and make content more reader-friendly

- Keep your readers in mind. Remember, if you're bored or confused by what you've written, they probably will be too

Using plain English:
Accessibility

- **Type size**
  The size of type (or point size) is a fundamental factor in legibility. Use a minimum of 12pt for all printed documents. Where possible, use 14pt as this increases the accessibility of documents to visually impaired readers

- **Type styles**
  Avoid setting text in italics or all capital letters as these make it more difficult for visually impaired readers to recognise word shape. Underlining should also be avoided to prevent confusion with hyperlinks

- **Reverse type**
  If using white or coloured type, make sure the background colour is dark enough to provide sufficient contrast

- **Text alignment**
  Text should be left aligned. Avoid justifying text as irregular word spacing can make it more difficult to read. Variable spacing can also make text appear distorted

- **Sentence spacing**
  Use a single space at the beginning of sentences as double spaces make text more difficult to read. Variable spacing can also make text appear distorted

- **Line length**
  The ideal line length is between 60-70 characters (except when using columns) as very long or very short lines tire the eyes and make reading more difficult

- **Hyphens and split words**
  Splitting words over lines should be avoided as it disrupts the reading flow and can also be confusing

- **Navigational aids**
  Leave a space between paragraphs and sections as dividing the text up gives the eye a break and makes reading easier

- **Contrast**
  The better the contrast between the background and the text, the more legible the text will be. Black text on a white background provides the best contrast

- **Images**
  Avoid placing text over images as it can be both easy to miss and difficult to read

Using plain English:
Punctuation

- **Apostrophe (')**
  These can be used to:

  > Show the omission of letters: we'll (we will); don't (do not); it's (it is or it has)

  > Show possession:
  Singular: Place the apostrophe before the s to show possession by one person/body: the Mayor's decision; the company's history
  Plural: Place the apostrophe after the s to show possession by more than one person/body: the teachers' room; the directors' decision

  > **Note:** The possessive form of 'it' is its, not it's: The cat licked its paw

  > **Note:** A common error is to form the plural of a noun by adding 's to the singular form eg: a dozen DVD's; several Tube's. This is wrong and should be avoided as it makes the word possessive

- **Comma (,)**
  These can be used to:

  > Indicate a short pause: Having finished the newspaper, I sat down to work

  > Separate listed items: He ordered apples, oranges, grapes and mangoes

  > **Note:** A comma is not required before 'and' at the end of a list unless one of the listed items includes another 'and': We ordered chocolate cake, cheese and biscuits, and ice cream

> Separate clauses: The boy, who hated my sister, was very rude

> Separate a series of adjectives: A long, rambling, pompous letter

> Prevent confusion. Compare:
> - Paul hit Harry, and George then ran away
> - Paul hit Harry and George, then ran away

- **Colon (:)**
These can be used to:

> Introduce a list

> Introduce a quotation: Mr Smith said: 'I don't like beetroot'

Use lower case after a colon unless the following words are a quote, question or proper name

- **Dash (–)**
These can be used to:

> Separate an explanatory or related comment: The union members agreed to the new terms – even the shortened lunch breaks – but said that if their holiday pay was affected they would walk out

> Emphasise a point or indicate a change of thought: What he said was true – or so I thought

- **Full stop (.)**
These can be used to:

> Show that a sentence has ended

> **Note:** It is no longer used after abbreviations, so use Mr not Mr. and eg not e.g.

Punctuation

- **Hyphen (-)**
  These can be used to:

  > Create compound nouns: father-in-law,
  > air-conditioned trains

  > Link compound adjectives: blue-chip company,
  > up-to-the-minute news

  > Prevent confusion. Compare:

  - The station has no smoking areas (ie there are
    no areas where smoking is allowed)

  - The station has no-smoking areas (ie there are
    designated areas where smoking is allowed)

  > Differentiate between verbs and nouns:

  - set up (v): please set up a meeting

  - set-up (n): it was a set-up

- **Semi-colon (;)**
  These can be used to:

  > Separate items in a list if the elements within it already
  > include commas: Members of the band include Ben
  > Jefferson, singer; Tony Williams, drummer; Edward
  > Ellis, trumpeter

  > Separate two independent thoughts that would otherwise
  > be linked by a word such as 'and' or 'but': A heart attack is
  > a medical emergency; prompt care is required

Using plain English:
Basics of good writing

The fundamental elements of good writing are traditionally taught to journalists but, in fact, are valuable to anyone who has to communicate in writing to a wider audience.

Good advice

George Orwell, in an essay on journalistic style, once offered this advice:

- Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print
- Never use a long word where a short word will do
- If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out
- Never use the passive where you can use the active
- Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent
- Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous

In other words…

- Avoid clichés and other well-worn expressions
- Where there's a choice, use the shortest, simplest word
- Cut out anything that does not truly add to the story. Every word should earn its place
- Construct sentences as simply and directly as possible
- Use active in preference to passive construction: 'The passenger paid the taxi driver' is better than: 'The taxi driver was paid by the passenger'
- Avoid jargon – particularly corporate jargon – and technical or other obscure terminology

Orwell's advice was given in 1946 but it is as relevant to communicators today.

Basics of good writing

Getting the message across

This may sound blindingly obvious, but it's worth making the point: As a communicator your job is to convey information.

Whatever that information – whether news or not – and whoever the intended audience – internal or external – our best chance of conveying it successfully lies in keeping it **clear**, **simple** and **concise**.

Always bear in mind: **Your readers don't have to read it**. You may have spent considerable time and effort over something but if it is confusing, over-complicated or just too long and boring, the readers will quickly turn to something else.

Know your audience

The first questions before you put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) must be:

- Who are the target readers?
- What do we need to tell them?
- What will they want to know?
- What do they already know (and therefore what else do we need to add)?

Put yourself in their shoes.

Knowing who the message is aimed at enables us to include the appropriate details, use the most suitable tone and terminology and angle it for maximum interest and impact. It also helps us to identify the gaps in our information and go back to our sources with further questions if necessary.

Basics of good writing

Structuring the message

Journalists talk about news 'stories' – so called because they are constructed to interest the readers rather than presented as an unstructured list of facts. Trainees are sometimes advised to tell the story just as they might to friends in the pub. This means they start by grabbing attention with the most important facts – the point of the story – before substantiating it with more detail, observations and background information.

There are plenty of ways to write a news story but the most common approach is:

1. Assert

2. Substantiate

3. Attribute

In other words: State the facts; expand and explain; support with quoted/reported speech (comment) and background information.

This is often described as the news (or inverted) pyramid. It simply means the biggest, most important facts of the story appear at the top. The rest of the details then follow in descending order of importance.

The advantage of this approach is that it enables the readers to understand what the story is about straight away. They can then read on if they are interested or move on to something else if not, safely knowing they haven't missed out on the most crucial facts.

The pyramid is by no means the only way to get a message across, but it generally works well for the reasons stated. And it works for most kinds of written communication, not just journalists' news stories.

Basics of good writing

Important questions

A useful guide before you start writing is to ask yourself these six basic questions: **Who**, **What**, **When**, **Where**, **How** and **Why**.

These are the questions your readers will, subconsciously perhaps, want answered.

- What is this about?
- Who is responsible/involved?
- Where and when is this happening?
- Why is it being done?
- And how?

In almost any kind of message, the logical place to start is with **Who** and **What**. Some**body** is announcing some**thing**. Or some**thing** is about to be launched (by some**body**).

The **Where** and **When** should follow soon after, if relevant, along with simple explanations of **Why** and **How**.

It is important, of course, to make your introduction as interesting as possible – after all, you want your readers to read it! So, the opening sentence should:

- Start with the main point
- Grab attention
- Be short, crisp and concise (but not vague or cryptic)
- Avoid clutter (subordinate clauses, parentheses etc)
- Make sense instantly (avoid questions, quotes, pronouns and abbreviations unless well known)

Basics of good writing

Dos and don'ts and other observations

In no particular order…

- Write the piece, then return to the intro. Can you improve it? Can you write a title/headline from it?

- Read and re-read as you go. If you read it aloud, awkward words or disjointed sentences will immediately become clear

- With longer messages, prepare and plan before you start writing. A simple bullet-point plan will help to marshal your thoughts, even if you decide to jettison the plan along the way

- Have you answered the six basic questions?

- When quoting people, stick to 'says/said'. Avoid 'claims', 'admits', 'states', 'remarks', 'explains', 'points out'… unless they convey the precise meaning. 'Adds/added' – use to make an additional or qualifying point, not as an alternative to 'says/said'

- Journalese/tabloidese. Tabloids have a language of their own but nobody really uses words like 'rap', 'probe' and 'axe' in everyday language – neither should we (see **Jargon and legalese**)

- Facetiousness, puns, wordplay: enjoyable if used sparingly and in the right circumstances – and if original. But if it isn't truly funny, forget it. Don't try for laughs

- Take care to separate fact from opinion. Both are important but comment and opinion should always be attributed

- First person/third person: be consistent. 'TfL has announced…' or 'We have announced…' but not both in the same story unless one is a direct report of somebody's comments (see **Plain English: Tone**)

Using plain English:
Basics of good writing

- Get someone else to check the piece when it is finished. It's no good relying on proofreading your own work – you are likely to miss your own mistakes

- And don't rely solely on the computer spell-checker. It won't distinguish between 'its' and 'it's' or 'there' and 'their'. Nor can it check the accuracy of your facts!

Checklist:

- Know your audience. Who are the readers; what will they need to know?

- Decide what the story/message is about – and get straight to the point

- Keep it as short and simple as possible. Remember, clarity, brevity, simplicity, precision

- Have you answered the six basic questions?

- Have you followed our style guide?

- Have you included contact details if required?

- Get someone else to check your story

Using plain English:
Jargon and legalese

Simplicity is the key to understanding. Short words in short sentences get your message across more quickly, more easily and in a friendlier way.

Note:

Some legal terms have specific legal meanings/implications that may be lost if replaced with plain English alternatives. If you have any questions about the use of legal terms, please contact TfL Legal

Jargon and legalese

accede	agree, allow
accordingly	so
accustomed to	used to
ad hoc	informal, unplanned
additional	more, extra
approximately	about
ascertain	learn, discover
assist, assistance	help
attain	reach
attempt	try
bona fide	good faith, genuine, honest
cease	stop, end
commence	start, begin
component	part
concerning	about

consequently	so
constitute	make up, form
defer	postpone
determine	decide
discontinue	stop
enable	allow, permit
endeavour	try
establish	set up, create, find out
et al	and the others, the rest
ex gratia	without obligation
expire/expiration	end
forthwith	immediately, now (state a time limit)
forward	send, give
further and better particulars	requests for information
generate	make
grant	give
henceforth	from now on
in camera	in private
initially	at first
institute	begin, start
inter alia	among other things
manufacture	make

minor/infant	child
modify	change
notify	tell
numerous	many
obtain	get, receive
per annum	a year
possesses	has, owns
purchase	buy
regarding	about, on
request	ask
subsequently	later
terminate	end, stop
utilise	use
verify	check, prove

Using plain English:
Superfluous words and phrases

Another way of saving time and avoiding confusion is by discarding unnecessary words. Information can often be made simpler – and less corporate – if words that either add nothing or mean the same thing are replaced with simpler alternatives:

a large proportion of	many
appropriate measures	measures, steps
at this moment in time	now
by virtue of the fact that	because
close scrutiny	scrutiny
consensus of opinion	consensus
despite the fact that	although, despite
due to the fact that	as, because
for the duration of	during, while
for the purpose of	to
future plans	plans
in accordance with	as, in line with
in conjunction with	and, with
in the absence of	without
in the event that	if
in order to	to
in the majority of	most, usually

Superfluous words and phrases

leaves much to be desired	poor
on account of the fact that	because
on behalf of	for
ongoing	continuing
revert back	revert
rolled out	introduced
the fact that	that
was of the opinion that	thought
with the exception of	except
with reference/regard/ respect to	about, concerning

Using plain English:
Frequently misused words

Words that sound very similar can mean very different things. Here is a list of frequently misused words. If you are not confident about their meaning, look them up or use an alternative.

affect	effect
alternate	alternative
appraise	apprise
biannual	biennial
complementary	complimentary
continual	continuous
dependent	dependant
discreet	discrete
disinterested	uninterested
distinctive	distinguished
enquiry	inquiry
explicit	implicit
flounder	founder
flout	flaunt
fortuitous	fortunate
inflammable	inflammatory
licence	license
loathe	loath
luxuriant	luxurious
meter	metre
peddle	pedal

Using plain English:
Frequently misused words

practice	practise
practical	practicable
principle	principal
refute	rebut
regretful	regrettable
resistant	resilient
stationary	stationery
systematic	systemic

Useful books and websites

There are numerous books and countless websites on using English. The following list includes some of the most helpful and accessible. It also includes useful reference guides, including dictionaries, encyclopaedias, maps and conversion calculators.

AskOxford: Compact Oxford English Dictionary and online guide to better writing

www.askoxford.com

Encyclopaedia Britannica

www.britannica.com

Jargon Buster: Definitions for grammar and literary terms by Oxford Dictionaries

www.askoxford.com/asktheexperts/jargonbuster

Maps and directions

http://maps.google.co.uk

Metric conversion calculator

www.metric-conversions.org/conversion-calculators.htm

OneLook Dictionaries: Provides online access to several hundred dictionaries

www.onelook.com

Online currency converter

www.xe.com/ucc

Plain English Campaign

www.plainenglish.co.uk

Useful books and websites

Roget's Thesaurus: Online edition

http://thesaurus.reference.com

**The Economist
Style Guide**

www.economist.com/research/StyleGuide
Also published by The Economist Books, London, 2003

The Guardian stylebook

www.guardian.co.uk/styleguide
Also published by Guardian books, 2004

The New Fowler's Modern English Usage

www.bartleby.com/116/
Also published by RW Burchfield, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2004

Using plain English:
Writing for online

People visit our website to get something done or to answer a question – they are task oriented. They are also impatient and will leave a page quickly if they can't see at a glance what they are looking for or don't understand it.

Don't waste time with long introductions. Be direct and specific in what you need to tell people. Put the most important information at the top of the page and only include information that is essential. Use short paragraphs, clear headlines, bulleted lists and words and phrases people are likely to search for.

Longer pages should include and 'on this page' menu to help readers scan the page, get an overview and find what they are looking for quickly (or decide the page is not what they are looking for).

Mobile first

We've designed our website to work on most devices whatever their size because an increasing number of people are using our site on a mobile. Our aim is to make the most important information visible on the first screen.

Produced by TfL Group Publishing and Events
September 2015